

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI MONDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2024



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Amit Shah targets Rahul in Haryana, says Waqf Bill will be passed in Winter Session



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I dedicate my award to all mothers, says Rani Mukerji after winning IIFA award



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WINDOWS



Javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra during an event in Mumbai on Sunday. — PTI

AAP moves SC against MCD's recent elections

New Delhi: The AAP has approached the Supreme Court challenging the election held for a member of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi's standing committee. The move came after Delhi chief minister Atishi accused the BJP of "murdering" democracy and claimed that the election held on September 27 was "illegal and unconstitutional". The BJP won the last vacant seat of the MCD's 18-member standing committee unopposed as the councillors of the ruling AAP abstained from voting. **Full report on Page 2**

Speeding car kills Delhi cop, drags body

New Delhi: Admonished for rash driving, a car driver allegedly hit a motorcycle-borne constable — disguised as a civilian to prevent burglaries — and dragged him for about 10 metres in outer Delhi early on Sunday, leading to his death, officials said. The incident occurred near Veena Enclave. **Full report on Page 2**

Centre mulls 3 bills for '1 nation, 1 poll'

New Delhi: The government is likely to bring three bills, including two to amend the Constitution, to put in place its plan to hold simultaneous elections. The bills deal with aligning the local bodies elections to that of the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies. **Full report on Page 4**

COUNTERPOINT



Sorry for the disturbance... We are here for the party membership drive!

WEATHER

Max: 35°C
Min: 25°C
RH: 61%
Rain: 10

Forecast: Partly cloudy

ASTROGUIDE

Krodhi: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Bhadrpada Bahula
Triyodasi till 7.07 pm
Star: Makha till 6.18 am
Variyam: 3.17 pm to 5.05 pm
Durmuhurtam: 12.30 pm to 1.17 pm; 2.52 pm to 3.40 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
SUNSET TODAY 6.08 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.14 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 4.48 AM
MOONSET TODAY 5.01 AM

Kharge falls ill at rally, says will not die till Modi ousted

'Congress will fight for restoration of statehood to J&K'

Jasrota/Jammu, Sept. 29: Asserting that the Congress will fight for the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, party president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday said he will not die until Prime Minister Narendra Modi is removed from power. Mr Kharge, who became unwell while addressing a poll rally in Kathua district, made the remarks after getting medical assistance.



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge during a public rally in Jasrota, Jammu and Kashmir, on Sunday. — PTI

Accusing the BJP government of continuing to run Jammu and Kashmir through remote control, Mr Kharge said, "These people never wanted to conduct the elections. They only started preparing for elections after the Supreme Court's intervention." "We will fight to restore statehood. We are not going to leave it. I am 83 years old, I am not going to die so early. I will stay

alive until PM Modi is removed from power. I will listen to you. I will fight for you," Mr Kharge told the rally in the Jasrota belt. He further accused the BJP of allowing outsiders to dominate key sectors like mining and liquor contracts in J&K. "Why has the BJP delayed restoring statehood when they hold all the power? The people of J&K deserve better govern-

nance, and the BJP has failed to deliver," he said. "Modiji is shedding crocodile tears for the future of the youth in Jammu and Kashmir. The reality is that in the last 10 years, the youth of the entire country have been pushed into darkness, and Modi ji himself is responsible for this," Mr Kharge alleged. He said that PM Modi has given nothing to the

'Buy Made in India products' ■ Lauds Swachh Bharat Mission Mann Ki Baat celebrates spirit & strength of India, says Modi

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

As the monthly radio broadcast Mann Ki Baat completes 10 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday asserted that the radio broadcast has shown that people like positive developments and inspiring and encouraging stories. He called the listeners of the radio show the "real anchors". Describing the latest episode as an "emotional" episode, Mr Modi said the programme has become a unique platform that celebrates the spirit of India and showcases the collective strength of the nation.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the inauguration of various projects in New Delhi. — PTI

"The listeners of Mann Ki Baat are the real anchors of this show. A commonly held belief has become so ingrained that as long as there are no spicy or negative conver-

much... Whatever work is taking place in our society with a sense of collectiveness, it gets recognition through Mann Ki Baat," said Mr Modi. He also thanked the media for taking up issues highlighted in the radio show. The Prime Minister said the Make in India programme is also completing its 10 years and asserted that exports are rising in every sector and the rise in foreign direct investment (FDI) is a testimony to its success. It has helped local manufacturers a lot, he added.

The Prime Minister urged people to buy "Made in India" products in the coming festival season. "This (Make in India) campaign has provided an opportunity to people of every class to showcase their talent... The continual rise of FDI in the

Participate in 'Create in India' challenges: PM

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

Noting that in these changing times, the nature of jobs is changing and new sectors are emerging, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged creators to participate in the "25 Challenges" under the theme "Create in India" organised by the ministry of information and broadcasting. In his radio broadcast Mann Ki Baat Mr Modi emphasised upon the rapidly changing nature of jobs and the growing opportunities in creative sectors such as gaming, filmmaking etc.

Udhayanidhi is deputy CM, Senthil back as TN mantri

N. RAVIKUMAR CHENNAI, SEPT. 29

The newly-elevated deputy chief minister of Tamil Nadu Udhayanidhi Stalin on Sunday vowed to answer his critics with a good performance in his new responsibility on a day when chief minister M.K. Stalin effected a major reshuffle in his Cabinet, inducting four new ministers and dropping as many.

The DMK youth wing leader said he welcomed greetings as well as the criticism for his elevation to the new post. He was speaking with the media in the morning at Marina after paying floral tributes to the memorials of DMK founder C.N. Annadurai and former chief minister M. Karunanidhi.

In the afternoon, governor R.N. Ravi administered the oath of office and secrecy to V. Senthil Balaji, Govi Chezhian, R. Rajendran and S.M. Nasar.

A Raj Bhavan release later said the subject allocation and designation of the newly-sworn ministers were approved by the governor on the recommendation of the chief minister. Mr Balaji, who was recently granted bail by the Supreme Court in a money laundering case, returns to electricity, prohibition and excise portfolios that he was holding earlier. Mr Balaji had spent 471 days



Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde with his deputy Devendra Fadnis during the inauguration of the southern extension of Pune Metro Phase-1 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday. ■ Report on Page 4 — PTI

No rift in Cong: Hooda claims Haryana is set to vote out BJP

'MLAs, party high command will decide on CM pick'

ASHHAR KHAN NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

After a decade of being out of power in Haryana, former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda is making a concerted bid for power. Speaking to The Asian Age, Mr Hooda said that the Haryana Assembly elections will end the BJP's "divisive" politics and shatter the arrogance of the saffron party leaders.



Bhupinder Singh Hooda

Exuding confidence of a Congress victory in the state, Mr Hooda said, "This election will have a direct impact on national politics. The BJP received a huge setback in the Lok Sabha elections. This will deliver another solid punch on their divisive and anti-people agenda. The arrogance of the BJP

and their leaders in the state will be shattered by the people of Haryana."

Mr Hooda asserted that there is no infighting within the Haryana Congress and called it a creation of the media and the Opposition parties. Claiming that the Congress will win a comfortable majority in the state, he outlined the six guarantees, including reverting to the old pension scheme and the legal guarantee for MSP that the Congress will give as

soon as it comes to power.

On the issue of who will be the chief minister if Congress wins Haryana polls, Mr Hooda said that the elected MLAs and the high command will decide on the name of the CM. The people of Haryana are intelligent; they will not waste their vote on vote cutters; the BJP's intentions are known to the people of the state.

The Congress has launched a blitzkrieg in the last week of campaigning ahead of the state elections. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, Lok Sabha Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi and general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra are all campaigning in the state.

■ 'People will elect Cong back in Haryana': Page 3

42 missing, 111 hurt; 20K personnel mobilised for rescue op Floods wreak havoc in Nepal, 170 dead

Kathmandu, Sept. 29: The death toll from rain-triggered floodings and landslides across Nepal climbed to 170 on Sunday, the police said. Large swathes of eastern and central Nepal have been inundated since Friday, with flash floods reported in parts of the country.



A flood-affected area following heavy rainfall in Kathmandu on Sunday. — PTI

According to the police, so far 42 people have been killed due to disaster-related incidents in Kathmandu Valley. According to the sources, 42 people are missing in floods, landslides and inundation, while 111 peo-

ple have been injured. National highways have been blocked since

Saturday, with hundreds of people stranded on various highways due to land-

Kejriwal woos Haryana with free electricity, jobs, schools

'Was jailed because BJP is scared of AAP, my work'

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

In poll-bound Haryana, AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday announced five guarantees, which include free 24x7 electricity and a monthly allowance of ₹1,000 to every woman above 18 years of age, to the voters. At rallies in Gurugram and Rewari, the former Delhi chief minister claimed that no government in Haryana will be formed without the AAP support and asserted that all its five guarantees will be fulfilled by the new government.

Mr Kejriwal, who was rallying for AAP candidates from Gurugram's Badshahpur Bir Singh Sarpanch and Satish Yadav from Rewari, asserted that only his party can give free electricity in the state. "Only the AAP can reduce your

RSS drives outreach to win back rural votes in Haryana

SHASHI BHUSHAN NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

Realising the importance of winning rural votes in the next month's Haryana Assembly polls for the BJP to form the government for the third time in a row, the RSS has launched an outreach programme for rural voters in the state.

The rural voter outreach programme is focused on mobilising grassroots workers and leaders to

create an atmosphere in favour of the saffron party candidates ahead of the voting for Haryana Assembly polls on October 5. The outreach programme also focuses on building a pro-government narrative to beat the anti-incumbency of 10 years. The BJP acknowledges that there is visible resentment among rural voters against the incumbent government.

electricity bills to zero," he said. Targeting the BJP, he said that while the AAP-ruled Delhi and Punjab enjoy free, round-the-clock electricity, the BJP-ruled states suffer under the costliest power.

Announcing his five guarantees to the people of Haryana, Mr Kejriwal reiterated that these are my guarantees, not the fake ones made by the other political parties. He said: "The first guarantee is free round-the-clock

Another top leader of Hezbollah killed after Israeli strikes

Jerusalem: Sept. 29: The Israeli military said Sunday it has killed another high-ranking Hezbollah official in an airstrike as the Lebanese militant group was reeling from a string of devastating blows and the killing of its overall leader, Hassan Nasrallah.

The military said Nabil Kaouk, the deputy head of Hezbollah's central council, was killed on Saturday. Hezbollah confirmed his death, making him the seventh senior Hezbollah leader slain in Israeli strikes in a little over a week. They include founding members who had evaded death or detention for decades.

The Israeli military said it carried out another targeted strike on Beirut later on Sunday, with details to follow. Hezbollah had earlier confirmed that Ali Karaki, another senior commander, died in Friday's strike that

killed Nasrallah. The Israeli military said earlier that Karaki was killed in the airstrike, which targeted an underground compound in Beirut where Nasrallah and other senior Hezbollah figures were meeting.

Israel says at least 20 other Hezbollah militants were killed in the strike, including two close associates of Nasrallah, one of whom was in charge of his security detail. White House spokesman John Kirby said that Israel's airstrikes had "wiped out" Hezbollah's command structure, but he warned the group will work quickly to rebuild it.

Terrorist killed in J&K's Kathua, fresh encounter in Rajouri dist

AGE CORRESPONDENT JAMMU, SEPT. 29

As a fierce gunfight between militants and the security forces in the Billawar area of Jammu and Kashmir's frontier Kathua district continued on the second consecutive day on Sunday, officials said that one of the holed-up militants has been killed and the operation has been stepped up to neutralise others. A firefight also broke out between the security forces and militants in the Thanamandi area of frontier Rajouri district in the evening. Officials in Jammu said that the forces launched a cordon-and-search operation in the hilly area on receiving information about the presence of militants. "Soon contact was established with the terrorists," they added.

Meanwhile, NC vice-president Omar Abdullah on Sunday accused the BJP for the deteriorating security situation in the Jammu region.

IN BRIEF

Criminal nabbed for attacking cops in '13

New Delhi: The Delhi police has arrested a member of a Mewat-based gang who along with his associates assaulted a police patrolling party 11 years ago in Kotla Mubarakpur, officials on Sunday said. The accused has been identified as Sonu (36), a resident of Nuh in Haryana, they said. "In the years 2012 and 2013, various gangs of Mewati region had created an atmosphere of sensation in the south and southeast districts of Delhi by committing a spate of crimes during the night hours. Several teams of police were constituted to track the movements of these gangs," a senior police officer said. The officer said that on April 29, 2013, the patrolling police team had found some suspicious movements. The team tried to check them but the gang members hit the police vehicle. The accused dragged the police officer's vehicle to some distance and fled. The police team sustained injuries during the incident. On Saturday, the team received information about Sonu. A team was formed and he was nabbed from Bisru Road in Punhana, said the officer.

2 Afghans held for running drug cartel

New Delhi: The Delhi police has arrested two Afghan nationals for allegedly running a drug syndicate, the police said on Sunday. The accused have been identified as Hashimi Mohammad Waris (19) and Abdul Nayib, they said. A raid was conducted on Saturday in Tilak Nagar in Delhi after they received a tip-off and arrested the two accused. They recovered 400 grams of heroin and 160 grams of cocaine from their possession, DCP Amit Goel said. Waris has been living in India on a refugee status since January 2020. His family is in Afghanistan. After arriving in India, he worked in a chemist shop as a helper in Vikasपुरi. He entered into the drugs business when his friend contacted him and asked him to collect the consignments from different people in Delhi and NCR.

Aurobindo Society trains 3.6L teachers

New Delhi: Project Inclusion, a key initiative of the Sri Aurobindo Society in collaboration with the SBI Foundation has trained 3,60,000 teachers and is now working with all 1,254 Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan schools across the country in order to create an environment for children with diverse learning needs to study and learn in regular classrooms. An event to mark the completion of the three-year training programme was attended by commissioner, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, Nidhi Pandey, member secretary, NCTE, Kesang Yangzom Sherpa, chief program officer, Project Inclusion, Dr Simmi Mahajan and SBI Foundation's Radhika Purohit, among others.

DMRC ADOPTS 70 CLEANLINESS TARGET UNITS

New Delhi: The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on Sunday said it has adopted 70 cleanliness target units outside its premises for a cleaner environment near stations, depots and residential colonies. The DMRC is actively participating in the 'Swachhata Hi Seva' initiative on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Swachh Bharat Mission by organising various activities across the Metro stations, residential colonies, construction sites and depots, a statement said. The DMRC employees, their family members, construction site workers etc. participated in 'shram daan' at about 110 locations to support the 'Jan Andolan' movement for a cleaner India, it said. "A zero-waste street food fest was also organised at the Noida staff quarters. Additionally, DMRC has adopted 70 cleanliness target units outside its premises for a cleaner environment near the Metro stations, depots and residential colonies," the statement said. To mark the campaign on Sunday, the DMRC also hosted a cultural program with live music performances by the employees and residents of the DMRC's staff quarters.

'Damaged PWD roads to be repaired, mantris to start field inspection today'**Pothole-free Delhi by Oct-end: Atishi**AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

Delhi will be free of potholes after all the damaged public works department (PWD) roads are repaired by the end of October, chief minister Atishi said on Sunday.

In a press briefing, Atishi said she and all the Delhi government ministers will start field inspection of roads across the city from Monday to assess the extent of damage and the repair needed.

A comprehensive review of a 1,400-km stretch of PWD roads in the city was done in a meeting chaired by her in the presence of all ministers and officials of PWD, the chief minister said.

It was decided that from Monday onwards all ministers will inspect roads in their designated areas for a week and identify if any of them need repair, she said.

The chief minister will inspect the PWD roads in south and southeast Delhi, ministers Saurabh Bharadwaj in east Delhi, Gopal Rai in northeast Delhi, Kailash Gahlot in west and southwest Delhi,



Delhi chief minister Atishi greets Justice Manmohan after he took oath as the chief justice of the Delhi high court during a ceremony at the Raj Niwas in New Delhi on Sunday. Lieutenant-governor V.K. Saxena is also seen. — PTI

Imran Hussain in New Delhi and central Delhi and Mukesh Ahlawat in north and northwest Delhi.

After one week of inspection, it will be decided which roads need "complete repair", "partial repair" and which need to be rebuilt. Repair works will begin the week after the inspection, Atishi

said. Atishi said she expected to provide a "pot-hole-free Delhi" by the end of October as was desired by the AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal. The chief minister was handed over a letter by Mr Kejriwal during the Assembly session on Friday, requesting her to repair the damaged roads

in the city. The chief minister said that the roads were damaged in the city because of work undertaken by power discoms and the Delhi Jal Board, after which the repair work has not been done. According to the Chief Minister, the work of repairing roads will be entrusted in October.

36-yr-old dead after welding machine blows up, 3 injuredAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

A 36-year-old man died and three others sustained severe burn injuries after a welding machine exploded in Bharthal village of Dwarka on Sunday morning, officials said. The deceased has been identified as Maya Ram, a resident of Bijwasan area. The injured have been identified as Rakesh (32), Faiyaz (22), Sameer (23), they said, adding the injured are under treatment at the Safdarjung Hospital.

"We received a PCR call regarding some people getting injured due to a welding machine explosion while working in an oil tanker in the Bharthal village located near Sector 25 in Dwarka. A team was rushed to the spot and the injured were immediately hospitalised at the Indira Gandhi Hospital," a senior police officer said.

The injured were later referred to the Safdarjung Hospital, where Maya Ram succumbed to his injuries, the police said.

"Mobile crime team inspected the spot and teams have been formed to investigate the case. The police is under the process of registering an FIR," said the officer.

Cop dragged to death in road rageAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

Admonished for rash driving, a car driver allegedly hit a motorcycle-borne constable — disguised as a civilian to prevent burglaries — and dragged him for about 10 metres in outer Delhi early on Sunday, leading to his death, officials said.

The incident occurred around 2.15 am near Veena Enclave when 30-year-old Sandeep was going towards Railway Road from Nangloi police station during duty hours dressed in civilian clothes.

When he noticed a car being driven recklessly, Sandeep told the driver not to do so, deputy commissioner of police (outer) Jimmy Chiram said. Suddenly, the vehicle increased its speed and hit the constable's motorcycle from behind and dragged him for about 10 metres before hitting a parked car, he said.

Sandeep was immediately taken to Sonia Hospital and later shifted to Balaji Hospital in Paschim Vihar, where he was declared dead.

"CCTV footage showed that Sandeep took a left turn in the street and indicated the vehicle to slow down," the DCP said. Sandeep received head injuries that led to his death, Mr Chiram said.

A purported video of the incident surfaced on social media. As per the footage, two men on



A damaged car that was involved in an accident outside Nangloi police station in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

Delhi in panic due to recent firing incidents, AAP leaders target L-GAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

Questioning the role and priorities of lieutenant-governor V.K. Saxena amidst rising law and order concerns, AAP minister Saurabh Bharadwaj on Sunday claimed that there is an atmosphere of panic in the national capital.

"Delhi has 209 police stations. Why doesn't the L-G visit them? Whenever there is work related to the

another motorcycle were seen behind the car, who stopped their vehicle and went to check on the constable. The police said a case under Section 103 (murder) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) is registered and an investigation has been taken up.

"We have formed multiple teams to investigate the matter and to nab the two accused persons who are absconding," the DCP said. "Sandeep is survived by his mother, wife and a five-year-old son. The Delhi police is saddened by the departure of a family member in such tragic circumstances," he added.

Municipal Corporation of Delhi, he goes with the commissioner, and for public works department matters, he takes the Secretary along," he alleged.

Mr Bharadwaj further said "For Delhi Jal Board issues, he will take all three involved. He inspects the sites, makes remarks, takes photos, and claims the work was done under his direction, even though it is the Delhi government's responsibility."

Manmohan takes oath as HC CJ

New Delhi, Sept. 29: Justice Manmohan on Sunday took oath as the chief justice of the Delhi high court. Lieutenant-governor Vinai Kumar Saxena administered the oath to the 61-year-old judge at a ceremony at the Raj Niwas, the L-G's secretariat.

The ceremony was attended by several dignitaries, including Delhi chief minister Atishi.

After the elevation of then Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma to the Supreme Court, Justice Manmohan was appointed as the acting chief justice of the high court here on November 9, 2023.

Justice Manmohan is the son of late Jagmohan, a famous bureaucrat-turned politician who also served as the governor of Jammu and Kashmir and the lieutenant-governor of Delhi.

3 men killed in mishap on Delhi-Meerut Expressway

Ghaziabad (UP), Sept. 29: Three men were killed when their scooter rrammed into a stationary truck on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway here on Sunday, the police said.

The incident occurred around 3 am, when Vikas alias Bittoo (21), Manmohan alias Anshu (30) hailing from Delhi's Trilokpur and Vipin Bhatt (25) from Delhi's Ashok Nagar were en route to Ghaziabad, Masuri assistant commissioner of police (ACP) Siddhartha Gautam said.

They were speeding and when they reached near the Masuri area their vehicle rrammed into a stationary truck due to which they sustained severe injuries, Mr Gautam said.

The trio was taken to a community health centre where doctors declared them dead, the ACP said.

The officer said plying of two wheelers was restricted by the police a long time ago.

A probe is on in the matter, he added. — PTI

BJP leaders gather in Raj to chalk out Delhi poll roadmap

New Delhi, Sept. 29: The two-day "Chintan Baithak" of the extended core committee of the Delhi BJP held at Ranthambhore in Rajasthan concluded on Sunday, with a resolution to better the result in the upcoming Assembly polls. A collective decision was made in the two days 'Chintan Baithak' that the Delhi BJP will contest the 2025 Assembly elections with the aim of performing better than the Lok Sabha polls, state president Virendra Sachdeva said in a statement.

The BJP won all the seven parliamentary constituencies in Delhi in the elections in this year. The party got more votes than the AAP and its alliance partners Congress in 52 out of 70 Assembly segments that comprise the seven Lok Sabha seats.

"This sentiment was clearly reflected in the results of the Lok Sabha elections, when the BJP won in 52 assembly constituencies, including the eight reserved for Scheduled Castes," Mr Sachdeva said. — PTI



Virendra Sachdeva

In the meeting held at Ranthambhore on September 28-29, the discussions took place on strengthening the organisation before the Assembly elections, exposing the "corruption" of the AAP government and planning the media and social media strategy for the polls, the statement said.

All leaders present in the meeting were unanimous in their view that the people of Delhi are "fed up with the corruption and inefficiency" of the Aam Aadmi Party, it claimed.

Apart from the national leaders, including party general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santhosh, several top leaders of the Delhi BJP participated.

2 shooters of Gogi gang held in firing caseAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

Two alleged sharpshooters of the Gogi gang run by jailed gangsters Deepak Boxer and Anshu Lakra have been arrested for a firing incident outside a sweet shop in Nangloi in west Delhi related to an extortion bid, an official said on Sunday.

Three sensational incidents of firing occurred in the city on Saturday — at a car showroom in Naraina in west Delhi, a hotel in

southwest Delhi and the sweet shop, they said, adding that all are linked to extortion activities by the gangsters.

"Our team has arrested Hari Om (27), a resident of Rohini, and Jatinder (21), of Mundka. Both the accused fired gunshots at the sweet shop to extort money in the name of jailed gangsters Deepak Boxer and Anshu Lakra of the Gogi Gang," deputy commissioner of police (special cell) Pratiksha Godara said.

The two armed men on a motorcycle had threatened the shop owner with extortion slips that had photographs of gangsters Gogi and Kuldeep Fajja on one side and the names of jailed gangsters Deepak Boxer and Anshu Lakra on the other side.

"An FIR was registered and further investigation was taken up. The team identified the suspects as Hari Om and Jatinder. Despite conducting raids in Delhi and surrounding

Burari 2.0? Police to probe 'occult' link in VK deaths

Says will study 2018 Burari deaths

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

The Delhi police will study the 2018 Burari suicide case to see if there was any "occult practice" angle in the deaths of a man and his four daughters at a village in southwest Delhi's Vasant Kunj area. The case has raised concerns as the team found a red thread tied to the waist, hand and neck of the four girls.

A box of sweets was also recovered from the spot. According to the police, Heera Lal Sharma, who worked as a carpenter at the Indian Spinal Injury Centre in Vasant Kunj for the last 28 years, and his four daughters — Neetu (26), Nikki (24), Neeru (23) and Nidhi (20) — took their lives under a suicide pact.

The police said that Sharma was struggling with emotional and financial stress after his wife died last year due to cancer. The police said that they would study the 2018 Burari suicide case. In 2018, 11 family members, blindfolded and mouth-taped, were found dead at their residence in the Burari area of north Delhi.

"In this recent case, we found five dead bodies — a man and his four daughters, two of them differently-abled — in their rented accommodation. Forensic teams during the initial check found a red thread (kalawa/mauli) tied on the waist, hand and neck. Our teams will check the records of the Burari case to connect the dots of this

THE CASE had raised concerns as the team found a red thread tied to the waist, hand and neck of the four girls. A box of sweets was also recovered from the spot.

suicide," the police said. "So far we got to know that Sharma had not spoken to anyone in the last nine months. He and his daughters were rarely seen outside. After his wife's death, the family had disconnected from everyone," a senior police officer said.

"The team recovered a box of sweets from the house and will also reach the sweets shop to check CCTV footage to know about his route, from where he purchased the celphos (poison) and why he took this extreme step," the officer said.

Sharma lived at a residential complex on the third floor of a four-storey building in Rangpuri village. Each floor houses eight flats and a majority of them were on rent, the officer said. The bodies, found on Friday afternoon, did not have any injury marks.

The police found three packets of Celphos poison, five glasses and a spoon containing a suspicious liquid from the house. The neighbours claimed they last saw Sharma and his daughters on Tuesday. CCTV footage of the day has also been recovered from outside the lane in which Sharma was seen going into the house with a packet in his hand.

AAP moves SC over standing committee member's electionAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has approached the Supreme Court challenging the election held for a member of the standing committee of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi.

The move came after Delhi chief minister Atishi accused the BJP of "murdering" democracy and claimed that the election held on September 27 was "illegal and unconstitutional".

The BJP won the last vacant seat of the MCD's 18-member standing committee unopposed as the councillors of the ruling AAP abstained from voting.

The BJP recently moved the apex court seeking an urgent hearing on its plea to initiate contempt proceedings against Delhi mayor

Shelly Oberoi over the election to fill the vacancy in the MCD's standing committee.

Addressing a press conference on Saturday, Atishi had said the AAP would approach the Supreme Court against the election.

"The country runs by the Constitution and laws, not by hooliganism. So the BJP should stop murdering democracy," she had said, adding the standing committee member's election was held in violation of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957.

According to rules, only the mayor can decide the date and place for the election of the MCD standing committee members and only the mayor can preside over a meeting of the MCD councillors for the election, the chief minister had said.

Over 87,000 challans, 3 lakh notices for jumping red lightAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

The Delhi traffic police has issued over 87,000 challans and more than three lakh notices for red light violations this year till September 15, as per the official data. According to the police, challans are issued by the traffic personnel on-site while notices are generated online through the traffic violation detection cameras.

The data showed that a total of 87,430 challans for red light violations were recorded this year till September 15 compared

to 66,774 in 2023 and 67,462 in 2022.

The highest numbers of 17,741 challans were issued in the New Delhi district, followed by 11,211 in south, 10,109 in west, 8,719 in southeast and 6,790 in southwest.

Among the 15 police districts in Delhi, the least numbers of 1,140 challans were reported in the northeast district, the data said.

Additionally, 3,12,541 notices for red light violations were issued till September 15 this year against 5,90,227 in 2023 and 10,11,028 in 2022, the data stated.



AIIMS students stage a protest to highlight their ongoing struggle for justice and resolution of strike-related concerns at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

FM must quit over poll bonds: Congress

New Delhi: A day after a case was lodged against finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman and others on a complaint relating to the electoral bonds scheme, the Congress on Sunday upped an attack on the BJP and demanded her resignation for "undermining democracy". The Congress also reiterated its demand for a Supreme Court monitored inquiry through an SIT into the electoral bonds scheme. Congress spokespersons Abhishek Manu Singhvi and Jairam Ramesh charged that four ways were used to extort money through the "conspiracy of electoral bonds". These were "prepaid bribery, postpaid bribery, post-raid bribery and through farzi companies" and said the finance minister should immediately resign as she is "guilty politically, legally and morally". The Congress alleged that other BJP leaders too are involved in this. "The finance minister cannot do this on her own. We know who is number one and number two," Mr Singhvi said.

France submits final price offer for 26 jets

New Delhi: France has submitted final price offer for the 26 Rafale Marine fighter jets which India is looking to buy for its navy. Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) had given initial nod to procure 26 Rafale Marine fighter jets for Indian Navy, and three scorpene submarines from France. French firm Dassault Aviation's Rafale Marine fighter jets will be deployed on India's indigenously developed aircraft carrier *INS Vikrant*. In recent years, France has emerged as an important defence partner for India. In 2016, India had signed a \$59,000 crore deal for 36 Rafales for Indian Air Force which have been deployed at Ambala and Hasimara air bases.

BJP neta draws flak for defiling prasad

Bhopal: A local BJP leader has drawn flak for throwing the "leftover" split grains, (daal) after tasting a few of them, into the grinder of the "laddu" making unit in the Mahakaleswar temple in Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh, forcing him to apologise for his actions. A video of the incident went viral on social media on Sunday. In the video, BJP's Ujjain district unit general secretary Sanjay Agrawal was seen picking a few pieces of "daal" from the grinder of the "laddu", making unit and then tasting a few grains before throwing the remaining back on the grinder. State minister Gautam Tetwal was seen with him. The viral video has triggered row with the Congress slamming the BJP leader for "defiling" the offering meant for Lord Mahakal before it was prepared.

NITISH GOVT RUN BY 4 EX-BABUS, ALLEGES KISHOR

Patna, Sept. 29: Political strategist-turned-activist Prashant Kishor on Sunday launched a scathing attack on Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar, alleging that the state government was being "run by four retired bureaucrats", and that the CM was in the "grip of these former babus". Addressing a press conference here, three days ahead of floating his own political party, he vowed to dislodge the JD(U) president from power. Mr Kishor charged the longest-serving CM of Bihar with running his government through a handful of "retired bureaucrats". He also claimed that the 2025 Bihar Assembly polls would be fought on the issue of "three S" — "sarab" (liquor), "survey" (land) and "smart meter". He asserted that these issues would prove to be the "final nail in the coffin for the current regime". "The Nitish Kumar government is being run by four retired bureaucrats. The CM is in the grip of these babus. Neither Kumar nor these bureaucrats are aware of the problems being faced by the people. Mr Kumar has changed now. He has lost his morality," alleged Mr Kishor. — PTI



Prashant Kishor

■ Ex-CM says no infighting in party, cadre united in defeating BJP, leaders campaigning together to bag win

Hooda: People will vote Cong to power in Haryana

As the Congress emerges as the front-runner in the Haryana Assembly elections, former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda stands at the forefront of the Congress party's resurgence, poised to reclaim the state after nearly a decade in opposition. In an interview with ASHAR KHAN, Mr Hooda outlines the party's vision for Haryana, and addresses the challenges such as economic recovery, social welfare and party unity.

Excerpts:
After almost a decade of being out of power, the Congress is making a strong comeback. What are you offering to the people of Haryana?

Well, our proven track record. From 2004 to 2014, when the Congress was in power, Haryana ranked number one in economic,

welfare, and sports indices. In the last 10 years, the BJP governments have failed Haryana. The Congress gave loan waivers, electricity bill waivers and MSP to farmers, while the BJP gave them lathis, batons, and bullets. We created over two lakh permanent jobs for youth, but under the BJP, they've faced paper leaks, recruitment scams, and the contract system like Agniveer.

Can you specifically tell what the Congress government is offering?

The Congress has guaranteed a monthly pension of ₹6,000 for the elderly, disabled, and widows. We have promised to reinstate the old pension scheme and offer gas cylinders for ₹500. Women aged 18 to 60 will receive ₹2,000 monthly. The party promised to "secure the future of the youth" and we are commit-



Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda during a public meeting in Haryana's Bhiwani district.

ted to a "drug-free Haryana". We have pledged to create 2 lakh jobs. Additionally, we're offering 300 units of free electricity and free medical care worth up to ₹25 lakh.

For the agricultural sector, we are committed to ensuring a legal guarantee for MSP. The Congress will also conduct a caste sur-

vey and raise the creamy layer income limit from ₹6 lakh to ₹10 lakh. Our manifesto is comprehensive, with guarantees that address the real needs of Haryana's people.

There is a lot of chatter about the infighting within the Congress. How do you respond?
There is no infighting. We

are all fighting the BJP unitedly. There is a dirty tricks department of the BJP that only spreads misinformation about the Congress and its leaders instead of looking at their own party.

The fact is that the Congress has very able leaders in the state who have significant influence. So, naturally, there is much more of a limelight on Congress. All the leaders of the party are campaigning together. The other day, Rahul Gandhi campaigned in Haryana and you could see that all the party leaders were on the stage.

Are you the chief minister's face?

As you are well aware the elected MLAs pick the chief minister. The observers will convey the decision to the high command. But I want to reiterate that neither I am tired,

nor retired. All I want is that Haryana and its people should be saved from the BJP government. The BJP is on the backfoot with nothing to show for its last 10 years in power. They have made Haryana number one in unemployment, corruption, drug addiction, inflation, and crime.

How confident are you of a Congress win in Haryana?

I've been travelling across the state, and the support has been tremendous from all sections. Based on this, I can say the people have decided — "Abki baar, Congress ki sarkar". We are heading toward a massive victory. Also, this election will also have a significant impact on national politics. The BJP faced a major setback in the Lok Sabha elections, and this will deal another blow to their divisive and anti-people agenda. The arrogance

of the BJP and its leaders in Haryana will be shattered by the people of the state.

This is almost a five-cornered election. Don't you think anti-BJP votes will be divided?

The people of Haryana are very intelligent. They will not vote for vote-cutters. We saw this in the Lok Sabha elections as well and what happened? People will not waste their votes and it is a direct fight between the Congress and the BJP. The BJP has deliberately propped up candidates in several constituencies to split votes and hurt Congress but voters will not be swayed. It is there for you to see. Gopal Kanda, for instance, has openly stated that he would support the BJP upon winning. What other evidence is needed? People have understood their game.

Waqf Bill will be passed in Winter Session, says Shah

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday vowed that the Waqf Amendment Bill will be passed in the Winter Session later this year and those who have "problems with it will be straightened out after the law is passed".

Mr Shah, who addressed rallies in Bashaahpur and Indri, stepped up its attack on Congress in poll-bound Haryana and alleged that Rahul Gandhi's election guarantees have come a cropper in states such as Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka, where the grand old party is in power. Criticising the previous Congress government in the state, Mr Shah further accused that "dealers, dalals and damads used to rule during (Bhupinder) Hooda government's time and corruption was rampant". Referring to the Waqf Bill, Mr Shah said, "You have a problem with the current legislation on Waqf Board... We will amend it in the Winter Session of Parliament."

Addressing his first rally of the day in support of BJP candidate Rao Narbir Singh in Gurgaon's Badshahpur, the home minister said at

BJP expels Ranjit Chautala, 7 others for 6 years in Haryana

Chandigarh, Sept. 29: Former Haryana minister Ranjit Singh Chautala and seven other leaders were expelled by the BJP for six years on Sunday, after they decided to contest the October 5 state Assembly polls as independent candidates.

The Haryana BJP said its chief Mohan Lal Badoli has expelled these leaders for six years with immediate effect. Besides Mr Chautala, Sandeep Garg (contesting the polls from Ladwa), Zile Ram Sharma

(Assandh), Devender Kadian (Ganaur), Bachan Singh Arya (Safidon), Radha Ahlawat (Meham), Naveen Goel (Gurugram) and Kehar Singh Rawat (Hathin) have been expelled from the BJP.

Mr Chautala decided to quit the BJP after he was denied the poll ticket from Rania, the seat he represented in the Assembly when he was an Independent MLA. He quit the membership of the Assembly before joining the BJP ahead of the LS polls this year. — PTI

the time of polls the Congress makes tall promises. However, it has failed to fulfil poll promises in Himachal, Karnataka and Telangana. On the other hand, the BJP does not make any promises it cannot fulfil.

"Rahul Baba and company cannot undertake development but the double-engine government of the BJP will ensure Haryana's development," he said, adding "We will secure the country's border, we will protect reservation and never allow Article 370 to return."

Mr Shah said every 10th soldier in the Army comes from Haryana. From Indira Gandhi to Manmohan Singh, the Congress did not fulfil the demand of One Rank One Pension and it was the Narendra Modi government that gave One Rank One Pension in 2015, the minister said.

Attacking Rahul Gandhi over Agniveer scheme, the Union home minister dubbed him a "lying machine" and said the Agniveer scheme has been introduced to ensure a youthful profile of the armed forces.



Congress candidate Vinesh Phogat interacts with people during a rally in Kishanpura village, Haryana, on Sunday.

RSS drives rural outreach for BJP's Haryana hatrick

SHASHI BHUSHAN NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

Realising the importance of winning rural votes in the next month Haryana Assembly polls for the BJP to form the government for the third time in row, the RSS has launched an outreach programme for rural voters in the state. The rural voter outreach programme focussed on mobilising grassroots workers and leaders to create an atmosphere in favour of the saffron party candidates before the voting for Haryana Assembly polls on October 5. The outreach programme also

focuses on building a pro-government narrative to beat the anti-incumbency of 10 years.

Sources said that the party leaderships have realised that it will be difficult to score a hat-trick in Haryana without winning the support of rural voters where the party has witnessed visible resentment against the incumbent government.

A party insider claimed that the BJP witnessed a significant fall in its vote share in Haryana during both the Lok Sabha and the 2019 Assembly polls, especially in rural areas.

As polling is almost a week away, the party has

explored various strategies to stop decline in its voteshare especially among rural voters, and one important step is an outreach programme backed by the RSS.

The BJP voteshare has fallen from 43 per cent in 2014 to 36.49 per cent in 2019 in the Assembly polls, while in Lok Sabha polls its vote share dropped from 58.21 per cent in 2019 to 46.10 per cent in 2024.

Sources claimed the BJP's decline in voteshare in the recent Lok Sabha polls was Congress' gain, as its voteshare increased from 28.51 per cent in 2019 to 43.68 per cent.

LJP-RV to fight J'khand polls in alliance or alone: Chirag

AMRESH SRIVASTAVA NEW DELHI/RANCHI, SEPT. 29

Ahead of Assembly polls in Jharkhand, cracks seem to appear in NDA fold as Union minister and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) president Chirag Paswan on Sunday said his party would contest Jharkhand Assembly polls and discussion was underway for all options, including contesting the election in alliance with the BJP or alone.

Union minister Chirag Paswan's statement came a day after Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is BJP's election co-incharge for Jharkhand elections, said the saffron party would contest the Assembly polls in alliance with AJSU and Janata Dal (United).

LJP (Ram Vilas) is a part of the NDA government in the Centre.

"The LJP state unit is discussing all options including contesting the polls in alliance or alone," the Union food processing industries minister told media at Ranchi's Birsas Munda airport enroute to Dhanbad.

He also said that his party has a strong mass base in Jharkhand.

"The party has developed a strong mass base in the state," Mr Paswan asserted.

■ 1st list for Maha polls likely during Navratri: Sena-UBT MVA aims to finalise seats by Oct. 1

BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, SEPT. 29

The talks of the seat-sharing arrangement in the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in Maharashtra for the upcoming Vidhan Sabha polls have reached the final stage and the seat-sharing formula will be finalised by October 1.

Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole on Sunday said that the MVA will resume its talks for the Assembly polls on September 30.

"MVA leaders will meet on September 30. The talks will also continue on October 1 to finalise the seat-sharing formula," Mr Patole said.

The MVA, which comprises the Shiv

MVA has to form govt in Maha 'at any cost': Pawar

Baramati, Sept. 29: NCP(SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday said the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) will conclude its seat-sharing talks in 8 to 10 days for the upcoming Maharashtra Assembly elections and asserted the Opposition alliance has to strive to come to power in the state "at any cost".

Targeting those who left his party, Mr Pawar claimed not even a handful of them will win the state polls.

Sena(UBT), Sharad Pawar-led NCP(SP) and the Congress, had defeated the

Elections to the 288-member state Assembly are likely to be held in mid-November, the NCP(SP) chief said, while addressing his party workers in Pune's Baramati town.

Winnability will be the only merit for the selection of candidates, the former Union minister said.

In a coalition, adjustments and flexible approach are a must, Mr Pawar added. — PTI

ruling Mahayuti alliance, which includes the BJP, Eknath Shinde-led Shiv

Sena and the Ajit Pawar's NCP, heavily in the Lok Sabha polls by winning 30 out of 48 seats in Maharashtra.

"In Vidhan Sabha polls too, we will fight as MVA. There is no difference of opinion on this issue," Mr Patole said.

Meanwhile, the Shiv Sena(UBT) has announced that its first list of candidates for the Vidhan Sabha polls might be released during Navratri, after the finalisation of the seat-sharing formula of the MVA.

Ambadas Danve, Leader of the Opposition in the Maharashtra Assembly, said, "Once the seat-sharing formula among the MVA partners is finalised, we will announce the first list."

Prakash Karat will be CPM's interim leader

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) has for the time being shelved the plan to declare a new general secretary to replace Sitaram Yechury who died recently. The party during its central committee meeting held at Surjeet Bhavan in New Delhi on Sunday decided that Prakash Karat will be the coordinator of the polit bureau and the central committee, as an interim arrangement until the 24th party congress to be held in April 2025 at Madurai.

"This decision was taken due to the sad and sudden demise of the sitting general secretary of the

CPI(M), Sitaram Yechury," CPI(M) said in a statement. This is the first time a sitting general secretary of the party has died.

Mr Karat was general secretary from 2005 to 2015. Following the demise of Mr Yechury several names are doing rounds for his replacement. These include that of Brinda Karat, Nilotpal Basu, M.A. Baby and B.V. Raghavulu.

However, given her age — she will be 77 next month — Mrs Karat may not be the obvious choice as the party usually does not appoint anyone as general secretary over the age of 75.



Prakash Karat

J&K Ph-3 polls: BJP may gain ground in Dogra heartland

YUSUF JAMEEL JAMMU, SEPT. 29

After a lack of momentum in its initial campaigning, and facing difficulty in exploring effective public outreach strategies, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has gained ground in the Dogra heartland, and will be a likely gainer over the National Conference-Congress combine and other competitors in the third and final phase of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections, the voting for which will take place on Tuesday. The local watchers say

that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's last election rally held in Jammu's Maulana Azad Stadium in the weekend is likely to act as a catalyst for the BJP in the Dogra heartland. They maintain that Mr Modi played the Jammu "victim card" very well, by repeatedly asserting that people of the region have had more than enough unfair and discriminatory treatment during the previous governments.

He was discernibly referring to what is widely believed in the Dogra heartland the governments dominated by the

Kashmir Valley-centric political parties including NC and People's Democratic Party (PDP) that have allegedly been unjust to the region.

The Prime Minister made several other mentions to arouse the pride of the Dogras, such as accusing the leaders of these parties of attacking the Dogra legacy in their speeches, especially the Congress of insulting and defaming the last Dogra Maharaja Hari Singh, by calling him corrupt.

Apparently to appeal the Hindu psyche, he also said that he was speaking in

the city of temples. "You have grown up under the shadow of Mata (Vaishno Devi), the results of these elections will start pouring in during the Shardiya Navratri and Vijaydashami to be observed on October 12, which will set off shubb shuruat (auspicious beginning)," Mr Modi said. "Don't miss this opportunity. Don't make a mistake. The BJP will remove your agony. J&K will have the first BJP majority government which will alleviate all pains of Jammu," the PM added.



Iltija Mufti being greeted by a supporter during an election roadshow at Gulmarg in Baramulla district on Sunday.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Railways plans 992 spli Kumbh trains

New Delhi: The railway ministry is making elaborate arrangements for the Kumbh Mela and has plans to run 992 special trains for the mega religious congregation to be held in Prayagraj in January. Besides running special trains, the ministry has reportedly earmarked Rs 933 crore to create and upgrade various infrastructure and amenities for passengers. Also doubling of railway tracks at a cost of Rs 3,700 crore in the Prayagraj Division and adjoining areas is being done at a fast pace for smooth movement of trains. Railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and his two deputies Ravneet Singh Bittu and V. Somanna held meetings on Saturday to review the arrangements for handling the huge rush of devotees during the event set to begin on January 12. "They also hold regular video conferences with senior railway officials, including general managers, of the zones concerned to take stock of the preparatory activities," a senior officer said.

CISF takes charge of Satluj project

New Delhi: The CISF on Sunday took over the security of the Beas Satluj Link (BSL) Project, Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) located at Sundernagar in Mandi (Himachal Pradesh), with a sanctioned strength of 235 personnel. This unit is headed by an officer of deputy commandant rank. With this induction, the total number of installations under CISF security has risen to 359 across the country. The Beas Satluj Link Project plays a crucial role in managing water resources in the region. By diverting water from the Beas River into the Satluj River through two tunnels and an open channel, the project enhances power generation and increases the storage capacity of the Bhakra Reservoir. This reservoir is one of the largest and most vital in northern India, providing irrigation, flood control, and drinking water to millions.

5 jawans injured in C'garh Naxal blast

Raipur: Five CRPF personnel were on Sunday injured when an improvised explosive device (IED), planted by Maoists, went off in Bijapur district under south Bastar in Chhattisgarh, police said. The incident took place when the personnel of CRPF's 153rd battalion were out on a demining exercise near their Chinnagelur camp under Terram police station, police said. According to the police, the jawans were trying to trace the IED after spotting a wire connected to it when it went off leading to splinter injuries to five of them. "The five injured CRPF personnel were admitted to the district hospital at Bijapur. They are out of danger now", Bijapur district additional superintendent of police (ASP) Chandrakant Gabrana said.

Modi highlights growing opening in gaming, filmmaking PM urges creators to join 'Create in India' challenge

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

Noting that in these changing times, the nature of jobs is changing and new sectors are emerging, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged creators to participate in the "25 Challenges" under the theme "Create in India" organised by the ministry of information and broadcasting. Addressing the 114th episode of monthly radio address "Mann Ki Baat", the Prime Minister emphasised upon the rapidly changing nature of jobs and the growing opportunities in creative sectors such as gaming, filmmaking etc. The Prime Minister underscored the immense potential of India's creative talents and said, "In these changing times, the nature of jobs is changing and new sectors are emerging. Such as gaming, animation, reel making, film making or poster making.

Modi lays foundation stone of ₹11K-cr projects in Maha

PRASAD PATIL MUMBAI, SEP. 28

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday virtually inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for various projects worth ₹11,200 crore in Maharashtra. He inaugurated Pune Metro's new underground section and laid the foundation stone for its 5.46 km long extension.

Addressing the occasion, the PM recalled the cancellation of his event in Pune due to bad weather two days ago and credited technology for the virtual event. Talking about Pune's progress and the pressure of the growing population, the PM said that the Eknath Shinde-led state government is working to modernise Pune's public transport.

active talents and said, "In these changing times, the nature of jobs is changing and new sectors are emerging. Such as gaming, animation, reel making, film making or poster making.

If you can perform well in any of these skills your talent can get a very big platform, if you are a part of a band or working for a community radio, then also there is a huge opportunity for you."

"In order to promote your talent and creativity, the ministry of information and broadcasting, government of India has started 25 challenges under the theme, 'Create in India'. You will surely find these challenges interesting. Some challenges even focus on music, education and even on anti-piracy," Mr Modi said. The Prime Minister noted that there are many professional organisations associated with this objective and are providing full support to these challenges. "In order to participate, you can log in to wavesindia.org. I specially urge the creators in the country to ensure participation and bring their creativity to the fore," the Prime Minister added.

Terrorist killed in Kathua, fresh encounter in Rajouri

BJP responsible for deteriorating security in Jammu: Omar

AGE CORRESPONDENT JAMMU, SEPT. 29

As a fierce gunfight between militants and the security forces in the Billawar area of Jammu and Kashmir's frontier Kathua district continued on the second consecutive day on Sunday, officials said that one of the holed-up militants has been killed and the operation has been stepped up to neutralise others. A firefight also broke out between the security forces and militants in the Thanamandi area of frontier Rajouri district in the evening. Officials in Jammu said that the security forces launched a cordon-and-search operation in the hilly area on receiving information about the presence of militants. "Soon contact was established with the terrorists," they added.

Meanwhile, National Conference (NC) vice-president and former chief minister Omar Abdullah on Sunday accused the BJP of being responsible for the deteriorating security situation in the Jammu region. "The rise in militancy and the increase in number of attacks across regions like Chenab, Pir Panchal, Reasi, Jammu, Samba and Kathua have occurred during the BJP's tenure. The overall security situation in the Jammu region has worsened. Also, the Modi government has failed to provide any meaningful development in J&K over the past 5-6 years. They have nothing to sell in the last five years, hence they are, day in and day out, attacking the National Conference and the Congress," he told reporters in Baramulla.

On Saturday evening, J&K police head constable Bashir Ahmed had laid down his life and two other police officials, including a DSP, were critically injured in the initial exchange of fire at Kog-Mandlia, a remote village of the Billawar tehsil of Kathua. J&K's outgoing DGP R.R. Swain while praising the valour of Bashir said that he fearlessly defended his community and the country, delivering a strong blow to the terrorists with his LMG before succumbing to his injuries. The DGP also prayed for the swift recovery of the injured personnel. Jammu's ADGP Anand Jain said that a cordon-and-search operation was launched in the village on Saturday after information about the presence of three to four foreign terrorists.

Centre not paying heed to floods in Bengal: Didi

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, SEPT. 29

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee described the flood situation in the northern districts of the state as "alarming" on Sunday before accusing the Centre of neglect. She later flew to take stock of the situation in north Bengal.



Mamata Banerjee

"North Bengal is under flood. Many districts like Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar have been affected," the CM said while leaving for Siliguri on Sunday afternoon. "Different areas in Bihar, Malda and Dakshin Dinajpur districts of Bengal will be affected in the near future due to heavy rain in catchment areas of the Koshi river in Nepal following the release of five cusec water. The same thing recently happened when water was released from the Damodar Valley Corporation," the CM added. "The TMC supremo also trained her guns on the Narendra Modi government. "The Centre is not discharging its role to help the state fight against the natural calamities. It has not taken up the maintenance work of Farakka Barrage for the last 20 years. As a result, its water-bearing capacity has reduced to a great extent despite our repeated reminders."



People take part in a half marathon organised by Himachal Pradesh police at Ridge in Shimla on Sunday.

Govt considering 3 bills to implement 1 nation, 1 poll

New Delhi, Sept. 29: The government is likely to bring three bills, including two to amend the Constitution, to put in place its plan to hold simultaneous elections. One of the proposed Constitution amendment bills, that deals with aligning the local bodies elections to that of the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies, will require an endorsement from at least 50 per cent of the states. Moving ahead with its "one nation, one election" plan, the government earlier this month accepted the recommendations of the high-level committee for holding simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha, state Assemblies and local bodies in a phased manner after a countrywide consensus-building exercise.

The proposed first constitutional amendment bill would make provisions for holding the Lok Sabha and state legislative Assembly elections together. Citing recommendations of the high-level committee, sources said the proposed bill would seek to amend Article 82A by adding sub-clause (1) relating to the "appointed date". It will also seek to insert sub-clause (2) to Article 82A relating to the end of terms of the Lok Sabha and state legislative Assemblies together. It also proposes amending Article 83(2) and inserting new sub-clauses (3) and (4) relating to the duration and dissolution of the Lok Sabha. It also has provisions related to the dissolution of the legislative Assemblies and amending Article 327 to insert the term "simultaneous elections". The recommendation said this bill would not require ratification by at least 50 per cent of the states. The proposed second Constitutional amendment bill will require ratification by at least 50 per cent of the state Assemblies as it will deal with matters relating to state affairs. It will seek to amend constitutional provisions relating to the preparation of electoral rolls by the Election Commission in consultation with state election commissions (SECs) for elections to local bodies. Constitutionally, the EC and SECs are separate bodies.

9 killed, 23 hurt in MP as bus rams into truck

CM assures best treatment, ex-gratia

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, SEPT. 29

At least nine people were killed and 23 others injured when a passenger bus rams into a stationary stone-laden truck near district headquarters of Maihar in Madhya Pradesh, police said on Sunday. The incident took place on national highway 30 in Nandan Vihar area, around 15 km from Maihar town, at around 11 pm on Saturday, police said. "While six people died on the spot, three others succumbed to injuries at a hospital in the neighbouring Satna city", Maihar district superintendent of police Sudhir Agrawal said. The bus carrying around 45 passengers was travelling from Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh to Nagpur in Maharashtra via Rewa in Madhya Pradesh when the accident took place. "The speeding bus rams into a stone-laden truck parked on the roadside and got entangled in it. Cutters were used to rescue the passengers out of the bus", the police officer said. The slain passengers included a four-year-old boy. Seven out of nine deceased passengers have so far been identified. Madhya Pradesh chief minister Mohan Yadav has expressed shock and sorrow over the tragic death of nine passengers in the accident and said that the local administration has been directed to provide proper medical facilities to the injured. He said that ex-gratia for the slain passengers would be provided as per the government rule.

that in view of the seriousness of the accusations he was facing, his custodial interrogation was inevitable for proper investigation of the crime. The high court had said since Mr Siddique's defence was "a total denial of the incident", his potency test was yet to be conducted and there being a "reasonable apprehension" that he may intimidate witnesses and tamper with evidence, "it was not a fit case to exercise the discretionary powers of the court" to grant him the relief.

Jamaican PM on 4-day visit from today; to meet Modi

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness will be on a four-day visit to India from September 30 to October 3. Although Prime Minister Modi and Mr Holness have met several times on the sidelines of multilateral meetings, this will be his first visit to India and also the first-ever bilateral visit of a Jamaican PM to India. "This visit is expected to bolster bilateral relations, enhance economic cooperation, and solidify the longstanding bonds between Jamaica and India," the ministry of external affairs (MEA) said while announcing the trip. Mr Holness will hold delegation-level talks with Mr Modi and call on President Droupadi Murmu and vice-president Jagdeep Dhankhar during his visit. "The visit will also provide an opportunity for Prime Minister Holness to meet with other dignitaries and interact with trade and industry leaders," the MEA said. Several MOUs are expected to be signed during the visit as the two sides discuss trade and investment. "India and Jamaica share strong historical and cultural linkages, reflected in their shared colonial past, values of democracy and freedom, and passion for cricket," the MEA said in a statement.

SC to hear today Malayalam actor plea against HC ruling

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

The Supreme Court is slated to hear on Monday the plea of Malayalam film actor Sidhique challenging the Kerala high court order denying him anticipatory bail in a rape case. A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Satish Chandra Sharma is scheduled to hear Mr Sidhique's plea. On September 24, the high court had rejected the anticipatory bail plea of Mr Sidhique in a rape case against him, saying

that in view of the seriousness of the accusations he was facing, his custodial interrogation was inevitable for proper investigation of the crime. The high court had said since Mr Siddique's defence was "a total denial of the incident", his potency test was yet to be conducted and there being a "reasonable apprehension" that he may intimidate witnesses and tamper with evidence, "it was not a fit case to exercise the discretionary powers of the court" to grant him the relief.

Govt nod to upgrade security infra along border with Pakistan

AMRESH SRIVATAVA NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

Amid a surge of militant attacks in the Jammu region, the Central government has given nod to the recommendations of a committee suggesting immediate upgrading of fencing and other security infrastructure in "vulnerable" stretches on Indo-Pak border. Recently, the Union home ministry had set up a committee to evaluate the existing vulnerability and security infrastructure along the 3,323 km Indo-Pak border, running from Jammu and Kashmir to Gujarat, Punjab, Rajasthan, the sources in the security set up said here on Sunday. Keeping focus on the Jammu area which has become the new infiltration zone along the India-Pak border, the sources further said that at least 15-20 vulnerable points in the Jammu region alone which needed to be plugged. "They also suggested proper scaling up of technology for better upkeep of fencing is the demand of the hour," a senior official deployed

in border management said. According to the sources, the deployment of a range of state-of-the-art surveillance technologies, thermal imagers, infra-red and laser-based intruder alarms, aerostats for aerial surveillance, unattended ground sensors that can help detect intrusion bids, radars, fibre-optic sensors and sonar systems for the riverine areas where fence cannot be installed. "Besides, frequent use of advanced technological equipment like hand held thermal imager, unmanned aerial vehicles, both hand held and stationary jammers to check the enemy drones and upgradation of intelligence setup needs to be deployed at earliest to counter militants/infiltrators from the hostile neighbour," the officials added. The sources also said that security officials have also suggested strengthening of the round-the-clock surveillance and patrolling on the borders and setting up of observation post.

Modi: Mann Ki Baat marks spirit of India

Continued from Page 1 country is narrating the success saga of Make in India..." he said. Referring to his recent visit to the US, Mr Modi said the return of nearly 300 antiquities to India is being widely talked about. When people start taking pride in their heritage, the world also respects their sentiments, he said, asserting that a large number of ancient artefacts have been returned to India by different countries in the last 10 years of his government. In the programme, Mr Modi highlighted the success of the Swachh Bharat Mission, lauding it as a great tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, who put special emphasis on cleanliness all his life. "On October 2, the Swachh Bharat Mission is completing 10 years. This is an occasion to commend those who turned it into a mass movement. It is also a befitting tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, who dedicated his entire life to this cause," he said. Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary falls on October 2. "Reduce, reuse and recycle" is now being talked about, he said. With India witnessing copious rains in the monsoon season, Mr Modi made a mention of efforts being made in different parts of the country to conserve water and lauded the exercise. He also mentioned efforts being made to preserve languages and dialects while mentioning that there are almost 20,000 languages and dialects in India. He also mentioned a campaign to preserve "Santhali" through digital innovation by Odisha's Ramjit Tudu.

Udhayanidhi is deputy CM

Continued from Page 1 in jail after being arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in the case related to a job scam that occurred when he was a minister in the J. Jayalalitha Cabinet during the 2011-16 period. Mr Chezhian becomes the minister for higher education, marking the appointment of a Dalit leader to the prestigious ministry for the first time in the state. Mr Rajendran will take care of the tourism ministry while Mr Nasar returns to the minorities welfare ministry, which he was holding when the DMK ministry took over in 2021. The chief minister, Udhayanidhi Stalin, whose designation was changed, and six other ministers whose portfolios were changed, attended the function at the Raj Bhavan along with the other ministers and the leaders of alliance parties. "This is not a post but an additional responsibility," said Udhayanidhi Stalin, who is the DMK youth wing secretary and minister for youth welfare and sports development. "This is an opportunity to work for the people. I accept both the greetings and the criticism. I will

reply to the criticism with my performance," he said. He thanked the chief minister for giving him the new role and expressed optimism that he will function well with the guidance of the CM and other senior ministers. Later, he went to the memorial of Dravidar Kazhagam (DK) founder E.V.R. Periyar and paid floral tributes. He also met the chief minister, DMK general secretary K. Duraimurugan, DK president K. Veeramani and deputy general secretary Kanimozhi in person and received their blessings.

impending Assembly elections. "The AAP is winning many seats and no government can be formed in Haryana without our support," he said. The AAP chief accused the BJP-led Central government of trying to "break" him during his time in jail and took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alleging that the BJP targeted him because of his political success in Delhi and Punjab. The AAP is contesting the 90-member Haryana Assembly polls alone. Mr Kejriwal exuded confidence about the party's poll prospects in the

Kharge falls ill at rally

Continued from Page 1 youth of India in the last 10 years. "Can you believe a person who cannot bring back your prosperity in 10 years?" he told the gathering. He also highlighted the unemployment issue, saying, "The highest unemployment rate in 45 years is in the Modi ji's tenure." In Prime Minister Modi and (Amit) Shah's minds, there is no intent to provide jobs, only to give speeches, take photos, and cut ribbons, he said. "In Jammu and Kashmir, 65 per cent of government positions are vacant. Jobs here are

being given to outsiders on a contractual and daily wage basis." "Even in AIIMS Jammu, people from Jammu haven't received jobs, according to the information I have," he noted. Hitting out at Prime Minister Modi, the Congress chief said, "You must have heard how many lies Modiji spoke when he came to Jammu and Kashmir (for campaigning)...how much he insulted the Congress, and the kind of language he used. This shows his nervousness because he can clearly see defeat in the polls." — PTI

Kejriwal woos Haryana with free electricity, jobs

Continued from Page 1 electricity supply; we will even waive outstanding bills. The second guarantee is to build excellent hospitals and mohalla clinics. The third guarantee is to establish excellent schools. The fourth is to provide a monthly allowance of ₹1,000 to every woman above 18 years of age, while the fifth is about employment. Giving Delhi's reference, where the AAP has been

in power since 2015, Mr Kejriwal said, "I have provided jobs to 12 lakhs youth. I know how to provide jobs and will ensure jobs for your children. While in Punjab, we have already provided 45,000 government jobs and arranged for 3.5-lakh private jobs." The AAP is contesting the 90-member Haryana Assembly polls alone. Mr Kejriwal exuded confidence about the party's poll prospects in the

The former Delhi chief minister also claimed the Central government is trying to stifle his welfare schemes. "Mr Modi thought that Kejriwal formed a government in Delhi and Punjab. Now, he fears that we will form a government in Haryana as well," he said. Striking an emotional cord, Mr Kejriwal also referred to his Haryana roots. He said, "They tried to torture me mentally and physically when

I was in jail. I am a diabetic patient and I need four insulin injections every day, but they stopped my medicines. They wanted to break me, but they don't know that I am from Haryana, and you can't break a person from Haryana," he said, adding, "the people of Haryana should give their son a chance to serve." Haryana will head to the polls on October 5. Results will be announced on October 8.



THE ASIAN AGE

30 SEPTEMBER 2024

Conflict may escalate as Israel stays on warpath

Israel's pinpoint strike on a southern Beirut suburb killing the Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in his underground command post to end his 32-year reign as secretary-general of the terrorist organisation with political wings has sparked fears of a far wider escalation of the Middle East war.

The killing of the top leadership that shaped Hezbollah into rebuilding its military machine since wars in the early parts of the millennium against Israel to become the world's most heavily armed terror group may seem a huge setback now.

The strike that followed months of intelligence may not, however, have knocked out the group's ability to keep firing missiles on Israel, which it has been doing with scores of projectiles per day since the barbaric October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas.

A tectonic shift may not come about in Iran's influence on its proxies in the region because of this strategically precise operation with powerful bunker buster bombs to hit a major figure like Nasrallah. What Iran does now in the face of this pointed attack on Hezbollah and one of its own revolutionary force commanders is what will define events in the war.

Having taken direct action against its sworn enemy, Israel, only in the softest possible way even after the extreme provocation of having a diplomatic compound in Syria bombed, Iran may continue to act only through proxies, sending even more powerful weapons into Lebanon.

An indication of an immediate reaction out of Iran is that the supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei had said that Hezbollah would continue to be at the helm of the resistance forces and that its military capabilities had not been destroyed.

It is debatable whether Israel, with its claim of an existential threat hanging historically over it since its formation, has the moral right to escalate its action against Hezbollah in this manner. But then, ranged against such a line of argument would be the militant organisation's history of terror acts against

Israelis and citizens of many other nationalities, including the United States and France.

Since Hezbollah had not stopped its military action in launching myriad missiles from October 8, the day after Hamas crossed the border into Israel to attack and take hostages, Israel has been on the offensive, mostly in reducing Gaza to rubble before opening this second front recently against Hezbollah with heavy bombing runs over Lebanon.

A feared ground invasion that may have stretched Israel's capabilities did not come about and the tactic of taking aim at the Hezbollah leader has worked well with regard to strategy, but Israelis are living in fear of counter-strikes from Hezbollah with most settlers in northern Israel having moved out of range of the Lebanon border.

The dynamics of the conflict have altered now with the elimination of Nasrallah, likely making way for his cousin Hashem Safieddine, another persona designated as a global terrorist by the US.

The world is aghast at the cost of war but the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose political stake in continuing to keep his country on the offensive is heavy, illustrated his defiance with a speech at the United Nations even as his bombers were taking off to strike Beirut. Where this will end and whether any major powers will be sucked into this Middle Eastern cauldron is open to question.

Disability: Welcome re-definition

Remember the time that we referred to someone as "physically handicapped" or "mentally retarded"? Gone are those days. Thanks to our leaders and activists, society has evolved to become more understanding towards people who are unable to use their faculties like most others. The words, "physically handicapped", have given way to "physically challenged", with the phrase, "differently abled", arriving on its heels. Most other such terms, too, have undergone changes.

The Supreme Court of India now feels that even such changes are a bit condescending and there must be ways to describe these conditions in a more people-centric way. Hence it suggests that judges would henceforth refer to them as "persons with a disability". So it will be "a person with hearing disability", with the person coming first in plain words. And nothing else. The court even suggests the judges check with the person on how they wished to be identified.

The Handbook Concerning Persons with Disabilities the apex court brought out on Saturday has listed several such usages and has explained how one has to be kind but correct. As Justice B.V. Nagarathna, who supervised the preparation of the handbook, noted, "The language used by judges in their judgments carries immense weight and has the power to shape societal perceptions and attitudes. When it comes to addressing matters involving persons with disabilities, the use of sensitive language is of paramount importance. Judges must be mindful of avoiding dehumanising or demeaning terminology that perpetuates stigma and reinforces negative stereotypes."

Only last week the court barred the use of the words, "child pornography", in the courtroom and on records. It was an exceptional display of the court's deep understanding of a social crime and the impact it can have on people. It may be remembered that the court last year came out with a handbook for judges advising them to shun certain words while referring to women.

It's time society at large, and especially the media, follow the suggestions and work on their vocabulary. The apex court, meanwhile, should have a mechanism to ensure that judges follow its directives. It has had to come down heavily on judges who pepper their judicial pronouncements with their personal convictions. Now the wait begins for better-worded judgments and judicial references.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Kishwar Desai
London Diary



Labour MP quits, calls PM hypocrite; Oxford Street to be free of traffic?

There are very few British Prime Ministers who have come out unscathed from the daily grilling that goes on in the British press.

And this time it raises a question that has vexed many over the centuries: "Do clothes maketh the man?" Or woman, as the case may be. And should a Prime Minister and his wife be always well dressed? If the answer is "yes", then what can be wrong if someone offers to buy fancy clothes for you? Surely if you are the Prime Minister, you should have better things to worry about than what you will wear for the Cabinet meeting or the UN get-together... And then, the Prime Minister's wife is always under scrutiny over what she wears. In fact, the press even publishes the brand she is wearing along with the price tag. (I have always wondered about how quickly the media know it all — but then undoubtedly the dress designers also have a PR firm which will quickly leak the information to the press.)

But Sir Keir Starmer made the mistake of allowing clothes worth thousands of pounds to be gifted to him by a supporter — and the subsequent hammering by the right-wing press means that he (despite having won a handsome victory) is now very, very unpopular — and 26 per cent voters dislike him more than those

who like him. The alleged error is that Sir Keir was given clothes to wear worth thousands of pounds plus spectacles costing more than two thousand pounds by a rich member of the Labour Party, Lord Ali.

MPs are supposed to declare gifts received but some of this happened during election when Parliament was not meeting and Sir Keir was a candidate but not an elected MP yet. However, the gifts are worth a six-figure sum. His statement about them got delayed, and that has become the latest scandal.

And then it turned out that fashion conscious Lord Ali had also helped Lady Starmer to buy thousands of pounds worth of dresses as well as the Chancellor Rachel Reeves and the Deputy Leader Angela Rayner.

And to make matters worse, Sir Keir "borrowed" Lord Ali's apartment to film a documentary and then it seems his son used it to study for his GCSEs. None of this is actually a crime, especially when obviously Sir Keir and his wife were badly advised about all these posh togs to swan around in, and a swanky apartment to get filmed in. For most of us it would be a relief to have someone who said — "don't worry, old chap, just tell me your sizes and I will get you nicely turned out. And when-

ever you need — my home is your castle." But sometimes generous friends can be your undoing... Lady Starmer should just make a bonfire of the vanities and auction the clothes to give the money to charity. It might calm everyone down.

And now even more embarrassingly for the PM it has led to the resignation of one Labour MP — Rosie Duffield, who will now sit as an independent as she is embarrassed over how Sir Keir and his wife and indeed other members of his Cabinet have also accepted freebies from Lord Ali and others, apart from some other political decisions she does not agree with. She is the first to go, but the fact that she has been extremely vocal and called the PM hypocritical does not augur well at all...

Meanwhile apart from the political theatre playing out, London continues to thrive with superb theatre at the West End. Currently we have the celebrated Samuel Beckett classic *Waiting for Godot* getting rave reviews. At the National Theatre there is Shakespeare's rarely performed *Coriolanus*. And there is a musical based on a 1957 Elia Kazan film *A Face in the Crowd*. I am booking

tickets like there is no tomorrow.

Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, re-elected once more, is planning to redesign Oxford Street as a traffic free zone. Of course, it is the heart of London's shopping area where you have Selfridges and Marks and Spencer and John Lewis. But there are buses and taxis and cars which he thinks create unwanted congestion. But making the most frequently visited stretch of Oxford Street traffic-free raises the worry that we may have to walk long distances carrying our shopping bags... hmmm... one more reason to shop online!

And... here we go again! It seems that soup has once more been thrown by climate activists at the "Sunflowers" painted by Vincent Van Gogh, at an exhibition at the National Gallery. What has astonished me is that those indulging in this vandalism are not young! Among the three who were arrested, is a sixty-year-old man and a seventy-seven-year-old woman. Anger knows no age!

Kishwar Desai is an award winning author and columnist. She is also the Chair of the Partition Museums in Amritsar and Delhi.

Subhani



Pride & politics: Netas toss the Tirupati laddu around



Sanjaya Baru
Sanjayovacha

The deputy chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, Pawan Kalyan of the Jana Sena Party (JSP), was once an admirer of the Latin American Marxist hero and youth icon Che Guevara. He milked his Marxism till recently sporting a red *angavastram* and marching with the Communists. He has suddenly switched to a saffron *angavastram*. He now marches to the tune of a *shankam*, politicising a controversy around the adulteration of ghee at the Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam (TTD).

What ought to have been an issue of either sloppy supply management or deliberate corruption in the purchase of ghee has been turned into a politico-religious issue. Not to be left behind his scheming deputy, an apparently nervous N. Chandrababu Naidu, the Andhra chief minister, has jumped onto the communal bandwagon, blaming the "minorities friendly" Jagan Mohan Reddy, his predecessor in the CM's office, for this insult to Hindu sentiment.

If religious passions are stirred, can the BJP be left behind? BJP activists in both Telugu states are rushing to save Hinduism from Hindus. God is no longer to be relied upon in protecting Oneself and humans.

Humans, that too political power brokers, are required to protect Gods. For the first time in contemporary political history, religion has been brought into the caste-ridden state politics of the Andhras.

The entire controversy revolves around a report that drew attention to the possibility of adulteration of ghee supplied to TTD. This is not a new problem. In the past, if such adulteration of ghee with vegetable oils was discovered, after sampling, such con-

signments were rejected and returned. Over the years several complaints were filed about such adulteration of ghee with vegetable oil. However, for the first time this year, when such adulteration was once again discovered, the Chandrababu Naidu government sent a sample of the ghee to the Gujarat-based National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) for further verification.

The NDDB analysis pointed to adulteration with vegetable oil. However, in an interesting new twist to the controversy, and an unusual move, it added a line in its report that it was "possible" that there "may be traces of animal fat". Thus far no evidence has been presented to confirm that there indeed was any animal fat. To suggest that there is a possibility of such adulteration is not to confirm the actual fact of such adulteration. Why the NDDB felt it necessary to flag this "possibility" without offering any evidence is a question waiting to be asked and answered.

Why bother about such issues when politicians are ready to stir the pot of communalism. If Chandrababu Naidu was trying to get at his bete noire, Jagan Mohan Reddy, by accusing him of insulting Hindu sentiment (remember Jagan Reddy's Christian credentials). Pawan Kalyan may be attempting to get closer to the BJP, and exerting pressure on Mr Naidu. Pawan Kalyan has been playing games seeking to cement his status in Andhra politics, preventing the rise of Mr Naidu's son Nara Lokesh. In this game of power politics involving all the three alliance partners — TDP, BJP, JSP — the Tirupati laddu has become a political ball to be tossed around.

The Tirupati "laddu controversy" is the first sign of the entry of communal politics into caste-ridden

The battle for power and wealth among the Telugu elites — Reddy, Kamma, Kapu, Velama and Raju — have contributed to the rise of caste as a factor in Telugu politics

Andhra politics. The erstwhile state of Andhra Pradesh entered the history books as India's first linguistic state. Taking the cue from the Telugus, the Gujaratis, Maharashtrians, Kannadigas, Punjabis and other linguistic groups managed to get their own administrative and political regions based on language. In the formation of Andhra Pradesh on the basis of language, the Indian National Congress and the Communist Party of India, at the time the single largest Opposition political party in India and in the state, forged common cause.

Years later, when the first round of a movement for a separate state of Telangana dividing a region united by language got dissipated, N.T. Rama Rao tried to re-unite the Telugus based once again on linguistic sentiment by naming his party Telugu Desam Party (TDP). Telugu pride secured a national boost and recognition first when NTR became the leader of an all-India political formation called the National Front, and then found its expression once again when P.V. Narasimha Rao became India's first Prime Minister of South Indian origin. Both NTR and PVNR were secular leaders who focused on development and welfare. Neither allowed communal politics to take root in the state.

The cementing ability of language became weaker once caste politics took over. The battle for power and wealth among the Telugu elites — Reddy, Kamma, Kapu, Velama and Raju — contributed to the rise of caste as a factor in Telugu politics. In the new state of Telangana, the political divide among the elites was between the

Velamas, who controlled the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS), and the Reddys, who regained leadership within the Congress Party. In truncated Andhra Pradesh, the political battle has been between the Reddy-dominated YSR Congress and the Kamma-controlled TDP.

Into this matrix of caste-based politics, the BJP entered with its time-tested communal politics. In Telangana, it secured easy entry given the history of Hindu-Muslim divisions dating back to the days of the feudal potentate, the Nizams of Hyderabad. The leadership of the Congress Party in united Andhra had exploited these underlying communal tensions as part of the internecine political battles within its local leadership. The NTR era contributed to a decline in communalism in politics but over the past decade, with the rise of the BJP at the national level, religion has entered politics in a big way in Telangana.

While politics in Telangana has always had a communal tinge, the Andhra region has been largely free of it. The Muslim minority in the Andhra region is also far more integrated into local social and cultural life, with many even among the elite comfortable speaking Telugu while their Telangana counterparts still struggle with the language of the majority.

Both Andhra chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Telangana chief minister Revanth Reddy are focused on development and welfare and have so far shown little interest in stoking the communal fires. While the BJP is wont to do that, Pawan Kalyan's conversion from faux Marxism to perhaps faux communalism is a self-serving political somersault of undiluted cynicism. It remains to be seen if this controversy is set to rest or ends up communalising Telugu politics.

The writer is an author, a former newspaper editor and adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. He has recently edited *The Importance of Shinzo Abe: India, Japan and the Indo-Pacific*.

LETTERS

BONDS ARE BACK

The orders of a court to file an FIR against the finance minister over electoral bonds must come as an unwelcome surprise for her party. Most probably, nothing will come of it since the bonds have been discontinued, but it will give Opposition parties something to attack the BJP with. Nothing much has been heard about electoral bonds in quite a while and this move will bring them back under the spotlight. Electoral funding is the big elephant in the room of democratic process and it's naive to expect big business to fund parties freely. Bonds are nothing but legalised bribes and since expenses are ever increasing greater will be the kickbacks!

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

SHIA AXIS REGROUPS

THE KILLING of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah by an Israeli airstrike has significantly escalated tensions between Israel and the militant group, threatening further instability in Lebanon and the broader Middle East. Hezbollah, backed by Iran, has vowed retaliation, which could lead to a surge in violence and deepen the ongoing conflict. This development adds pressure to Lebanon, already grappling with economic and political crises, and may alter regional alliances, with countries like Iran and Syria potentially strengthening ties with Hezbollah.

Amarjeet Kumar
Hazariabagh

CONGRESS FREEBIES

THE MANIFESTO of the Congress Party in Haryana has something for everybody. However, measures like restoring the old pension scheme, ₹2,000 to every woman and legal guarantee of MSP for every crop requires money and may put Haryana on the brink. As of now, Haryana's debt-to-GDP ratio is already 25.5 per cent higher than Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka, but still bearable. However, because of these schemes, the state government will have to resort to borrowing and enter a debt trap. Then the promises will prove to be a medicine worse than the disease itself.

D.B. Madan
New Delhi

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to D.B. Madan (Sep. 23). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.



SHORT TAKES

MILITANTS KILL 7 LABOURERS IN BALOCHISTAN

Islamabad/Karachi, Sept. 29: At least seven labourers from Punjab province were killed by separatist militants in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, police said on Sunday. The labourers from Multan were shot dead late on Saturday night when they were asleep in an under-construction house in the Khuda-e-Abadian area of Panjgur town. Ansari said the labourers were in deep sleep when the armed terrorists entered the under-construction house and opened indiscriminate fire with automatic weapons.

SYRIAN NABBED IN GERMANY OVER TWO FIRES

Berlin, Sept. 29: A Syrian suspect has been arrested after fires broke out at two apartment blocks and a van was rammed into shops in the western German city of Essen, police said on Sunday.

More than 30 people were injured in the fires on Saturday evening, including eight children who were seriously injured, Essen police said in a statement.

A short time later, a van was rammed into two shops nearby, causing damage but no injuries, the police said.

A 41-year-old Syrian man was arrested at the scene.

EGYPT REFUSES TO FREE JAILED ACTIVIST FATTAH

Cairo, Sept. 29: Egyptian authorities have refused to release dissident Alaa Abdel Fattah. Abdel Fattah, 42, was arrested on September 29, 2019. Two years later, he was handed a five-year sentence for "spreading false news" by sharing a Facebook post about police brutality. His family on Thursday urged the government of UK, where Fattah holds citizenship, to ensure his release this weekend.

On Sunday his sister Mona Seif said that the authorities "refused a request" to consider the two years of pre-trial detention as time served towards his sentence.

POPE ASSERTS CHURCH HAS NO PLACE FOR ABUSE

Brussels, Sept. 29: Pope Francis on Sunday wrapped up a week-end trip to Belgium, where he faced some of the strongest criticism yet levied during one of his foreign trips.

The 87-year-old pontiff was pressed by high-profile figures at three of the five major events on his three-day visit in unusual and sometimes fierce language for a papal trip.

In a meeting with Belgian dignitaries on Friday, both King Philippe and Prime Minister Alexander De Croo called for more concrete action to help survivors of abuse by the Catholic clergy.

HUNDREDS RALLY TO SUPPORT ABORTION RIGHTS

Paris, Sept. 29: Hundreds of people came out in Paris on Saturday, marching in support of the right to abortion for women across the world, just six months after France became the first country to guarantee in its Constitution a woman's right to voluntarily terminate a pregnancy.

The protest, organised by civil society groups to mark International Safe Abortion Day, also called for greater and easier access to abortion in France, denouncing budget cuts, staff reductions and the closure of abortion centres and maternity wards.

SEARCH ON FOR 48 MIGRANTS OFF CANARY ISLANDS

Puerto De La Estaca, Sept. 29: Rescue teams on Sunday resumed searching for at least 48 migrants who went missing the day before when their boat overturned just as it was being rescued off Spain's Canary Islands, killing nine people.

Hopes of finding survivors were slim as sea rescue teams searched the waters off El Hierro, an island in the Atlantic archipelago. It is the latest in a series of such disasters off the coast of Africa.

"The search operation is resuming," Spain's maritime rescue organisation told AFP.

Strike kills another Hezbollah official

Hezbollah: Top commander also died; Israel says '20' Hezbollah members killed alongside Nasrallah

Jerusalem, Sept. 29: The Israeli military said on Sunday that it killed another high-ranking Hezbollah official in an airstrike as the Lebanese militant group was reeling from a string of devastating blows and the killing of its overall leader, Hassan Nasrallah. The military said Nabil Kaouk, the deputy head of Hezbollah's Central Council, was killed on Saturday.

There was no immediate comment from Hezbollah, and it was not known where the strike took place. If confirmed, he would be the seventh senior Hezbollah leader slain in Israeli strikes in a little over a week, including founding members who had evaded death or detention for decades.

The Israeli military said it carried out another targeted strike on Beirut later on Sunday, with details to follow. Hezbollah meanwhile confirmed that one of the seven, Ali Karaki, died in Friday's strike that killed Nasrallah. The Israeli military had said that Karaki was killed in the airstrike, which targeted an underground compound in Beirut where Nasrallah and other senior Hezbollah figures were meeting.

The Israeli military said on Sunday the strike that killed Nasrallah also "eliminated" more than 20 other members of the Lebanese armed group. "More than 20 other terrorists of varying ranks, who were present at the underground headquarters in Beirut located beneath civilian buildings, and were managing Hezbollah's terrorist operations against the state of Israel, were also eliminated," the military said in a statement that listed some of them.



An Israeli tank is transported to a position in the Upper Galilee region of northern Israel near the border with Lebanon, on Sunday. — AFP

According to the statement, Ibrahim Hussein Jazini and Samir Tawfiq Dib who were "among Nasrallah's closest associates" had been killed.

Hezbollah has also been targeted by a sophisticated attack on its pagers and walkie-talkies that was widely blamed on Israel. A wave of Israeli airstrikes across large parts of Lebanon has killed at least 1,030 people — including 156 women and 87 children — in less than two weeks, according to Lebanon's health ministry.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been driven from their homes in Lebanon by the latest strikes. The government estimates that around 2,500,000 are in shelters, with three to four times as many staying with friends or relatives, or camping out on the streets, the country's environment minister Nasser Yassin told *The Associated Press*. — Agencies

Gaza school struck as 11 Palestinians killed

Cairo, Sept. 29: Israeli military strikes across the Gaza Strip have killed at least 11 Palestinians, health officials in the enclave said on Sunday, as Israeli planes bombarded several northern, central and southern areas.

A school sheltering displaced Palestinians in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip was among buildings hit, killing four people and wounding several others, Gaza medics said.

The Israeli military said it struck Hamas militants operating from a command centre embedded in a compound that had previously served as Um Al-Fahm School. It accused Hamas of exploiting civilian facilities and its population for military purposes, which Hamas denies.

In another strike, three people were killed in a house in Gaza City, medics said. Four others were killed in three separate airstrikes in Nuseirat and Khan Younis in central and southern parts of the Gaza Strip.

Israeli forces pursued their operations in Rafah, near the border with Egypt, and in Gaza City's suburb of Zeitoun, where forces blew up several houses, according to residents and Hamas media.

On Sunday the Israeli military said that forces continue the fight in a "multi-front war" and are operating in Gaza to bring Israeli and foreign hostages home and to "dismantle" Hamas. — Reuters

TRUCE TALKS ON: LEBANON

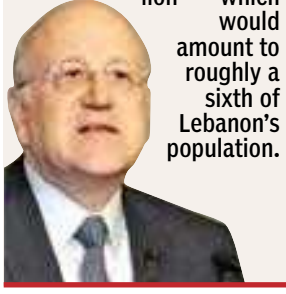
IRAN VOWS TO RESPOND TO KILLING OF GUARDS BY COMMANDER IN LEBANON
Iran's foreign minister Abbas Araqchi said on Sunday that the killing by Israel of an Iranian Revolutionary Guards deputy commander in Beirut was a "horrible crime" that would not go unanswered. Brigadier General Abbas Nilforoushan was killed in the Israeli strikes on Beirut on Friday.



Lebanon's information minister Ziad Makary said during a Cabinet session on Sunday that diplomatic efforts for a ceasefire with Israel were underway. "It is certain that the Lebanese government wants a ceasefire, and everyone knows that (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu went to New York based on the premise of a ceasefire, but the decision was made to assassinate Nasrallah," Makary said.

LEBANON MAY BE SEEING 'LARGEST DISPLACEMENT' EVER: PM

Intense Israeli attacks may have forced up to a million people to flee parts of Lebanon in possibly the worst displacement crisis in the tiny country's history, Prime Minister Najib Mikati said on Sunday. Mikati told reports that "the estimated number is very high and may reach one million" — which would amount to roughly a sixth of Lebanon's population.



UN SENDS EMERGENCY FOOD AID FOR ONE MILLION LEBANESE
The World Food Programme on Sunday said it had launched an emergency operation to provide meals for one million people affected by the escalating conflict in Lebanon. "A further acceleration of the conflict this weekend underscored the need for an immediate humanitarian response," the Rome-based agency said.



Donald Trump

TRUMP LAYS INTO HARRIS ON IMMIGRATION

Prairie du Chien, Sept. 29: Former President Donald Trump sought again to link Vice President Kamala Harris to illegal border crossings, speaking in a western river town where he said she could never be forgiven for "erasing our border". A day after Harris discussed immigration at the US-Mexico border, Trump spoke to a crowd in the Wisconsin town of 5,000 people, claiming the Democratic nominee was responsible for migrants who have come into the country illegally and have committed crimes.

"Kamala Harris can never be forgiven for her erasing our border and she must never be allowed to become president of the United States," Trump said. "She's letting in people who are going to walk into your house, break into your door," he said. Trump is hoping frustration over illegal immigration will translate to votes in Wisconsin and other crucial swing states. — AP

Russia pounds Ukraine's city with bombs, 16 hurt

Kyiv, Moscow, Sept. 29: Russia hit the Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia with multiple guided bombs on Sunday, wounding at least 16 people, and damaging railways, infrastructure, and residential and commercial buildings, Ukrainian officials said.

Russia's defence ministry said on Sunday its forces had repelled six new Ukrainian attempts to enter its western Kursk region and had also taken control of the settlement of Makiivka in Ukraine's Luhansk region.

The ministry said on the Telegram messaging app that its forces, with the support of aircraft and artillery rounds, repelled attempts to enter the region near the village of Novy Put, some 79 km (50 miles) west of Sudzha, a strategic crossing point for Russian natural gas exports to Europe via Ukraine.

Ivan Fedorov, the governor of the Zaporizhzhia region, said that Russian forces hit three city districts with a total of 13 guided bombs. The strikes injured at least 16 people, including two children.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a post on Telegram that several residential buildings, the city's infrastructure, and railways were damaged in the strikes.

He posted pictures from the sites of the attacks, showing charred cars, a hole blown through a residential building, and rescuers battling fires. — Reuters



Firefighters put out the fire after Russia attacked the city with guided bombs overnight in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, on Sunday. — AP

N-doctrine being formalised: Kremlin

Moscow, Sept. 29: The Kremlin said on Sunday that amendments to Russia's nuclear doctrine had been prepared and were about to be formalised, meaning the relevant documents setting out the circumstances in which nuclear arms can be used by Moscow will be updated.

President Vladimir Putin warned the West on Wednesday that under proposed changes to the doctrine Russia could use nuclear arms if it was struck with conventional missiles and would consider any assault on it supported by a nuclear power to be a joint attack.

The changes were widely seen as an attempt by Putin to draw a "red line" for the United States and its allies by signalling that Moscow will consider responding with nuclear weapons if they allow Ukraine to strike deep inside Russia with long-range Western missiles.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state TV reporter Pavel Zarubin on Sunday: "The amendments have been prepared, and will now be formalised." Peskov cited the global situation, escalating tensions near Russia's borders and the growing proximity of Nato infra to them, and what he called the deeper involvement of Western N-powers in the Ukraine war. — Reuters

AUSTRIAN FAR RIGHT WINS POLL FOR FIRST TIME

Vienna, Sept. 29: Austrian voters handed a first ever general election victory to the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) on Sunday, vote projections showed, underlining rising support for hard-right parties in Europe fuelled by concern over immigration levels.

The Eurosceptic, Russia-friendly FPÖ held a slim lead in opinion polls for months over Chancellor Karl Nehammer's ruling conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) in a campaign dominated by immigration and worries about the economy.

Led by Herbert Kickl, the FPÖ was projected to secure 29.1 per cent of the vote, ahead of the ÖVP on 26.2 per cent, and the centre-left Social Democrats on 20.4 per cent, a projection by pollster Foresight for broadcaster ORF showed after polls closed.

A separate projection by pollster Arge Wahlen also had the FPÖ coming first, winning by around 4 percentage points.

The winner will fall short of an absolute majority, but will claim the right to lead a coalition. If confirmed, Kickl's victory may prove pyrrhic, as the 55-year-old is a polarising figure under whom other party leaders have refused to serve. He has given no indication so far he could step aside to ensure his party leads the government. — Reuters

Blow to Starmer as party MP quits

London, Sept. 29: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has suffered his first setback since taking charge at 10 Downing Street in July after one of his members of Parliament resigned from the Labour Party, delivering a scathing attack on his leadership. Rosie Duffield, MP for Canterbury in Kent, will now sit in the House of Commons as an Independent after her resignation letter published in *The Sunday Times* attacked the Labour leader's "cruel and unnecessary" policies amid an ongoing expensive free gifts row.

UK's government will close a loophole that meant ministers did not have to declare hospitality they had received. Cabinet office minister Pat McFadden said when pressed to explain the use of donations for clothing and gifts.

Duffield claimed there were many "last straws", but her main reason is over the government's programme of unpopular policies. "They are cruel and unnecessary and affect hundreds of thousands of our poorest, most vulnerable constituents. This is not what I was elected to do. It is not even wise politics, and it certainly is not 'the politics of service'," writes Duffield in her resignation letter.

The MP goes on to state that she has no confidence in the Labour PM's commitment to deliver the "so-called change" he promised during the general poll campaign and that she could not look her "constituents in the eye and tell them that anything has changed". — PTI

Nepal rain death toll at 170, schools shut

Kathmandu, Sept. 29: Nepal has shut schools for three days after landslides and floods triggered by two days of heavy rain across the Himalayan nation killed 170 people, with 42 missing, officials said on Sunday.

The floods brought traffic and normal activity to a standstill in the Kathmandu valley, where 37 deaths were recorded in a region home to 4 million people and the capital.

Authorities said students and their parents faced difficulties as university and school buildings damaged by the rains needed repair.

"We have urged the concerned authorities to close schools in the affected areas for three days," Lakshmi Bhattarai, a spokesperson for the education ministry, said.

Some parts reported rain of up to 322.2 mm (12.7 inches), pushing the level of its main Bagmati river up 2.2 m (7 ft) past the danger mark.

But there were some signs of respite on Sunday, with the rains easing in many places, said weather forecaster Govinda Jha. "There may be some isolated showers, but heavy rains are unlikely," he said. Television images showed police rescuers in knee-high rubber boots using picks and shovels to clear away mud and retrieve 16 bodies of passengers from two buses swept away by a massive landslide at a site on the key route into Kathmandu.

Weather officials in the capital blamed the rainstorms on a low-pressure system in the Bay of Bengal extending over parts of neighbouring India. Haphazard development amplifies climate change risks in Nepal, say climate scientists at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). "I've never before seen flooding on this scale in Kathmandu," said Arun Bhakta Shrestha, an environmental risk official at the centre. In a statement, it urged the government and city planners to "urgently" step up investment in, and plans for, infrastructure, such as underground stormwater and sewage systems, both of the "grey", or engineered kind, and "green", or nature-based type. The impact of the rains was aggravated by poor drainage due to unplanned settlement. — Reuters

WAR | DANCE Auckland organisers had hoped for up to 10,000 participants NZ breaks world record for mass haka

Auckland, Sept. 29: New Zealand on Sunday reclaimed the world record for the largest mass haka after more than 6,000 people performed the legendary Maori war dance, detroning France.

The record was broken in deafening fashion at Eden Park rugby stadium in Auckland, where thousands of men, women and children combined on the pitch to complete the traditional native challenge involving vigorous movements, stamping feet and rhythmic shouting.

An adjudicator confirmed 6,531 participants had performed the 'Ka Mate' haka, a rendition made famous by the All Blacks rugby team, who perform it immediately before Test matches.

The world record had been held by France since September 2014 when 4,028 people slapped their thighs and belted the chant following a rugby match in France Brive-la-Gaillarde, southwestern France. Auckland organisers had hoped for up to 10,000 participants but were nevertheless pleased the record had been reclaimed by New Zealand, where the haka is regarded as a national treasure.

"We want to bring the mana (pride) of the haka back home," Michael Mizrahi, director of the Auckland attempt, said while speaking to AFP. "It's not just that we want to take it off the French, it's like a national treasure that somebody has taken from us. It's got enormous meaning for us as New Zealanders," said Mizrahi. — AFP

Participants at a world record attempt for the largest mass Haka in Auckland on Sunday. — AFP



Participants at a world record attempt for the largest mass Haka in Auckland on Sunday. — AFP

quick
BITES

INDICATORS %

Sensex	85571.85	-0.31
Nifty 50	26178.95	-0.14
S&P 500*	5,738.17	-0.13
Dollar (₹)	83.70	0.05
Pound Sterling (₹)	112.01	0.26
Euro (₹)	93.41	0.21
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	74,930.72	0.10
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	72.45	0.65
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.759	0.041
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	3.751	-0.038

* As of 8:30 PM IST

SBI plans new
products to
boost deposits

State Bank of India is contemplating to come out with innovative products including a combo product of recurring deposit and SIP, said the bank's chairman C S Setty. With the economy progressing, he said, customers are becoming financially more aware and demanding, and have started looking for innovative investment instruments. Today, the customers are looking at the value proposition, he said.

GSTN restores
historic GST
data on portal

The GST Network (GSTN) on Sunday said that the monthly returns data of July and Aug. 2017, the starting months of goods and services tax (GST) rollout, has been restored on the portal. The GSTN said it is implementing its data policy, as per which data for taxpayers will be retained for seven years only. "Thus, GST returns data will not be available beyond 7 years, and they would be archived," it said.

Candytoy in pact
with Reliance arm
for confectionery

Candytoy Corporate, the manufacturer of candy toys, has partnered with Reliance Retail to supply confectionery toys for 1,400 stores of the country's leading retailer, said founder director Gaurav Mirchandani. "We already have a purchase order for more than 15 outlets right now, which is live, and 200 outlets will be live by end of Diwali, and 1,400 outlets will be live by the end of this financial year," he said.

Output of iron
ore, manganese
rises in Apr.-Aug.

The production of iron ore and manganese ore witnessed a growth during the April-August period of FY25, according to mines ministry. The output of iron ore rose by 7.4 per cent to 116 million tonnes (MT) during the said period compared to 108 MT registered in same period of previous fiscal. The production of manganese ore jumped by 15.4 per cent to 1.5 MT during April-August period as compared to 1.3 MT in FY24.

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Mfg. seeks safety net
from China onslaught

India's imports from China rose 15.5% to \$10.8 billion in August

SANGEETHA G.
CHENNAI, SEPT. 29

China's aggressive exports and predatory pricing have badly hit manufacturers and exporters in India industries, including pharma, electronics, paper, steel, solar equipment, chemicals, rubber products, and plastics. The Indian industry wants the government to keep a close watch on the industries and apply trade remedial measures to safeguard the domestic manufacturing.

While the global trade prospects remain bleak, China's exports grew 8.7 per cent in August to a 23-month high of \$308.65 billion. The growth achieved after slashing the prices of goods indicates a huge surge in export volumes.

"China is experiencing a slump in domestic demand, which is evident from several economic indicators, including credit demand and property sales. The excess capacity of industrial units is forcing China to cut the price and push products into global market," said Ajay Sahai, secretary general, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO).

As the US, Europe, and other major markets are implementing trade remedial measures, including anti-dumping duties, Indian industry is also equally affected. Despite ultra-low prices of goods, India's imports from China rose 15.5 per cent to \$10.8 billion in August while exports declined 22 per cent to \$1 billion. India saw finished steel imports from China reaching a six-year high at

CHEAPER PRODUCTS

COPPER and aluminium exports from India have lost their global market share due to cheaper Chinese metals.

THE INDIAN INDUSTRY wants the government to apply trade remedial measures to safeguard domestic manufacturing.



3.7 million metric tonnes in April-August period, while rolled steel imports went up 31 per cent. Meanwhile, copper and aluminium exports from India have lost their global market share due to cheaper Chinese metals.

"Industry is concerned about the surge in imports of steel into India at predatory prices and threat posed by China's downturn," the Indian Steel Association informed the government while asking for a duty hike. The US has already imposed a 25 per cent tariff on Chinese steel.

In pharma, the import of drug intermediates and bulk drugs used in the manufacture of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and formulations has seen a surge. The total volume of imports from China grew by over 20 per cent during the first quarter of FY25, with the import volumes of some large molecules increasing by over 80 per

IN PHARMA,

the import of drug intermediates and bulk drugs used in the manufacture of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) and formulations has seen a surge.



cent. API prices have fallen between 20 per cent and 50 per cent due to the aggressive pricing by China. Meanwhile, Indian API exports are down by 8 per cent. "The pharma companies who are manufacturing APIs under PLI scheme are left with no buyers as domestic formulation makers are flooded with cheaper Chinese imports," said PV Appaji, former director general of Pharmexcl.

Despite India being a net exporter of electronics, China has a huge stake in providing components. Chinese imports have hit India's efforts to develop the electronics component ecosystem. "Value addition in electronics is less than 18 per cent due to the dependency on imports. Chinese imports in the sector are around \$30 billion and we have to work towards creating entire ecosystem," said Ashok Chandak, president, India electronics and semiconductor association.

SEVERAL CHINESE

brands are importing mobile phone kits, assembling and selling them in the country.

THE US has already imposed a 25% tariff on Chinese steel.



Low-priced Chinese imports have been a longstanding issue for plastic manufacturers. "Of the \$12 billion worth of plastics imports, China accounts for 49 per cent. Retailers are free to decide their margins on Chinese products against the MRP fixed on Indian products," said Jayesh Ramdhia, past president, All India Plastic Manufacturers' Association.

Imports of paper from China grew 20 per cent in FY24, while it has been growing at a CAGR of 41 per cent for past 3 years. Imports of soda ash increased to 10.41 lakh MT in FY24, a huge 80 per cent jump from the imports in the previous year, said Alkali Manufacturers Association of India. While anti-dumping duty imposed on Chinese tyres has helped curb the products flooding the market, non-tyre rubber products are still suffering from onslaught of cheaper imports.

Centre planning steps to boost
factory output, increase GDPMADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29

Ahead of some state Assembly polls this year and early next year, the government is cautious about the fiscal stimulus as it may impact India's tag as the fastest growing economy in the world.

Sensing slow progress on some key economic indicators, including fiscal deficit, inflation, manufacturing activities and digital infra among others, the Centre is likely to take some measures in the next half this fiscal year (2024-25) to boost the economy, a government source said on Sunday.

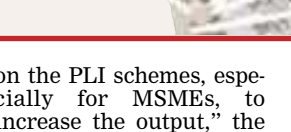
"We have initiated a review of certain sectors and will take corrective measures. They include green energy, semiconductor, steel and mines, agriculture, health, skill and development, and education among others," the source said.

A huge outgo of government subsidies has been a concern to maintain the country's fiscal balance. "The bulk of the central government's subsidies arise on the provision of economic services, which account for more than 80 per cent of the total subsidies. The recovery rates in the social and economic services are low. The government is pushing hard

GROWTH DRIVERS

THE GOVERNMENT will sell bonds worth ₹6.61 lakh crore for the second half of FY25.

A HUGE OUTGO of government subsidies has been a concern to maintain the country's fiscal balance.



On the PLI schemes, especially for MSMEs, to increase the output," the source said.

"As some state Assembly elections in Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir will be completed this year whereas Delhi and Bihar will go to polls next year. The government needs to rethink this factor before announcing its annual budget for FY 2025-26 next year," the source added.

The finance ministry recently said India's GDP would grow at 6.5-7 per cent this fiscal. Last week, the government said it will sell bonds worth ₹6.61 lakh crore for

A RECENT REPORT BY FINANCE

MINISTRY SAID India would achieve 6.5-7 per cent gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the current fiscal.

THE GOVERNMENT is now mulling setting up a foreign investment regulatory mechanism for post-investment review and monitoring.

the second half of FY25. The Centre had budgeted ₹14.01 lakh crore of gross borrowing for FY25 in the last Budget, down from Rs 14.13 lakh crore in the interim Budget.

Aided by the favourable outlook for revenues, the fiscal deficit to print in line with or mildly trail the FY25 (4.9 per cent of GDP). "The market borrowings appear unlikely to exceed the announced level for H2 FY2025," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist at IcaR Ltd.

On the investment front, the government has plans for a foreign investment regulatory mechanism for review and monitoring.

New norms put health,
life cover users in focusFALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, SEPT. 29

A host of changes will come into effect in health and life insurance policy contracts effective Oct. 1.

A major revamp of the regulatory norms, the insurance regulatory and development authority (Irdai) issued a comprehensive master circular on health insurance products in May repealing 55 of its earlier circulars. For an existing policyholder, the new clauses will be incorporated in the policy when it comes up for renewal.

Key changes

Waiting period - It is reduced for pre-existing ailments to 3 years from 4 year earlier. Till now several diseases and medical conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, etc required a waiting period of four years. **Moratorium** - It is reduced from eight years to five years. The insurer can't deny claims on grounds of non-disclosure or misrepresentation, except in cases of fraud.

Cashless Claims - The new norms would require insurers to decide on cashless authorisation requests within one hour and final authorisation on discharge from hospital within three hours of request from the hospital.

According to experts the move will significantly improve customer experience for the patient and their family members. If there is any delay beyond three hours, the additional amount if any charged by the hospital shall be borne by the insurer from the shareholder's fund.

Cashless services must be provided for both planned and emergency



treatments.

Death - In the event of the death of the policyholder during the treatment, the insurer will have to immediately process the request for claim settlement and get the mortal remains released from the hospital immediately.

Penalty for insurers - The policy should not discriminate against any particular group. An insurer is liable to pay ₹5000 per day to the policyholder in case of non-implementation of the policy within 30 days. Moreover, policyholders have the right to a refund of premiums for the unexpired policy period if they cancel their policy early.

Contribution Clause - A big relief under health insurance is that the regulator has done away with the contribution clause at the time of a claim. As a result, a policyholder with two or more insurance covers can choose the policy to file the claim.

Life Insurance - Insurance companies are now required to pay a special surrender value after policyholders have completed the full premium payment for first year. Earlier, companies began payments only after two years of premium payments.

The Irdai in its final master circular on surrender value of life insurance policies has significantly reduced surrender charges too on traditional savings plans.

China's stimulus casts shadow
on FPI investments in IndiaRAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, SEPT. 29

China's most aggressive stimulus since the pandemic announced last Tuesday to boost the struggling Chinese economy has cast shadows on foreign inflows in the Indian equity market.

In the last week, FPIs have slowed down investment in Indian equities through stock exchanges as a result of diversion of funds to cheap Chinese equities.

However, after China's stimulus announcement, in India metal stocks saw a strong rally as a rub off effect with the Nifty metal index gaining 6.68 per cent last week. Last week China's Shanghai Composite index gained 12.87 per cent while Hong Kong's Hang Seng index gained 13.13 per cent.

"A recent trend is the big inflows into the Hong Kong market which was the star performer in September with the Hang Seng index gaining a whopping 14 per cent. If the outperformance of Hang Seng continues, it is possible that more funds will flow to Hong Kong since that market continues to be very cheap," said V K Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist, Geojit Financial Services.



this calendar year. "Total investment by FPIs so far in 2024 now stands at ₹1,00,245 crore. This has contributed to the stability in Indian rupee this year. The September 18 rate cut and the dovish commentary by the US Fed can be seen as a major pivot in interest rates. This can facilitate sustained flows to emerging markets like India," he added.

"Last week's Fed rate cut has increased the liquidity in the Indian markets since the Indian rupee got aided by currency fluctuations. This interest rate differential is expected to attract more FPI inflows into India. Sebi also added an icing on the cake to lure investors by establishing a dedicated foreign portfolio investor (FPI) outreach cell, aimed at direct engagement with foreign investors," said Manoj Purohit, partner and leader, Tax and Regulatory Services, BDO India, an accounting firm.

"All eyes will now be on the upcoming SEBI board meeting on September 30 which may bring up more such announcements which will reflect the government's intention of making India a transparent, flexible, and easy to trade platform for offshore investors," said Purohit.

HEDGE | TOOL

Prices of yellow metal up 12.3% this fiscal offering better valuation for collateral

Gold loan mkt. to swell to ₹10L-cr on rising prices

SANGEETHA G.
CHENNAI, SEPT. 29

Surging gold prices and higher valuation for the collateral will see the organised gold loan market growing 40 per cent this fiscal to ₹10 lakh cr.

Gold prices have gone up by 12.3 per cent since the start of the fiscal. The existing inventory in the gold loan market has appreciated as much due to the price rise. Further, elevated prices

offer better valuation for the collateral and hence the demand for gold loan has been robust.

V.P. Nandakumar, managing director and chief executive officer, of Manappuram Finance said, "We were able to achieve significant growth in gold loan AUM in this quarter, registering nearly 15 per cent growth year-on-year and 10 per cent sequentially." The gold loan market is expected to exceed a size

of ₹10 lakh crore in the current fiscal, finds ICRA. As per the data of PwC India, the market was valued ₹7.1 lakh crore in FY24, thus growing 40 per cent this fiscal. ICRA estimates the market to further reach ₹15 lakh crore by March 2027.

The growth will be led by public sector banks and driven by agriculture loans that are backed by gold ornaments. Banks scaled-up in recent times in gold loan space and are upscal-

ing their branches to offer gold loans.

Customers also have been preferring gold-backed agriculture loans at low interest rates compared to those offered by NBFCs.

Gold loan AUM of NBFCs stood at ₹1.7 lakh crore in June 2024. The AUM growth continues to be driven by gold prices with ornament growth remaining muted. Bran-ch addi-

tions have also been subdued, though entities are steadily augmenting online loan models.

Although new players are venturing into this space, the NBFC gold loan book remains concentrated among top four players.

The seg-

ment is operationally intensive, and the key processes are also regulated. The directions restricting cash disbursements have not impacted business as the entities have been able to seamlessly adopt digital mode.

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SHORT TAKES

Indian shooters win 2 team golds

New Delhi: Indian shooters began their ISSF Junior World Championship (Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun) campaign in Peru on a good note, winning team gold in men's and women's 10m air pistol events, though a potential top-podium finish was lost in the individual category after a marksman was docked two points for reporting late for the final.

The junior men's trio of Umesh Choudhary, Pradyumn Singh and Mukesh Nelaivali topped the men's team competition in 10m air pistol with a tally of 1,726 points. They finished 10 points ahead of second-placed Romania, while Italy took bronze with a score of 1,707. Choudhary though missed a potential individual gold after being penalised two points for reporting late for the final. Choudhary and Singh had earlier made it to the individual finals placed third and fourth respectively in the qualification round. Choudhary shot 580 and Singh 578 but missed out on individual medals, ending up sixth and eighth respectively. The combination of Kanishka Dagar, Lakshita and Anjali Chaudhary tallied 1,708 to clinch the junior women's 10m air pistol team gold. — *PTI*

Wushu players clinch 7 medals

New Delhi: Indian wushu players bagged a rich haul of seven medals, including two gold, in the 9th Junior World Championships which concluded in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, on Sunday. India also won 1 silver and 4 bronze in the competition.

"This marked the first time that Indian player Aryan, competing in the 48kg weight category, clinched the gold medal after a fierce contest against a Chinese player," a release from Wushu Association of India said.

"Additionally, Indian player Shaurya triumphed over his Iranian opponent to win another gold medal."

Nang Mingbi Borphan bagged a silver medal in the Taolu Jian Shu C Group event. Tanish Nagar (56kg), Abhijeet (60kg), Divyanshi (60kg women) and Yuvraj (42kg) had a bronze medal each.

A 24-member Indian team participated in the championships. — *PTI*

Tushar breaks 46-sec barrier

Patna: Delhi quarter-miler Tushar Kanti Manna and Haryana javelin thrower Jyoti were cynosure of all eyes as they bettered meet records on the penultimate day of the Indian Open U23 Athletics Competition here on Sunday.

While Manna broke the meet record as well as the 46-second barrier to win gold in 400m, Jyoti improved upon her own javelin throw meet record.

Manna shifted gears in the home stretch to post a winning time of 45.92 seconds in the men's 400m, which was better than the meet record of 46.58 seconds set in 2021 by Ayush Dabas.

At the javelin throw arena, defending champion Jyoti was unstoppable. She surged ahead of other competitors on her opening throw but got a big throw on her fifth attempt (58.49m), which was better than her own previous meet record of 52.77m set in 2023. She had a series of 54.92m, 55.83m, 57.41m, 54.27m, 58.49m and 55.40m. — *PTI*

Laxmi, Dheeraj in qualifier finals

New Delhi: Top seeds Laxmi Dandu and Dheeraj K.S. advanced to the women's and men's singles qualifying round finals at the 29th Fenesta Open National Tennis Championship at the DLTA Complex here on Sunday.

Laxmi, from Telangana, secured a dominant 6-2, 6-0 victory against Gujarat's Mahi Trivedi and will face Tamil Nadu's Vitula Velumani for a spot in the main draw, while Dheeraj triumphed over Maharashtra's Pranav Korade in a thrilling match, winning 6-3, 3-6, 10-8.

In the boys' U-18 category, top seed Ojas Mehlawat of Delhi defeated Parag Jain 6-0, 6-0 and will meet Vaibhav Kr Charotia of Uttar Pradesh in the qualifying round finals.

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FUTURE TENSE

Succession plan to BCCI secretary gains momentum

KEY DECISIONS AT BCCI AGM

▶ Arun Singh Dhumal and Avishek Dalmiya have been elected to the IPL Governing Council.

▶ V. Chamundeswarmanth was nominated by the Indian Cricketers Association (ICA) as a player representative and was inducted to the IPL Governing Council.

▶ The audited accounts for Financial Year 2023-24 were passed and adopted by the General Body.

▶ The Annual Budget of Financial Year 2024-25 was approved by the General Body.

▶ The recommendations of the IPL Governing Council with respect to the player auction cycle 2025-2027 were approved. This included the provisions of player retentions, right to match, salary cap, etc.

▶ The members of the General Body appreciated the efforts of the office bearers for the work undertaken with respect to the new National Cricket Academy campus, the Centre of Excellence.

▶ The members unanimously resolved to maintain BCCI's legal status as a society. The members further resolved that the tournaments of the BCCI, including IPL, shall not be converted to a company.

Bengaluru, Sept. 29: The members who were present at the 93rd BCCI Annual General Meeting (AGM) here on Sunday requested incumbent secretary Jay Shah to speed up the process of finding his successor to keep the transition of power as smooth as possible. Shah is expected to step down from his post in the last week of November and take over as the chairman of International Cricket Council for a three-year period from December 1.

While selecting the new secretary was not on the AGM agenda, it has been learnt that the attendees discussed the succession plan among themselves to keep the procedure open.

"It was a normal request to keep all due process in place at the earliest as there will be clarity for us. Also, we have some big events like the IPL auction coming up, so it should not be like we will be handling everything at one go," a state association representative who attended the AGM said.

As things stand now, Rohan Jaitley, the president of Delhi and District Cricket Association, BCCI treasurer Ashish Shelar, joint secretary Devajit Saikia and Gujarat Cricket Association secretary Anil Patel are the candidates who are in the fray to succeed Shah, unless a dark horse emerges in the latter stages of the selection process.

With no secretary elec-

tion on agenda, the primary focal point of the AGM was the nomination of two representatives of India to the ICC meetings. Currently, Shah is BCCI's representative on the ICC Board and IPL chairman Arun Dhumal is in the Chief Executives' Committee.

The AGM entrusted the general body members to recommend two names soon for the posts — director and alternate director — as the ICC has also scheduled a conclave in Dubai right after the final of the upcoming women's T20 World Cup.

As reported on Saturday, Arun Singh Dhumal and Avishek Dalmiya were elected to the IPL Governing Council as general body representatives with former all set to continue as the league's

chairman at least till IPL 2025. Former Andhra cricketer, V. Chamundeswarmanth was nominated by the Indian Cricketers Association (ICA) as a player representative and was inducted into the IPL GC.

"The members of the general body also appreciated the efforts of the office bearers for the work undertaken with respect to the new National Cricket Academy campus, dubbed as the Centre of Excellence near the Bengaluru International Airport," said the BCCI.

In that context, the AGM also featured the screening of a 17-minute-long tribute video to Shah, highlighting the strong services he rendered to Indian cricket in his role as the board's secretary. — *PTI*

'UNCAPPED' DHONI READY TO BE RETAINED BY CHENNAI

Bengaluru, Sept. 29: The 10 IPL franchises will be allowed to retain a maximum of six players from their previous squads, including usage Right To Match (RTM) card at the auction that will cost ₹75 crore out of an enhanced team purse of ₹120 crore, the IPL governing council decided on Saturday.



Mahendra Singh Dhoni

In a significant move, the BCCI also decided that all those India players, who haven't played any international game for at least five calendar years will be deemed 'uncapped players', a move being seen to ensure that Chennai Super Kings can retain the peerless Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who last played for the country in the 2019 ODI World Cup semifinal.

It is learnt that for an uncapped player, the retention cost will be ₹4 crore and hence CSK even if they retain Dhoni, can surely save a lot for the auction.

A team was allowed up to four retentions in the last mega auction held in 2022.

On the day, BCCI secretary Jay Shah also announced a fixed match fee of ₹7.50 lakh for all players selected to play the league games with an additional ₹1.05 crore

income over and above their salaries.

A fixed salary purse of ₹120 crore in addition to the auction cum retention purse of ₹120 crore will have to be kept by the franchises for next season. "The total salary cap will now consist of auction purse, incremental performance pay and match fees. Previously in 2024, the total salary cap (auction purse + incremental performance pay) was ₹110 Crs which will now be ₹146 Crs (2025), ₹151 Crs (2026) and ₹157 Crs (2027)," the BCCI release stated.

The IPL franchises can now retain 6 players from their existing squad, either via retention or by using the RTM option. — *PTI*

KANPUR | TEST

WET OUTFIELD WIPES OUT PLAY ON THIRD DAY

Kanpur, Sept. 29: No play was possible for the second consecutive day in the second Test between India and Bangladesh due to a wet outfield at the Green Park Stadium here on Sunday.

Overnight rain had caused a delay to the start of action but even as the sun was shining bright around 2:00pm and there were no soggy patches on the ground, the officials decided to call off the play.

Almost eight sessions have been lost in the game due to persistent rain that has played havoc with the final match of the two-game series. Questions on the drainage system used at the venue have been duly raised.

Bangladesh had ended the rain-shortened opening day at 107 for 3.

The entire second day was washed out without a ball being bowled, and only 35 overs were bowled on the opening day.

India pacer Akash Deep (2/34) and Ravichandran Ashwin (1/22) were among the wickets.

On Friday also, the start of the match was delayed by an hour due to a wet outfield.

India are leading the two-match series 1-0, having won the Chennai Test by 280 runs. — *PTI*



View of newly-inaugurated National Cricket Academy (NCA), named BCCI Centre of Excellence, on the outskirts of Bengaluru on Sunday. — *PTI*

NCA turns Centre of Excellence

Bengaluru, Sept. 29: It took 24 years for the National Cricket Academy (NCA) to find a dwelling that suits its stature and growth, but the wait was worth it as the facility finally took a new avatar as the BCCI Centre of Excellence, a hub of ultra-modern features including three different kind pitches.

The Centre of Excellence, now operating closer to the international airport here, was inaugurated by BCCI secretary Jay Shah on Saturday, and

the most striking features were three international-quality grounds and 86 decks — prepared specifically to make players feel at home in any conditions at home or abroad.

The Ground A, the main ground, boasts an 85-yard boundary with 13 meticulously maintained Mumbai red-soil pitches that will offer a good amount of bounce.

It may be recalled that such a pitch was used in the first Test against Bangladesh recently at Chennai, where India won

by a massive 280 runs. It might come handy in the near future when India travel to Australia, a home of bouncy tracks, in November for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Another unique feature of this ground is the Herringbone drainage system that allows uber quick evaporation of water in case of rain.

The Ground B and C serve as dedicated practice grounds with 75-yard boundaries, featuring 11 Mandya soil pitches and nine Black Cotton soil

pitches from Kalahandi, Odisha, respectively.

The outdoor facility will also receive a dedicated fielding practice area and six outdoor running tracks.

V.V.S. Laxman, the head of the newly inaugurated BCCI Centre of Excellence, on Sunday said the modern facilities here will help players upskill themselves and maintain top-notch fitness level which will in turn help India maintain their dominance in all three formats. — *PTI*

Usha hits back at revolting EC members

New Delhi, Sept. 29: Accused of running the Indian Olympic Association in an "autocratic" manner, its president P. T. Usha on Sunday hit back at the revolting executive council members, saying they "seem more focused on self-serving power play and monetary gain" than working for the betterment of the country's sport.

In an official press release, Usha also alleged that "some of these EC members have very questionable track records, including allegations of gender bias and even cases of sexual harassment filed against them".

"In my 45-year-long career as a sportsperson representing India... I have never encountered individuals so indifferent to the aspirations of our athletes and our nation's sporting future... these individuals seem more focused on self-serving power play and monetary gain through their prolonged presence and control in sports administration," Usha said.

"Further, it is essential to bring to light that some of these EC members have very questionable track records, including allegations of gender bias and even cases of sexual harassment filed against them".

● In an official press release, Usha also alleged that "some of these EC members have very questionable track records, including allegations of gender bias and even cases of sexual harassment filed against them".

them," said the track legend without specifying any particular case or giving specific names.

On Saturday, 12 members of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) Executive Council shot off a letter to senior International Olympic

Committee (IOC) official Jerome Poivey, accusing Usha of running the organisation in an "autocratic" manner and with a "my way or the highway" approach.

They had sent the letter to Poivey, the head of Institutional Relations and Governance at the IOC, after Usha rejected their demand of removing Raghuram Iyer from the IOA CEO's post during a stormy executive council meeting.

The revolting EC members wrote to Poivey that Iyer's appointment is yet to be ratified and they will re-advertise for the position of the IOA CEO, "aim-

ing to appoint a suitable candidate within the next two months".

Senior vice president Ajay H. Patel, vice presidents Rajlaxmi Deo and Gagan Narang, Treasurer Sahdev Yadav, Joint Secretaries Alaknanda Ashok and Kalyan Chaubey, other Executive Council members had signed the letter.

Termining the accusations made by the 12 EC members as "malicious and false", Usha said they "are only intended to malign my leadership and the efforts of those working diligently towards the betterment of Indian sports". — *PTI*

PREMIER LEAGUE

Salah's penalty sends Reds atop

Wolverhampton (United Kingdom), Sept. 29: Mohamed Salah fired Liverpool to the top of the Premier League as the Egypt star's penalty sealed a 2-1 win at struggling Wolves on Saturday.

Salah struck in the second half after Rayan Ait Nouri had cancelled out Ibrahim Konate's opener for Liverpool.

Arne Slot's side have won five of their six league games this season and sit one point clear of second-placed Manchester City, who were held to a 1-1 draw at Newcastle earlier in the afternoon.

Slot insisted this week that Liverpool are yet to prove themselves title contenders, but the Dutchman has made a strong impression at the start of the post-Jürgen Klopp era at Anfield.

Since their shock home loss to Nottingham Forest, the Reds have reeled off four successive victories in all competitions.

Liverpool fans packed into one side of Molineux chanted Slot's name loudly as the final minutes wound down on their latest win.

The 46-year-old has masterminded one of the best starts to a managerial reign in Liverpool history. If they continue at this pace it will be hard for even Slot to deny their title credentials.

The only concern for Slot was a late injury to Andrew Robertson that forced the Scotland left-back to limp off. — *AFP*



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah celebrates scoring against Wolverhampton during their EPL match at the Molineux Stadium in Wolverhampton on Saturday. — *AP*

"The first 20 minutes weren't great. It was a real tough start for us but eventually we took control of the game and scored the first goal," Slot said.

"Wolves have a really good game plan for every opponent and it was the same for us. It's always nice to win, especially away."

Liverpool, who last won the title in 2020, host Bologna in their second Champions League fixture on Wednesday before travelling to Crystal Palace in next weekend. — *AFP*



Sri Lanka's Nishan Peiris (right) celebrates the wicket of New Zealand batter Mitchell Santner on Day Four of the second Test in Galle, Sri Lanka, on Sunday. — *AP*

SECOND TEST

DEBUTANT PEIRIS SPINS KIWIS TO INNINGS LOSS

Galle (Sri Lanka), Sept. 29: Debutant off-spinner Nishan Peiris took six wickets Sunday to seal Sri Lanka's first series win against New Zealand in 15 years with a crushing victory by an innings and 154 runs in the second Test in Galle.

New Zealand were all out for 360 in their second innings before tea on day four after being asked to follow-on.

Peiris, 27, and fellow spinner Prabhath Jayasuriya shared 18 wickets in the match, the latter taking 6/42 in the first innings to bundle out the tourists for just 88 after the hosts had amassed a mammoth 602/5 declared.

"Amazing how the batting unit rose to the occasion," Sri Lanka captain Dhananjaya de Silva said.

"Then the spinners were too good... Once we bowled them out for less than 100 runs in the first innings, it was very difficult for them to come back into the game."

New Zealand's lower order did put up some

BRIEF SCORES

Sri Lanka 602/5 decl. beat New Zealand 88 & 360 (Glenn Phillips 78, Mitchell Santner 67, Devon Conway 61, Tom Blundell 60, Nishan Peiris 6/170, Prabhath Jayasuriya 3/139).

fight after resuming at 199/5 on Sunday, with Tom Blundell, Glenn Phillips and Mitchell Santner all making half-centuries.

Peiris, who had taken three second-innings wickets on Saturday, trapped Blundell lbw for 60 early in the first session, ending a 95-run stand with Phillips.

Santner helped craft a 64-run partnership for the seventh wicket before the gutsy Phillips fell on 78 when he mistimed a shot to long-on, giving Peiris his maiden five-wicket haul.

Santner put together a stubborn ninth-wicket stand of 53 with Ajaz Patel before the latter was sent back, bowled by Jayasuriya, on 22. — *AFP*