

Aryan Age

The Age of Truth

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PM Modi hails Indian space sector

New Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday hailed India's space missions saying the nation's youth have benefited a lot from the space sector reforms. "A lot is happening in Bharat of the 21st century that is strengthening the foundation of a developed Bharat" PM Modi said while addressing his 113th Episode of 'Mann Ki Baat'. Touching upon the achievements made by the country's space sector, Modi said On August 23, the countrymen celebrated the first National Space Day. Last year, on this day, Chandrayan-3 made a successful landing on the southern part of the moon at the Shiv-Shakti point. "India became the world's first nation to achieve this pride-filled accomplishment" he added. He said the space ecosystem has now become very vibrant, Modi also interacted with a team from Spaceteck Start-Up GalaxEye which was launched by the alumni of IIT-Madras. Recalling his speech, on August 15, the PM said while speaking from the ramparts of the Red Fort, he had urged one lakh youth who are not from a political background to connect with the political system. "This point of mine has garnered a tremendous response. We thus come to know that a large number of our youth are eagerly ready to enter politics" he said. Modi also thanked the people for sending him letters from across



the country on such subjects. Speaking about the Har Bhar Tiranga campaign, the Prime Minister said, in Reasi in Jammu and Kashmir, a Tiranga rally, bearing a 750 metre long Flag was taken out on the Chenab Railway Bridge, the tallest Railway Bridge in the world. He said whoever has viewed these pictures, would find their hearts swelling with delight. Modi said, there were captivating pictures of the Tiranga Yatra on the Dal Lake in Srinagar and a yatra with a 600-foot-long Tiranga was carried out in East Kameng District in Arunachal Pradesh. The Prime Minister also shared how sanitation workers from Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh created wonderful artworks out of garbage. He also shared how a startup 'e-conscious' uses plastic waste to craft eco-friendly products. Also, a startup named Eco-kaari produces myriad beautiful items out of plastic waste. The Prime Minister urged people to take part in the Catch the Rain Movement and also in the Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam campaign and plant more and more trees. Speaking about World Sanskrit Day, which was celebrated a few days ago, PM Modi said, Vytis Vidunas a professor in Lithuania has embarked upon a unique endeavour. "A group comprising a few

people came together on the banks of the Neris river and performed recitation of the Vedas and the Gita there. Such endeavours have been continuing there over the past few years" he added. Modi said people should try and bring forward such efforts which promote the Sanskrit Language. Touching upon the issue of fitness, the prime minister said it is extremely important in the lives of people and urged them to be fit, and keep paying attention to their diet and lifestyles. The prime minister said to make people aware of the need for fitness, the Fit India campaign was launched. "To be fit, we have to keep paying attention to our diet, our lifestyles... everything. To make people aware of fitness, the Fit India campaign was launched" he added. Raising the issue of children's nutrition, the PM said "It is a priority for the country. We pay attention towards their nutrition during the entire year but there is one particular month that is dedicated to focus especially on this matter. For this, every year, Nutrition Month is celebrated from the 1st of September to the 30th of September." During the programme, the Prime Minister also called upon the people to take part in the "Catch the Rain Movement" and reminded the "EK PED MAAN KE NAAM" campaign.

Lead Modi Felicitates and gives certificates to 11 lakh new Lakhpati Didis



Jalgaon : The Prime Minister Narendra Modi today address today Lakhpati Didi gathering in Jalgaon and handed out certificates and felicitated 11 lakh new Lakhpati Didis who recently became Lakhpati during the third term of the present government. The Prime Minister also interacted with Lakhpati Didis from across the country. Modi released a Revolving Fund of Rs 2,500 crore, benefiting about 48 lakh members of 4.3 lakh Self-Help Groups (SHG). He also disbursed bank loans of Rs 5,000 crore which will benefit 25.8 lakh members of 2.35 lakh SHGs. Since the inception of the Lakhpati Didi Yojana, one crore women have already been made Lakhpati Didis and the government has set a target of three crore Lakhpati Didis. Prime Minister paid condolences to the victims of the bus accident tragedy in Tanahun, Nepal where several people from Jalgaon lost their lives. Expressing happiness over the attendance of a huge crowd of mothers and sisters at the mega event of Lakhpati Didi Sammelan, Modi said, "Today, funds of more than Rs 6000 Crore were disbursed for lakhs of Women SHGs spanning across India". He added that this corpus of funds will bolster many women to transform into 'Lakhpati Didis'. Modi underlined that the mothers and sisters of Maharashtra give a glimpse of the glorious culture and traditions of the state. "Traditions of Maharashtra are known not only in India but around the world", the Prime Minister remarked. He mentioned witnessing the culture of Maharashtra during his recent visit to Poland and said that the people of Maharashtra are highly respected by Polish citizens. He spoke about the Kolhapur Memorial that is dedicated to the spirit of service and hospitality of the people of Kolhapur by the people of Poland. The Prime Minister noted that women power of India has always contributed to building the future of the society and the nation. "Today when India is striving to become developed, our women power is once again coming forward," emphasized Modi. Underlining that the Lakhpati Didi campaign is not just a way to boost the income of mothers and sisters but a mega campaign to strengthen the family and future generations, the Prime Minister said that it is transforming the rural economy. "Every woman present here knows that her social position in society is elevated when she starts to make a living", the Prime Minister exclaimed, noting that the purchasing power of a family also goes up with an increase in income.

Need to dismantle narcotics network: Shah

New Delhi : Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said that illicit trafficking of narcotics in India is severely impairing national security and the entire narcotics network needs to be dismantled with a 'Top to Bottom and Bottom to Top' approach. Shah said that money earned from illicit drug trade promotes terrorism and Left Wing Extremism (LWE) and weakens the country's economy and drugs not only ruin the country's young generation but also weaken the country's national security. The Home Minister was speaking after virtually inaugurating the Zonal Unit Office of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in Raipur. He also chaired a review meeting on the Narcotics scenario in Chhattisgarh. In his address, Shah said that the government's resolve of a drug-free India by 2047, is today becoming the resolve of every citizen of

the country, an official statement said. Shah said, "Unless we attack the entire network, we will not be able to achieve the goal of a drug-free India which is significant for building a prosperous, safe and glorious India". Stating that drugs are not just India's problem but a global menace, he underlined that, "If we fight the battle against drugs in India with intensity, seriousness and a comprehensive strategy, we can win this battle. Shah said that everyone should move forward together on the zero-tolerance policy against narcotics and fulfil PM Modi's resolve of a drug-free India. "Today the Raipur Zonal Office of NCB has been inaugurated. This office will play an important role in controlling narcotics not only in the state but in the entire region. Our aim is to have the presence of NCB in every state of the country. Our government will end

the drug trade by establishing NCB offices in every state with the cooperation of the state governments," the Home Minister asserted. He also expressed concern over the changing trend of drug trafficking and its moving from natural to synthetic drugs, and emphasized on the use of scientific methods in the investigation of drug-trafficking cases. He said that we need to work with a 'Top to Bottom and Bottom to Top' approach and dismantle the



Rajnath Singh visits Naval Surface Warfare Centre in US



New Delhi : Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, as a part of his ongoing tour to the US, visited the William B. Morgan Large Cavitation Channel (LCC) in the Naval Surface Warfare Centre (NSWC) at Memphis, Tennessee. The LCC is one of the world's largest and most technically advanced water tunnel facilities for testing submarines, torpedoes, naval surface ships, and propellers. Singh was briefed at the facility, and he also witnessed an actual tunnel experiment, an official statement said. The Minister was accompanied by the Ambassador of India to the US, the Director General of Naval Operations from the Indian Navy, and the DRDO Defence Technology Counsellor, among others. He was received by the US Deputy Under Secretary of the Navy for Policy and briefed by the Commander and Technical Director of the NSWC. The discussions also intend to support the ongoing proposal for the establishment of similar facilities for indigenous design and development in India. Meanwhile, Rajnath Singh, on his social media handle X, shared, "I visited the Naval Surface Warfare Centre at Carderock and witnessed the pathbreaking experiments at the facility. India and the US look forward to working together and benefiting from each other's experiences."

Scared of losing, BJP wants Haryana polling date postponed: Chautala



Chandigarh : Ridiculing the BJP for seeking postponement of the Haryana Assembly polling date, former state Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala has said it only shows that the saffron outfit is "afraid" of losing the election. Addressing mediapersons in Jind on Saturday, the Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) chief claimed the ruling BJP has reached out to the ECI requesting the polling, currently slated for October 1 for the 90-member Assembly, be deferred as its support base in the state has "shrunk". "The BJP is afraid of losing the polls. So it is scared after the announcement of the early polling date. It is because of this that it has reached out to the Election Commission requesting the date of polling be pushed back. We don't think the Commission will consider this request," said Chautala. He was referring to the letters give to the ECI by the BJP and the opposition Indian National Lok Dal requesting the polling date be deferred by almost a week as they apprehend a low turnout in view of a host of holidays around the current election date. Chautala prophesied that the BJP would not be able to win even 20 seats. He said the people of Haryana are very angry with the BJP, and on October 1 they will express their anger by voting in large numbers. Taking on the Congress, Chautala said before the BJP, the Congress divided the state on the basis of regionalism during its 10 year rule. "Everyone is aware of the poor condition of roads in all areas except one region during Congress rule. There was regionalism in jobs and corruption and the people of the state will never forget the rule of the Congress". In response to a question, Chautala said for the

Chandrayaan-3 data released to scientific community

Chennai : The science data of India's third Lunar mission Chandrayaan-3 was released to the scientific community. In an update, ISRO said the data was released by Union Minister of State (Space) Dr Jitendra Singh at New Delhi on the occasion of National Space Day, which was celebrated to commemorate soft landing on the South polar region of the Moon. The Chandrayaan-3 mission consisted of a Vikram Lander, Pragyan Rover, and a propulsion module (PM). The lander soft-landed on August 23, 2023 at the southern high latitudes on the Moon. Post-landing, the rover moved around the landing site and covered 101m distance. All the payloads on the Lander, Rover and Propulsion module were operated and collected in-situ data pertaining to seismicity, thermo-physical properties, plasma environment and elemental composition of the landing region. Indian Space Science Data Center (ISSDC) is the nodal center for archiving planetary missions' data of ISRO. The Chandrayaan-3 data are available in Planetary Data System-4 (PDS4) standard and are peer reviewed for sharing with global scientific community and general public. Chandrayaan-3 datasets are now available on PRADAN (Policy based data Retrieval, Analytics, Dissemination And Notification system) which is a browse and dissemination web application, designed by ISSDC to disseminate Chandrayaan data to the scientific community. Users of the scientific data may register themselves and access and browse the data from PRADAN portal of ISSDC.





Parties not part of INDIA alliance secretly collaborate with BJP: Shafi Uri

Srinagar : Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (NC) leader Sajjad Shafi Uri alleged on Sunday that political parties who are not part of the INDIA alliance are secretly collaborating with the BJP.

He made these remarks while inaugurating the party's election office in Boniyar, Uri, in north Kashmir's Baramulla district doay.

Sajjad, who is likely to be the party candidate from the border constituency of Uri, claimed that these parties, who remained silent during the Lok Sabha elections, are now adopting an underground strategy to support the BJP in the upcoming assembly elections.

He challenged them to openly apologise for their



past support for the BJP, stating that NC's pro-people policies will provide jobs, free electricity, water, and increased ration quotas. The event was attended by senior NC leaders, including DDC Mohammad Ismail Khan, Tehsil President Raja Javid, Block President Nazir Ahmed Chack, and others.

Yogi orders regular police patrolling, bans objectionable posters ahead of Janmashtami

Lucknow : Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed authorities to ensure that the festival of Sri Krishna Janmashtami is celebrated on a grand note with traditional devotion across the state, including all reserve police lines, police stations, and prisons.

As part of the preparations, the Chief Minister has emphasised the need for robust security, cleanliness, and logistical arrangements during the Krishna Leela events, tableaux, and processions. He has ordered the deployment of adequate police forces at crowded locations to ensure public safety.



In line with these directives, DG Jail Rama Shastri of the Uttar Pradesh Prison Administration and Reform Services has issued orders for the traditional celebration of Sri Krishna Janmashtami in all state prisons.

The CM issued the necessary guidelines to the officials on Sunday regarding the Janmashtami festival. He said that Janmashtami is celebrated with great reverence and pomp in Mathura, the birthplace of Lord Krishna, in which lakhs of devotees from the country and abroad participate.

He highlighted the sensitive nature of the Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi and Shahi Idgah Mosque sites, which have been on the radar of ISI and various terrorist organisations. He called for special attention to be given to security arrangements in the area.

He further instructed that a comprehensive list of Leela Sthals, Pandals, Temples, and Shobha Yatras be compiled for each district, with a well-coordinated police arrangement in place. Additionally, he emphasised the importance of robust security and traffic management, taking into account the anticipated number of devotees expected to attend these events.

CM Yogi made it clear that no new traditions should be introduced under any circumstances. He ordered the updating of lists containing the names of anti-social and commu-

processions, particularly when they pass near religious sites of other communities, has previously led to controversies.

To avoid such situations, Yogi directed that all necessary arrangements be made with sensitivity. He also mandated the videography of processions for security purposes, ensuring that all CCTV cameras along the procession routes and at event venues are operational. Furthermore, drone cameras should be deployed to monitor key sensitive areas.

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Kolkata police chief should resign, face CBI grilling: Medics

Kolkata, Aug 25 (UNI) The striking Kolkata medics on Sunday demanded the resignation of city Police Commissioner Vineet Goyal and his questioning by the Central Bureau of Investigation as part of the federal agency's ongoing probe into the murder and rape of a doctor in R G Kar Medical College and Hospital on August 9.

The demand for action against the police chief was voiced on the 17th day of a cease-work of junior medics who have refused to attend Outdoor Patient Department (OPD) over their demands of justice for their murdered colleague and security at work place.

The agitating medics announced that their cease-work at the OPDs in government-run institutions across West Bengal would continue till the time there is visible progress in the investigation.

The medics have also called a mass convention on Monday at Calcutta Medical College and Hospital in Central Kolkata.

The protesting doctors also demanded immediate suspension of ousted RGKH principal Sandip Ghosh, who has been facing daily questioning by the CBI for alleged lapses in the



murder case alleged financial irregularities in the troubled hospital since 2021. On Sunday, the CBI's anti-corruption unit carried out searches at 15 places in Kolkata and Howrah and North 24 Parganas districts over the alleged financial irregularities in the hospital. The CBI raided the house and offices of Ghosh, former superintendent Sanjay Vashist's house and office, premises of hospital's former forensic chief Debashish Shome and businessman and supplier Biplab Singha in the

Dalit, BC seers rally behind Karnataka CM amid Muda case

Bengaluru : A delegation of influential seers from Dalit and backward class communities met Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday, offering their "unconditional moral support" following Governor Thaaawarchand Gehlot's decision to sanction prosecution against him in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment case.

The Chief Minister's office responded robustly to the Governor's move, accusing the Central government and the Raj Bhavan of attempting to destabilise the state administration. The

statement from Siddaramaiah's office emphasised the seers' commitment to uniting against these perceived conspiracies and supporting the Chief Minister's leadership.

Governor Gehlot's decision on August 16 to approve prosecution under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, and Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, has posed a serious challenge to the Congress government, which has been in power for nearly 15 months. The sanction follows petitions from activists Pradeep Kumar S.P, T.J. Abra-

BJP MP Kangana trying to disrupt peace in Punjab: Neel Garg

Chandigarh : Castigating BJP MP Kangana Ranaut for her controversial statements, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday accused the actor of deliberately trying to disrupt the peaceful atmosphere in Punjab.

In a statement, AAP spokesperson in the state Neel Garg said Kangana Ranaut often gives statements defaming the farmers of Punjab and sometimes even calls Punjabis terrorists. Her statements seem to have the support of the central leadership of BJP or the party is deliberately making her give such statements.

He said BJP has been tar-



getting Punjab since the time of the farmers' movement. Whoever raises his or her voice against the Modi gov-

Joblessness in HP at its peak: BJP

Dharamshala : Former Speaker of Himachal Pradesh Assembly and BJP legislator from Sullah, Vipin Singh Parmar, on Sunday attacked the Congress government over joblessness and said Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has cheated unemployed youth in the name of employment guarantee.

Parmar said the youth are protesting on streets as there is a complete ban on new recruitments, including routine competitive examinations.

The former Vidhan Sabha Speaker and Kangra-Chamba BJP in-charge said

Cong MLA accuses BJP of Rs 100 cr bribery plot to topple Karnataka govt

Bengaluru : In a fiery allegation, a Congress MLA has accused the opposition BJP of orchestrating a high-stakes scheme, dubbed 'Operation Kamala,' to destabilise the Siddaramaiah-led government in Karnataka.

The MLA claims that BJP operatives are now offering a staggering Rs 100 crore to Congress legislators to lure them away and create political chaos.

Ravikumar Gowda, the Congress MLA from Mandya, dropped a bombshell on Sunday, accusing the BJP of escalating their bribery offer from Rs 50 crore to an eye-watering Rs 100 crore.

"Only a few days ago, someone approached me with an offer of Rs 100 crore to buy off 50 MLAs," Gowda revealed in a press conference. He emphasised that, despite these extravagant bribes, the Congress govern-



ment remains solid and unwavering.

The term 'Operation Kamala,' or 'Operation Lotus,' refers to the BJP's alleged strategy to engineer defections among opposition legislators in a bid to install a BJP-led government and en-

sure its stability. Gowda revealed that he received a recent call from a BJP intermediary offering the increased bribe. "I told them to keep their Rs 100 crore," Gowda said sternly, adding that he contemplated reporting the matter to the Enforcement Directorate (ED). "They are constantly plotting to undermine our government, but our position remains unshakable."

Earlier, in October of the previous year, Gowda had made similar accusations, alleging that BJP operatives

Stalin announces solatium to cracker blast victims

Chennai : Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Sunday announced solatium of Rs three lakh each to the families of four workers, who were killed in two blasts at the cracker manufacturing unit in Mayiladuthurai and Dindigul districts.

An official release Mr Stalin expressed deep grief and anguish over their deaths and announced the solatium from the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund.

It said two workers, Kannan alias Chinnan (42) and Muneeswaran alias Masa (30), were charred to death in the blast at Avichipatti village in Natham Taluk in Dindigul district of the State.

In the other mishap, that took place at Tiruvallangadu in Mayiladuthurai district, two workers, Karnan (45) and Lakshmanan (45) we-



killed in the blast and two others sustained injuries.

Mr Stalin offered his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members and announced an assistance of Rs three lakh each to their families.

He also announced Rs one lakh each to the two injured as assistance and directed the hospital authorities to provide the best of treatment to them.



Briefs :

Delhi police recover pistol from school bag of 10-year-old boy in Najafgarh

New Delhi : A ten-year-old student in Delhi's Najafgarh was discovered with a pistol in his school bag, officials reported on Sunday. The weapon was found during school hours, prompting the administration to immediately notify the police. The authorities confirmed that the firearm was registered in the name of the boy's late father, who passed away a few months earlier. Steps are being taken to revoke the gun's license, and the incident is currently under investigation.

Delhi's minimum temperature recorded at 25.4 degrees Celsius

New Delhi : Delhi's minimum temperature on Sunday was slightly below the average, recorded at 25.4 degrees Celsius, according to the Meteorological Department. At 8:30 am, the humidity level was 86 percent. The weather forecast suggests generally cloudy skies with a chance of light rain throughout the day, with the maximum temperature expected to reach around 35 degrees Celsius. As of 9 am, the (AQI) in the national capital was categorized as 'satisfactory,' with a reading of 91, as per the Central Pollution Control Board. An AQI reading of 0-50 is considered 'good,' 51-100 'satisfactory,' 101-200 'moderate,' 201-300 'poor,' 301-400 'very poor,' and 401-500 'severe.'

Govt not worried about dengue: Cong

New Delhi : On Saturday, the Delhi Congress accused the (AAP) government of neglecting the rising dengue cases in the capital, alleging that the administration was more focused on using official resources to defend Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and secure his release from jail. There was no immediate response from the AAP government. Delhi Congress President Devender Yadav issued a press statement noting that hospitals in the city had reported 300 dengue cases so far. He criticized the Delhi government and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) for their lack of preparedness in addressing the situation. Yadav highlighted that regular monsoon rains have led to waterlogging and increased water accumulation, which has exacerbated the spread of vector-borne diseases. He pointed out that despite an advisory from the Union Health Ministry, many hospitals lack the basic facilities needed to treat dengue patients. Since 2022, Delhi has reported over 10,000 dengue cases and nine deaths, yet the AAP government and the MCD have failed to act effectively to prevent further outbreaks, Yadav claimed.

72-year-old held for raping minor

New Delhi : A 72-year-old man was arrested for allegedly repeated sexual assault of a 7-year-old girl in south Delhi's Ambedkar Nagar. The accused is the landlord of the family and was reported by the child's parents after she disclosed the abuse. According to Delhi Police, the girl's parents live in the landlord's house as tenants. The father is a labourer while her mother is a homemaker. The girl revealed to her parents that the elderly man assaulted her whenever they were out of the house. She stated that the abuse had been ongoing for the past month, with the most recent incident occurring three days ago. We also published the following articles recently: Man arrested for sexually abusing 5-year-old girl in Maharashtra's Sinnar taluka.

Maliwal case: Court extends Bibhav's judicial custody

New Delhi : On Saturday, a Delhi court extended the judicial custody of Bibhav Kumar, an aide to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, until September 13 in connection with the alleged assault on Rajya Sabha member Swati Maliwal. The court, presided over by Judicial Magistrate Gaurav Goyal, also requested a response from the investigation officer concerning a plea by Kumar.

The plea sought proper pagination of the chargesheet and documents provided to Kumar's legal counsel to ensure organized documentation for the defense. Kumar appeared before the court via videoconference, with his lawyer Rajat Bhardwaj em-

phasizing the need for structured documentation.

Delhi Police had filed a chargesheet against Kumar on July 16, citing various offenses under the Indian Penal Code. The chargesheet also suggested the possibility of a "larger conspiracy" behind the assault on Maliwal, which is still under investigation. The court took cognizance of the chargesheet on July 30.

In related developments: Cops oppose Bibhav Kumar's bail: Delhi Police have opposed bail for Kumar, arguing that he is influential and could potentially affect witnesses. The police affidavit also mentioned that Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal was

present at the crime scene and hinted at a larger conspiracy involving tampering with CCTV evidence and delays in filing the FIR due to the victim's trauma.

Supreme Court hearing: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal's pleas on September 6. The CBI has opposed Kejriwal's bail plea, accusing him of orchestrating a scheme to increase liquor wholesalers' commission and allegedly receiving Rs 100 crore in kickbacks for the party's Goa election campaign. The agency claims Kejriwal holds significant influence over AAP's decisions despite not holding a ministerial portfolio.



DJB denied budget funds, crisis part of conspiracy, claims Delhi minister Atishi

New Delhi : With a recent spike in sewer-related complaints in Delhi, Water Minister Atishi has accused a conspiracy of deliberately depriving the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) of necessary funds, leading to a shortage of manpower and machinery crucial for sewer maintenance and repair. According to Atishi, since the 2023-24 fiscal year, the Delhi government's finance department has imposed "unnecessary" obstacles, creating what she describes as an "artificial financial crisis" for the DJB.

Documents accessed by TOI reveal that the funds allocated to DJB in this fiscal year's budget have not been released according to the planned schedule, severely hampering the water utility's operations. Typically, the budget funds are to be released in three installments: 25% in April or May, 50% in September or October, and the remaining 25% in January or February. However, in the 2023-24 fiscal year, funds were only released by March 31. After the DJB petitioned the Supreme Court for the release of nearly ₹1,500 crore, which would have otherwise lapsed at the end of the financial year, the finance department released ₹500 crore, which was used to clear outstanding payments, leaving ₹777 crore in liabilities carried over to the next fiscal year.

The situation hasn't improved much in the current financial year. Of the ₹7,195 crore allocated to the DJB in the 2024-25 budget, only ₹1,100 crore has been released so far, with August almost over.

A significant portion of this amount was used to settle the previous year's liabilities. Due to this fund shortage, the DJB has reduced its workforce and machinery, bringing its operations to a near standstill.

Atishi expressed concern over the situation, stating, "Every day, we



are receiving complaints of sewers overflowing. Delhi is on the verge of a public health crisis.

"She added that many sewer lines have broken or collapsed, but the DJB is unable to replace them due to the lack of funds, which she claims have been intentionally withheld to create a financial crisis.

As the chairperson of the DJB and also in charge of finance and planning, Atishi pointed out that despite the increased budgetary allocation for the DJB this fiscal year, from ₹6,340 crore in 2023-24 to ₹7,195 crore in 2024-25, the finance department has repeatedly delayed the release of funds.

She noted that new objections are raised every time a proposal for funds is submitted, causing further delays.

Atishi also highlighted that no funds have been released under the

capital head this fiscal year, with the finance department asking the DJB to "revamp" its proposals according to previously issued guidelines.

She alleged that these guidelines, reissued without consulting her, are part of a strategy to create additional hurdles for the DJB.

However, a finance department official disputed Atishi's claims, stating that ₹1,300 crore has already been released to the DJB this fiscal year.

The official also mentioned that proposals worth ₹500 crore, submitted on August 8, are currently under review, with no other proposals pending.

The official added that the funds released are based on "actual requirements" and that some proposals were rejected because they did not align with the specific project guidelines, but most have been approved.

CBI & BJP conspiring to keep Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal in jail: AAP

New Delhi : The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Saturday accused the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of conspiring to keep Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in jail in connection with the excise policy case. Senior AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Atishi claimed that while the CBI had requested additional time from the Supreme Court to file a response to Kejriwal's bail plea, it simultaneously leaked details to the media.

The BJP, in response, challenged AAP to contest the CBI's actions in the Supreme Court if the party believed the agency was acting dishonestly or with bias.

Former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia took to social media platform X (formerly Twitter) to express his concerns, stating in Hindi that the CBI had requested a 14-day extension in court to prepare its reply on Kejriwal's bail plea. Yet, on the same day, the CBI's response was allegedly leaked to the media to create one-sided headlines. Sisodia further accused the CBI of acting under BJP's direction to ensure Kejriwal remained in jail, but asserted that such "headline management" efforts would ultimately fail, and the truth would prevail.



On Friday, the Supreme Court postponed the hearing on Kejriwal's bail plea to September 5 after the CBI sought additional time to submit its affidavit. Kejriwal has filed two petitions challenging the denial of bail and his arrest by the CBI in the case.

At a press conference on Saturday, Minister Atishi echoed Sisodia's sentiments, alleging that the "BJP's CBI" had sought a week to file its affidavit in the Supreme Court but ensured that the in-

formation was widely publicized in the media. She accused the CBI of lying to the Supreme Court in order to keep Kejriwal in jail for a few more days, but insisted that despite these efforts, the truth would eventually come to light, just as it did in Manish Sisodia's case.

Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Kapoor criticized AAP, labeling it an "anarchic party" and accusing its leaders of expecting investigative agencies to operate according to their whims. He

argued that for AAP leaders, any opposition from investigative agencies or courts is seen as biased and influenced by the BJP.

Delhi Congress President Devender Yadav added that the Supreme Court's decision to defer Kejriwal's bail hearing indicated that the CBI had found credible evidence of his direct involvement in the alleged liquor scam, necessitating his continued judicial custody to ensure an impartial investigation.

LG orders removal of secy of sports complex

New Delhi : LG VK Saxena has ordered the removal of Yamuna Sports Complex's secretary over the "appalling state of affairs" in its maintenance.

Raj Niwas officials said Saxena recently visited the sports complex in east Delhi and issued directions for its complete makeover within the next two months. One of the largest sports facilities in east Delhi, the Yamuna Sports Complex is operated by Delhi Development Authority.

"Dismayed at the appalling state of affairs as far as maintenance and upkeep were concerned, Saxena has directed that the officials in charge of the sports complex be immediately removed," a Raj Niwas official said.

Officials said that LG underlined the "apathy and neglect" towards the maintenance of the stadium, which once hosted events of archery and table tennis in Commonwealth Games 2010.

"LG directed to not only restore the complex to its earlier glory but also ensure that it develops into a top-of-the-class sporting arena for sportspersons and also a self-sustaining recreational destination for the people of east Delhi," the official said. He also asked for an unused building just at the gate of the complex to be immediately developed and repurposed as a clubhouse, where members from the neighbouring localities could avail of facilities like open-air dining, a restaurant, and recreation, the official added.

On an open unused space spread over about two acres of land along the boundary of the complex, LG ordered for facilities of tentage and banquet to be developed so that the people living in the crowded east Delhi localities get the facility of a designated space for organising community functions. This portion of the complex, separated from the sporting facilities, will be accessible to users from outside without disturbing the sporting activities in the complex, LG's office said.

We also published the following articles recently: Officials raze illegal complex of Ayodhya rape accused

Authorities in Ayodhya demolished a purported illegal multi-storey shopping complex owned by SP func-



tionary Moeed Khan, arrested for allegedly gang-raping a 12-year-old. The demolition came after the removal of another structure, a bakery, owned by him. The survivor, who had to undergo a court-sanctioned abortion, reportedly experienced prolonged abuse.

Zodiac Signs with Complex Personalities: Understanding the Intricacies

The article discussed zodiac signs known for their complex personalities. Scorpio, known for its enigmatic nature, Pisces for its emotional depth, Gemini for its multifaceted character, Aquarius for its innovative approach, and Capricorn for its ambitious yet intricate nature. The summary highlighted the traits making these signs fascinating to understand.

BBMP: Jayanagar shopping complex basement cleared for parking

'Custody' Death: HC Relief For Delhi Police

New Delhi : The Delhi High Court has temporarily halted a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) directive requiring the city's police chief to compensate for a man's death inside a police station. This intervention came after the court reviewed CCTV footage showing that the deceased, Rashid Raza, was alone in the room where he allegedly committed suicide.

Justice Sanjeev Narula noted that the CCTV footage indicated that Raza, who was in the Sankraman Kaksh at the police station, appeared alone at certain times, as the footage showed the door closing and opening intermittently.

This evidence suggested that the police could not have intervened to prevent his death.

The High Court's action followed an appeal by the Delhi Police challenging the NHRC's ruling, which had held the officers accountable for the death on December 8, 2019, at the Narela Industrial Area police station.

The NHRC had asserted that even if Raza's death was deemed a suicide, the police should have been more vigilant.

In defense, Additional Standing Counsel Prashant Manchanda argued that Raza had visited the police station unexpectedly to inquire about his wife's body.

Delhi man kills puppy, brags about it in video; cops register FIR

New Delhi : A resident of New Ashok Nagar has landed in trouble for allegedly maiming and killing a puppy. He allegedly dragged a metal gate over its neck and later bragged about it in a video.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PeTA) and local activists recently filed a complaint with the New Ashok Nagar police station against the accused and an FIR was subsequently registered under sections of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.

"After learning that an individual had allegedly

killed a puppy in Pandit Mohalla area by dragging a metal gate over its neck and later bragged about it in a video, PeTA India and local activists advocate Leena Sharma and Nimisha Bhagat filed a complaint with seeking the registration of an FIR. The police station registered an FIR under Section 325 of BNS, 2023, and Section 11(1)(a) of The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960, against the accused," PeTA said in a statement.

In a proposal sent to central govt regarding an amendment to the PCA Act, 1960, the organisation had

recommended significantly increasing penalties for cruelty to animals.

"Those who abuse animals often move on to harming humans. It is imperative that members of the public report cases of cruelty to animals such as this one for everyone's safety," says PeTA India's cruelty response coordinator Sunayana Basu.

"PeTA recommends that perpetrators of animal abuse undergo psychiatric evaluation and receive counselling, as abusing animals indicates a deep psychological disturbance.

Research shows that people who commit acts of

cruelty to animals are often repeat offenders who move on to hurting other animals, including humans," the organisation said.

We also published the following articles recently: Can animals be gay? Explore homosexual behaviour in animals

The article discussed how animals exhibit homosexual behaviors, such as bonobos, dolphins, and giraffes, and explored the evolutionary rationale behind these actions. Researchers suggested these behaviors might offer social benefits or help in reducing conflict. It was also highlighted that historical inter-

pretations might have been biased by human cultural perspectives on sexuality.

Badlapur school sex abuse: SIT registers FIR against school authority under Pocco act

Following a rebuke from the Bombay High Court, a Special Investigation Team registered a case against a Badlapur school administration under the Pocco Act. The school failed to report child abuse complaints from victims' families. Public pressure and a delayed police response highlighted serious procedural lapses in handling the child abuse incident.



HARYANA

Briefs :

Booths in high-rises increased from 52 to 126 in Gurugram to boost polling

Gurugram: Aimed at achieving 75 per cent polling in the Vidhan Sabha election, the Gurugram Administration has increased the number of polling booths in high-rise societies. The Gurugram Assembly segment records one of the poorest polling percentages and its the society and high-rise residents who are blamed for it. The administration, as part of the ECI directive, has set up 52 polling booths in the societies itself to promote 'vote from doorstep'. It proved to be a game changer as polling touched 60 per cent in many areas as the residents gave thumbs up to the convenience at these booths. Inspired by this, the administration has now raised the total number of booths in societies to 126 for the Vidhan Sabha elections. "We managed to turn around low-voting percentage in areas which were conventionally known for poor turnout with these society booths. It was not just the society residents but even people from nearby areas who voted here, citing shorter queues and better facilities as the reason to vote. We will replicate this in the Vidhan Sabha elections," said District Election Officer-cum-DC Gurugram Nishant Yadav. The maximum number of these booths will be in Badshahpur Assembly segment with 71 booths in high rises followed by 42 in Gurugram, nine in Pataudi and four in Sohna. Yadav said Gurugram district had in all got 234 new polling booths, out of these, 63 were transferred booths, which were in dilapidated condition and shifted to new premises. "There were 63 booths in the Lok Sabha elections, which reported poor voting performance as they were in damaged buildings such as very old schools or community centres. We have got them shifted to nearby spots and hope that it will boost polling too," said Yadav.

BJP lost Lok Sabha poll as it fielded outsider from Hisar: Bishnoi

Hisar: The internal strife in the BJP which started brewing during the Lok Sabha elections has come out into the open as former MP Kuldeep Bishnoi has criticised the party's decision to field Energy Minister Ranjit Singh as its candidate from the Hisar seat. Singh had lost the Lok Sabha poll to Jai Prakash of the Congress by 60,000 votes. He also trailed from Bishnoi's stronghold Adampur Assembly segment by 12,000 votes. Singh had also vented his ire on Bishnoi alleging that some party leaders had worked against him. Bishnoi said here today that ticket allocation during the Lok Sabha election was wrong. "People had wanted to vote for the BJP. Had the party fielded me from Hisar, I would have won the election by the highest margin among all 10 seats in Haryana. But people did not accept Ranjit Singh as he was an outsider," Bishnoi said while interacting with mediapersons today. "Personally, I have good terms with Ranjit Singh.

BJP working hard to retain Thanesar Assembly seat

Kurukshetra : While the BJP is trying hard to retain the Thanesar Assembly seat for the third consecutive time, the Congress is leaving no stone unturned to make a comeback in the constituency in the upcoming Assembly election.

The seat is being represented by Minister of State for urban local bodies Subhash Sudha who had won the seat for the BJP in the previous two Assembly elections.

In the previous Assembly election, Subhash Sudha defeated Congress candidate Ashok Arora by a margin of over 840 votes. While the sitting MLA is confident that he will retain the seat based on the work done, Congress leader Ashok Arora, who is eyeing the party ticket, believes that things at the ground level haven't changed and people of Thanesar are set to bring about a change.

Subhash Sudha said, "The BJP has worked for all sections of society and I am confident that the people will continue to support the party.



The government has spent crores of rupees on the development works in Kurukshetra.

The road network, sewerage system and power infrastructure have been strengthened. Similarly, various projects were started to increase tourism in Kurukshetra.

We have been getting blessings from all communities so the BJP will form its government for the third

time in Haryana". About the rumours of his seat being changed from Thanesar to Karnal, Subhash Sudha said, "The BJP has a big organisation and every BJP worker accepts its decision. I have been an MLA twice from Thanesar and I will contest the next election from the Thanesar Assembly again. The opposition is spreading rumours and I will request the party workers and supporters not to believe in what

the opposition is spreading." Meanwhile, Ashok Arora, who is holding regular programmes and getting new people to join the party, said, "We have been getting a tremendous response from the public. The people of Haryana want to bring in a change and oust the BJP government. While the BJP MLA claims that a huge budget has been spent in Thanesar, the things at the ground level has not changed.

Intense battle looms in Kalanwali constituency; Shishpal, Balkaur, Desujodha, Gurtej in fray



Sirsa : As Haryana prepares for its upcoming Assembly elections, the Kalanwali (reserved) constituency is becoming a major battleground. The seat, previously a stronghold of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) with support from the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), is now drawing intense interest from candidates across multiple parties. The race is shaping up to be a fierce contest among contenders of the Congress, BJP and INLD.

Historically, Kalanwali was a stronghold of the SAD because it is located near the Punjab border. SAD candidates won twice in the previous three Assembly elections with the support of INLD. The constituency, which was part of the Rori Assembly segment before 2009, is a rural area predominantly inhabited by Sikhs and Punjabis. Drug

addition remains a serious issue in the region. In the current election cycle, Shishpal Kecharwala, the sitting MLA from the Congress, is seen as a leading candidate. Despite competition from 14 other aspirants within the Congress party, Kecharwala's strong local support makes him a likely candidate for the party's ticket.

On the other hand, Balkaur Singh, who joined the BJP in 2019 after winning in 2014 under the SAD-INLD alliance, is determined to reclaim his seat. Despite rumours of a strained relationship with the BJP leadership, Singh is actively campaigning for the ticket, bolstered by his connection with former Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar.

He faces competition from Rajendra Desujodha, who recently joined the BJP and is also seeking a party

nomination. Adding another layer to the contest is Gurtej Singh, the son of the late INLD veteran Budh Singh Sukhchain. Gurtej retired from his government job a year ago to enter politics, a move seen as a strategy to secure the INLD ticket.

His early retirement and background in the region give him a strong base of support.

With these three prominent figures vying for the Kalanwali seat, the 2024 elections promise to be highly competitive.

Each candidate is employing various strategies to secure their party's nomination, making the final outcome likely dependent on strategic alliances and last-minute negotiations. As a result, Kalanwali is expected to be one of the most closely watched constituencies in the upcoming elections.

Post 'threat' by miscreants, PGI docs withdraw from emergency services

Rohtak : Resident doctors of the Rohtak-PGIMS, who have been on a strike for the past 12 days, decided to withdraw themselves from the emergency services, including the ICUs and Trauma Centre, with effect from today. A decision to this effect was taken after some car-borne persons entered the PGIMS campus and allegedly threatened some doctors and medical students last night.

The protesting doctors took a strong exception to the incident and reported the matter to the institute authorities. Following that, representatives of the Resident Doctors Association (RDA) were called for a meeting with the PGIMS Director this morning. "We had detailed discussions over the prevailing situation and our concerns. However, we decided to continue the strike and withdraw ourselves from the emergency services also as certain issues are yet to be resolved," said a representative of the protesting doctors.

Meanwhile, the medicos also locked a gate leading to a path connecting the PGIMS campus to an adjoining colony to register their protest.

Contacted for comments, the PGIMS Director, Dr SS Lohchab, said the local police authorities had been apprised of the incident in which the car-borne persons had threatened the resident doctors

and students, following which the car had been impounded and its occupants rounded up by the police.

"The other concerns conveyed by the resident doctors regarding the provision of safety and security on the campus, especially the academic area housing the hostels and library buildings, have also been looked into and sorted out at our level. The RDA representatives said they would discuss the matter at their general body meeting and convey their decision," the Director stated.

The resident doctors have been striking work and staging protest demonstrations against the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College in Kolkata, in addition to press for their demand to ensure the provision of adequate safety and security measures on the PGIMS campus.

The patients visiting the local PGIMS have been facing grave inconvenience due to the ongoing strike of the resident doctors.

The OPD services as well as elective surgeries have been affected by the strike of the resident doctors, which was preceded by a long strike by the PGIMS nurses.

Now, with the resident doctors withdrawing themselves from the emergency services as well, the situation has become more critical.

Concretisation causing inefficient stormwater drainage in Faridabad

Faridabad : Although 80 per cent of internal roads and streets are cemented or Ready Mix Concrete (RMC) in the district, problems related to civic infrastructure have still prevailed in the form of waterlogging and depleting groundwater levels. While several hundred crores of funds were spent on the construction of RMC roads over the last two decades, the issue of waterlogging and inadequate recharge of underground water have propped up in the wake of the improper upkeep of infrastructure, sources in the district administration claimed.

Though the exact data of the funds spent on the RMC roads so far is yet to be compiled, sources claim that an amount of over Rs 700 crore may have been spent on cemented roads till date. However, this has failed to provide respite from the problem of waterlogging due to inefficient stormwater drainage despite the improvement in the condition of the roads, sources added.

Ninety per cent of roads lying in Badkhal, Ballabgarh and urban sectors in the city have been cemented. Around 70 per cent of roads or streets in the NIT zone have also been covered. The Faridabad Metropolitan Development Authority (FMDA) has also spent around Rs 50 crore on RMC roads, it was revealed.

"The concretisation has led to sharp decline in the green or open areas as footpaths and the green belts adjoining the roads



have also been covered with interlocking tiles, resulting in rainwater getting accumulated on road or low-lying areas," said Vishnu Goel, an area resident. He said poor stormwater drainage or absence of proper drains had made the problem severe and this had affected the so-called posh or VIP areas. "With no efficient rainwater harvesting system, excess water results creates waterlogged conditions and concretisation leads to reduced groundwater recharge during the

monsoon," he added. "Waterlogging after every downpour has emerged as a cause for concern and this has led to an appalling situation even after spending hundreds of crores each year," said NK Kataria, a resident. Areas covered with concrete affect the groundwater as it reduces the seepage of rainwater into ground, he added. "The problem of stormwater disposal was aggravated due to lack of cleanliness and maintenance of the drains, which had either

been choked or not connected with disposal outlets," said Ajay Bahl, another resident, who added that the quality of the RMC roads had also come under a scanner following the complaints of these cracking up.

Ombir Singh, Superintendent Engineer, Faridabad Municipal Corporation, said a stormwater drainage system was provided with every new road and cleaning and maintenance of the existing drains was a regular exercise.

120 apply for Congress ticket from 4 Yamunanagar constituencies

Yamunanagar : As many as 120 aspirants have applied for Congress ticket from all four Assembly segments Sadhaura, Jagadhri, Yamunanagar and Radaur of Yamunanagar district. Except for two sitting MLAs, a few former MLAs and some senior party leaders, most of the ticket seekers are new faces.

Sitting MLA Renu Bala, former MLA Rajpal, party leaders Rishi Pal, Brijpal Chhappar and Pinki Chhappar are among 27 persons who have applied for Congress ticket from reserved Sadhaura Assembly segment of the district. Six women sitting MLA Renu Bala, Pinki Chhappar, Usha Kamal, Dr Shivani Brakh, Parminder Kaur and Nisha Rani — have also applied from here. Former MLA

Balwant Singh and senior party leader Data Ram are among the front-runners of the party ticket in the BJP from this reserved Assembly segment.

From Jagadhri Assembly segment, as many as 23 persons, including former MLAs Akram Khan, Sub-



hash Chand and Arjun Singh and party leaders Adarsh Pal Singh, Shy-

am Sunder Batra, Zakir Hussain, Rai Singh Gurjar and Manoj Jairampur, have filed party form for Congress ticket. However, only one woman — Harmeen Kaur Kohli — has applied for party ticket from here. Haryana Agriculture Minister and Jagadhri BJP MLA Kanwar Pal Gujjar is a strong contender for party ticket from here. The BSP has announced the candidature of Darshan Lal Khera, a former president of Municipal Committee, Jagadhri, from this hot seat. As many as 41 persons have applied for Congress ticket from Yamunanagar Assembly segment. The strong contenders for party ticket from this seat include Nirmal Chauhan, Dr Rajan Sharma, Raman Parkash Tyagi, Satpal Kaushik, Anil Kumar Goel, Raj Kumar Tyagi, Bhaskar Sharma, Vinay Sharma, Shyam Sunder Batra, Akash Batra, Gurbaj Singh, Virender Gupta and Rakesh Sharma alias Kaka. As many as nine women including Nirmal Chauhan, Vinay Sharma, Dr Meenakshi Sharma, Sangeeta Aggarwal and Bhanu Batra have also applied from this hot Assembly segment.

Ex-CM vows job security to Rozgar Nigam staff



Chandigarh : Former CM and Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda today said that the BJP has left nothing in Haryana besides lies and deception. "That is why the ruling party is misleading the public by making fake videos viral about Haryana Kaushal Rozgar Nigam Limited (HKRNL) and recruitments," he added.

The Haryana BJP posted an edited video of Hooda on X today and claimed that the Congress government would render jobless thousands of youth employed under

HKRNL. Hooda clarified that he had raised the issue of exploitation of youth under HKRNL on every platform. "There is no job security for the youth in HKRNL. They are not given proper salary, or any post or promotion, nor exams or merit, and reservation is not implemented. The sword of dismissal always hangs over the head of the youth," he said. He promised that workers employed under HKRNL would be given job security by making a proper policy and better salaries would be arranged for them.



AAP to go door to door to hand over Kejriwal's guarantee cards

Kurukshetra : To woo voters in Haryana, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) workers will now go door to door to distribute the guarantee cards of Arvind Kejriwal, as part of the party's outreach programme 'Parivar Jodo Abhiyan' for the Assembly elections in the state. As per the information, party workers have been imparted the training regarding how to approach the electorate, get registration done and issue the cards. The party workers will generate a unique registration number for each card to be issued.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal launched 'Kejriwal's five guarantees' for Haryana in Panchkula last month, promising free electricity, mohalla clinics in every village and city, Rs 1,000 per month assistance to every woman; employment for youth, and better and free education.

As per the party leaders, separate cards for each guarantee will be given to the people. While the guarantee cards for free power have arrived, the remaining cards are expected to arrive soon.

Party's state spokesman Sumit Hindustani, who held training sessions in Kurukshetra and Yamunanagar, said: "The party has launched guarantee cards to give Kejriwal's guarantee to the



people of Haryana for which training was provided to the party workers today. Duties have been assigned and the cards have been handed over to them. The party workers will go door to door, generate registration number for each family, by giving a missed call on a toll-free number and hand over the guarantee cards."

"Party workers will set up canopies in the market areas as well to prepare the cards and it has been decided to complete the exercise by September 10. We aim to cover 50 lakh people during the period. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guarantees can be heard only, Kejriwal's guarantees will be in the hands of the people. The party has fulfilled its promises in Delhi and Punjab, and it will fulfill its promises in Haryana too. The guarantees will play a

crucial role in helping AAP getting votes in Haryana", he added. AAP's senior state vice-president Anurag Dhanda said: "The party has imparted trainings in all 360 blocks of 90 Assembly constituencies in Haryana to party workers. Recently, the party appointed in-charges in all blocks and now the party workers will go door to door to hand over the guarantee cards of Arvind Kejriwal. They will also make people aware to vote on the issues of health, education, power, and employment." "The party has a strong organisation in the state and the party will contest on all 90 Assembly seats. Soon the party will start holding Assembly segment-wise rallies in Haryana to present before the public the work done by Kejriwal in Delhi and Punjab, and his vision for the entire country," he added.

BJP's poll delay bid a sign it's losing: Hooda

Chandigarh : Former CM and Leader of Opposition Bhopinder Singh Hooda today lambasted the BJP for asking the Election Commission to delay the poll, terming it as their acceptance of defeat. He said, "Elections for the Haryana Legislative Assembly were announced more than a week ago (August 16). Now, they have woken up to write to the Election Commission. This implies they want to postpone the elections and have accepted their defeat."

Bhopinder Hooda added, "When the elections were announced, we thanked the Election Commission because people don't want to tolerate this government (BJP government) even for a day. The elections should happen on time. The public holidays around the polling date were known a week ago too, but they are writing to the Election Commission now. The people of Haryana are mature. They will come out in large numbers on voting day." Haryana



BJP president Mohan Lal Badoli wrote to the Election Commission on August 22 stating that a string of holidays around the polling date could impact voter turnout. He reasoned that September 28 and 29 are Saturday and Sunday and October 1 is a polling holiday. October 2 is a hol-

iday due to the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. He added that taking leave on September 30 creates a scenario of five holidays for both government employees and those in the private sector. Badoli said that families might leave the state due to these holidays, potentially affecting

voter turnout. Rohtak MP Deepender Hooda said that BJP's letter to the Election Commission shows "how scared BJP is of the elections." In a post on X, he said, "Seeing its defeat in front, the ruling party is giving childish arguments. Because it has no issue, no work or achievement to

tell the public, and no 9 candidates to give tickets. That is why BJP is conspiring to postpone the elections by making an excuse of holidays."

He added, "Haryana ke matdata behad jagrook hain. Woh kahin chutti manane nahin jayenge, balki BJP ki chutti karne ke liye bhaari sankhya mein matdaan kendra aakar vote denge (The voters of Haryana are very aware. They will not go anywhere for a holiday but will come to the polling booth in large numbers to vote out BJP)." Supporting Badoli's move, Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini, while talking to mediapersons in Kurukshetra today, said that voting percentage could be affected. "If voting percentage is good, it is good for democracy," he added.

Meanwhile, Indian National Lok Dal's secretary general Abhay Singh Chautala also wrote to Election Commission today for delaying the poll by a week due to the string of holidays around October 1.

Gurugram's construction waste piles up, leaves residents frustrated ahead of polls

Gurugram : In the midst of a solid waste crisis and with state elections approaching, Gurugram continues to remain buried under over 8 lakh metric tonnes of construction and demolition (C&D) waste. The city, which constantly has over 3,000 ongoing projects, lacks a designated mechanism or agency to manage or clear the debris scattered across the Aravallis, empty plots, green belts, roads, drains and even highways. This situation has left many residents frustrated and disillusioned with politicians.

"Look around the city; it's not just garbage mounds but hillocks of debris every few metres. The Aravallis and green belts have been ruined, the drains are choked and the waste has spread to all empty spaces in the city. This is one of the biggest civic issues, yet no one seems to care. The increasing C&D waste is worsening air quality, but past leaders and politicians avoid discussing it," said city-based environmentalist Vaishali Rana Chandra. Key hotspots for illegal dumping include the Aravallis along the Gurugram-Faridabad road, Golf Course road,



Sohna road, Sector 29, Sector 45, side lanes and empty spaces along National Highway-8, KMP green belts and empty plots in HSVP sectors like Sectors 17, 15 and 57.

There are five designated sites for dumping C&D waste — Babupur, Basai, Baliawas, Daultabad and Sector 29 — but processing is only taking place at the Basai unit. Other sites have

halted operations due to public resistance. Even at Basai, the plant is underutilised, processing only 300 metric tonnes of waste daily, despite a capacity of 1,800 metric tonnes per day from within a 15-km radius.

In 2020-21, Gurugram received accolades for its C&D waste treatment management and was lauded by Niti Aayog. However, in late 2021, the agency re-

sponsible was discontinued following a complaint by an RTI activist alleging financial misconduct. Although a year-long inquiry was inconclusive and new tenders were announced, the same agency won the contract again.

Before it could start working this year, the tender was cancelled as the government announced a common tender for all of Hary-

ana. As of now, this has not materialised, and the situation in Gurugram continues to deteriorate.

As a temporary measure, the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) has formed teams to identify and clear the waste, but a dedicated and expert agency is needed. Ruchika Sethi Takkar, a member of Citizens for Clean Air and Why Waste Your Waste, a citizens' collective for a sustainable and healthy environment, said, "The indiscriminate dumping of debris has exacerbated health issues due to year-round dust pollution. Visit any residential area near the dumping sites, and you'll see it's nothing short of a health hazard. We urge the authorities to immediately implement the C&D Waste Management Rules, 2016, to save the city."

Gurugram MP Rao Inderjit Singh has called for a CBI inquiry into the widespread collusion between contractors and officials within civic agencies. He has repeatedly urged the state government to take action, but no concrete steps have been taken over the past three years to address the C&D waste issue.

Strong connections with top brass, good image key to getting ticket

Faridabad : With all parties currently focused on selecting the right winnable candidates for the Assembly segments of Faridabad and Palwal districts, the factors seen as vital for the ticket allotment have taken the centre stage. "Though the final decision regarding the allotment of tickets from any constituency lies with the party leadership, the factors such as the image of the candidate, his or her hold in the respective Assembly segment and the connections with the top leadership are likely to dominate the finalisation of nominees," says Subhash Sharma, a political analyst.

He adds though there are several ticket aspirants trying their luck, the final decision largely depends on one's connection with those who matter at the higher level. Issues like anti-incumbency and performance level of the sitting incumbent also play a vital role in repeating or replacing anyone, says Sharma. An average of six to eight candidates are reported to be vying for tickets of main parties like the BJP and the Congress in each of the segments. The parties are likely to bet upon the candidates who are very close to the leadership and have a clean and strong political track record, besides the fi-



nancial standing, according to sources. Changes or replacement of candidates in more than half of the segments may be a strong probability, in the view of anti-incumbency, performance, involvement in party activities in the past and other factors, according to a political activist. Haryana Pradesh Congress Committee (HPCC) president Uday Bhan says while the final decision lies with the committee appointed by the party high command, only strong and winnable candidates are likely to be fielded to ensure that party gets a thumping majority. He adds the favourable political current blowing in the state will further boost the morale of the party candidates. Rajender Bisla, a three-time former

MLA from the Ballabgarh segment says the selection of candidates should be based on the criteria comprising honesty, character and educational qualifications. He stresses while the candidates should be well-qualified with a vision, the business approach in politics needs to be curbed. Bisla who got elected as an MLA in 1977, 1991 and 2000 says his personal, social and political image had helped him a lot. Karan Singh Dalal, a former MLA and leading ticket aspirant of the Congress from Palwal, says people with a clean image and higher educational qualifications should be considered. With political character as base, only those candidates with a secular approach should be preferred, he emphasises.

Congress leaders fighting for vested interests, not state's: CM Saini

Kurukshetra : Sharpening his attack on the Congress, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini today said the infighting in the grand old party was for vested interests and its leaders were not concerned about the welfare of the people of Haryana. Addressing a gathering on the occasion of 70th foundation day celebration of the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh in Kurukshetra on Saturday, the Chief Minister said: "The government has taken various initiatives for the welfare of the people working in organised and unorganised sectors. The government has worked on a mission mode to ensure the welfare of the labourers and also ensure that they don't face any inconvenience."

"Bhopinder Singh Hooda has no achievement of his government to share, but he keeps saying that he will discontinue the portals, started by BJP government, and HKRN if voted to power. The portals launched by the BJP government have proved to be beneficial for government employees, aged people and labourers and other sections of the society who have been getting benefits of the government schemes without making rounds in government offices."

He added that the government introduced online transfers for the employees and provided job security to 1.20 lakh HKRN employees. We have stopped the leakage of

funds with the help of portals. Saini said Hooda had been shying away from replying to the questions raised by him.

"I also ask Kumari Selja and Randeep Surjewala to give answers to my questions, if Hooda has no answers. They are fighting for their vested interests instead of working for the welfare of the people of Haryana," he said. During the event, Sangh leaders raised concerns and demands of workers working in various sectors, including the Education Department, municipal corporations and sugar mills. The CM said: "The government has been working for the welfare of the public and several decisions were in pipeline when the model code of conduct came into force. The Sangh has raised some issues, and I promise you that all the concerns will be addressed after the elections are over."

Speaking to mediapersons, about the letter sent to the Election Commission regarding the election dates, Saini said "I will appeal to all to come out in large numbers and exercise their franchise."

The party's state chief has also raised the concern with the Election Commission, suggesting that the poll dates be slightly changed after consulting all the parties, so that voter turnout could be increased. A higher voter turnout is good in democracy. The candidates will be announced soon."

Fake call centre that duped US nationals busted, 20 held

Gurugram : The Gurugram police have busted a fake call centre that allegedly duped US nationals by pretending to offer technical support. A total of 20 persons, including four women, were arrested, a spokesman for the local police confirmed here on Saturday.

The authorities recovered Rs 50,000 in cash, 16 laptops and 25 mobile phones from the call centre premises. Mahender Bajrang Singh, a resident of Kubernagar in Ahmedabad district, Gujarat, was identified as the operator of the centre, which employed several youths.

Assistant Commissioner of Police Priyanshu Diwan said Singh was arrested on-site along with 19 others, including four women. The operation involved collecting money from victims via



gift cards ranging from \$100 to \$500 each. "Upon receiving the complaint, a team from Gurugram's Cyber

Crime Police raided the call centre and discovered 20

people communicating with US nationals in a typical American-English accent," Diwan said. The investigation revealed that the centre was operating without a licence from the Department of Telecommunications. Those arrested include Ashish Ojha, a resident of Darjeeling (West Bengal), Min-lun of Chura Chandpur (Manipur), Vidanwang of Samjijuram (Nagaland), Vikhombou Chawang of Kangletonbi (Manipur), Amor Abonmai of Khunkhu Naga (Manipur), Namchumbo of Samjijuram (Nagaland), Laboi Haokip of Motbung (Manipur), Athihari Lohri of Karong (Manipur), K Labikjuali of Serkawan (Mizoram), (Manipur), Shriya of Udhampur (J&K), Palak of Ramban (J&K), Mahendra Bajrang Singh of Kubenagar (Gujarat).



The last twirl: Shikhar Dhawan and the moustache that enchanted fans

New Delhi : Shikhar Dhawan, with his trademark moustache twirl and broad smile, was a sight to behold every time he stepped onto the cricket field. His retirement marks the end of a chapter in Indian cricket that was written in bold strokes, much like his batting.

For over a decade, Dhawan was more than just an opening batsman—he was the embodiment of fearless cricket, a player who didn't just play the game but lived it with every run, every shot, and every celebration.

From his early days in domestic cricket, it was clear that Dhawan was special. He wasn't just another talented batsman; he was an artist with the bat, crafting innings with a mix of aggression and elegance that was uniquely his own.

When he finally made his international debut in 2013, the world got a glimpse of the sheer talent that had been waiting in the wings. But it wasn't until 2013 that Dhawan truly announced himself on the global stage.

It was in Mohali in his very first Test innings that Dhawan dismantled a formidable Australian attack with a knock that will be remembered for generations. His 187 was rather a spectacle—a breathtaking display of strokeplay that left bowlers and fans alike in awe. Fastest Test century on debut—85 balls, a record that still stands—was more than just a statistic. It was a statement. Dhawan had arrived, and he was here to stay.

Dhawan had a penchant for the big stage. When it came to ICC tournaments, there was something about the pressure and the global spotlight that brought out



the best in him.

The 2013 ICC Champions Trophy was his canvas, and he painted it with masterful strokes of brilliance. Leading India's charge with the bat, Dhawan not only topped the run charts but also played a pivotal role in India's unbeaten run to the title. His opening partnership with Rohit Sharma went on to become one of the most successful in ODI history. In the 2015 World Cup, Dhawan was once again at his imperious best. His century against South Africa, where he dismantled a world class bowling attack with ease, is etched in the memories of cricket fans. It wasn't just the runs he scored, but the way he scored them—effortlessly pulling and driving the likes of Dale Steyn and Morne Morkel, making them look ordinary on a stage where they were supposed to be the protagonists.

Dhawan's journey was not without its challenges. The dips in form, the criticisms, the injuries—he faced them all with the same smile and resolve that defined his approach to the game. His fighting century in Auckland in 2014 in testing conditions was a testament to his resilience.

And none can forget his brave 117 at The Oval in the 2019 World Cup, played with a fractured thumb against a fierce Australian attack. That innings, ultimately his last in an ICC tournament, summed up Dhawan's spirit—never backing down, always rising to the occasion. But Dhawan was more than just his on-field exploits. Off the field, he was a character—always cheerful, always approachable. Whether it was his infectious energy during team celebrations or his playful antics with teammates, Dhawan brought a

sense of joy to the Indian dressing room. He was a senior figure who led by example, showing younger players that cricket is not just a game of skill, but also of character and heart.

His contribution to Indian cricket goes beyond the runs and the records. He was a player who played with his heart on his sleeve, who gave his all for the team every time he stepped on the field. He was a man who made the game look beautiful, who made fans believe that with hard work and a little bit of flair, anything was possible. Dhawan's legacy will live on in the memories of those who watched him play, in the records he set, and in the inspiration he provided to countless young cricketers. Dhawan, the artist of the cricket field, has signed off, leaving behind a masterpiece that will be admired for years to come.

Fatima Sana named Pak women's captain for ICC T20 World Cup 2024

Islamabad, Aug 25 (UNI) In a significant development for Pakistan women's cricket, 22-year-old Fatima Sana has been appointed as the captain of the national team for the upcoming ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024.

The decision was unanimously made by the Women's national selection committee, marking a new chapter in the young all-rounder's burgeoning career.

Fatima, a bowling allrounder, has been a standout performer for Pakistan with 31 T20I wickets at an average of 30.09 and 215 runs at a strike rate of just over 100. Her appointment as captain comes on the back of her previous leadership roles with Pakistan's Emerging and domestic sides, as well as a memorable stint as the national team captain in December 2023, when she led Pakistan to a historic ODI victory against New Zealand at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch.

The squad for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024 sees only one change from the team that recently competed in the Women's Asia Cup. Right-handed batswoman Sadaf Shamas, who was part of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2023 in South Africa, has made a comeback, replacing wicketkeeper-batswoman Najiha Alvi. Alvi will travel to the UAE as a reserve player, while Rameen Shamim and Umm-e-Hani have been named as non-traveling reserves.

Fatima takes over the captaincy from veteran allrounder Nida Dar, who remains an integral part of the squad. Dar has been widely praised for her contributions to Pakistan cricket, most notably becoming the second Pakistan player to take 100 wickets in women's ODIs. Former Australian cricketer Lisa



Sthalekar lauded Dar as a "feisty character" and expressed confidence in Fatima Sana's ability to lead the team.

Pakistan has been placed in Group A of the tournament, alongside formidable opponents Australia, India, New Zealand, and Sri Lanka. The Women in Green will look to blend experience and youth as they aim to make a strong impact on the global stage.

As the team prepares to face some of the toughest teams in the world, all eyes will be on Fatima Sana as she steps into this pivotal role. The cricketing world

will be watching closely as Pakistan embarks on its journey in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024. Pakistan Team: Fatima Sana (captain), Aliya Riaz, Diana Baig, Gull Feroza, Iram Javed, Muneeba Ali (wicket-keeper), Nashra Sundhu, Nida Dar, Omaira Sohail, Sadaf Shamas, Sadia Iqbal (subject to fitness), Sidra Amin, Syeda Aroob Shah, Tasmia Rubab, Tuba Hassan.

Traveling Reserve: Najiha Alvi (wicket-keeper)

Non-Traveling Reserves: Rameen Shamim, Umm-e-Hani.

Mohammedan Sporting Club inducted into ISL

Kolkata : Kolkata's Mohammedan Sporting Club has been inducted into India's top-tier football tournament Indian Super League's 11th edition from the seasons 2024-25, the ISL management announced on Saturday.

Starting from the 2024-25 season, Mohammedan SC, one of the oldest active football clubs in the nation will compete in the top tier of Indian football, bringing the total number of clubs in the ISL to 13, an ISL statement confirms.

This promotion follows their triumphant 2023-24 I-

League title-winning campaign, making them the second club after Punjab FC to earn promotion to the ISL.

With the inclusion of the black and white brigade, which has many silver wars in its club tents at the Maidan, altogether three outfits from this city will be seen in action in the coming season.

The news was celebrated hugely in the club tents as many fans arrived at the Maidan tent and greeted each other after their favourite club got a berth in the country's top-tier football tournament.

Ace shuttler Lakshya Sen heads to Austria for physical assessment

New Delhi : Lakshya Sen, India's 22-year-old badminton star from the recently concluded Paris Olympics, left for Austria on Sunday in order to get assessed and optimize his physical condition for the upcoming BWF tournaments.

Sen, who narrowly missed securing an Olympic medal at the Olympics by finishing fourth, is determined to enhance his performance.

To achieve this, he will undergo a comprehensive assessment at the Red Bull Athlete Performance Centre located in Salzburg.

The state-of-the-art facility will conduct a series of tests to provide Sen with a thorough evaluation of his body, enabling him to fine-tune his fitness regimen and elevate his game to new heights.

"Lakshya is going to Austria to do some physical assessment. There is a good sports institute there, where he wants to do some physical exercise. He left today and will be back after a week," coach Vimal Kumar told PTI.

Lakshya's trainer Gaurav, along with 15-year-old junior shuttler Nischal Chand as training partner,



are accompanying Sen to keep him in shape during the week.

"The tests will focus basically on specific strength aspects. Many of the elite athletes go and get themselves tested there. We had consulted Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala for all his niggles and injuries.

"Right now he is fine; but before he really starts going full-fledged, it is important for him to get the right physical training, and unless the strength and conditioning program is really spot on, he can get injuries. So we have to find the right things to do."

Lakshya is expected to participate in the upcoming Hong Kong Super 500 and China Open Super 1000 tournaments, which are scheduled to take place in

late September of this year.

According to Vimal, the nature of Lakshya's playing style demands him to continuously work on improving his overall fitness.

"He needs to definitely get better on fitness aspects, especially the speed, endurance and other things he needs to work on because the game he plays, it's very fast-paced. He has to defend a lot and then he converts the defence into offense," said Vimal.

"When he's playing with the wind, he needs to keep putting the shuttle down, come into the net, tumble at the net, so up and down... those sort of things. It takes away a lot of your energy. So he needs to get super fit or develop the ability to control the drift."

midfield. Before the match, Yamal was seen sharing a friendly moment with Athletic's Nico Williams, who is reportedly a transfer target for Barcelona.

Lewandowski, who had already scored twice in the season opener against Valencia, hit the post after a promising buildup involving Yamal and Raphinha.

Athletic's goalkeeper, Alex Padilla, made a stunning save to deny Lewandowski from converting another Raphinha cross. Barcelona's relentless pressure finally paid off when Lewandowski netted his third goal of the season, capitalizing on a cross from Pedri that Padilla could only deflect into his path.

This win against Ernesto Valverde's Copa del Rey champions is another morale boost for Barcelona following their opening day victory at Valencia.

We need to be involved more, says former India tennis player and selector Sai Jayalakshmy

New Delhi : Sai Jayalakshmy Jayaram, former Billie Jean King Cup tennis player and a member of the national selection committee, says the selectors need to have a larger role than what they have currently while picking the Indian squads for various competitions.

"The system seems to be that the association (AITA) makes a list of players based on rankings, and they reach out to all these players (asking for their availability), and each player responds with a yes or no.

Then that list comes to us. So to be honest, our role is very small, if you ask me. We select the best players from this list that has been given to us," Sai told The Times of India.

"I know how it works in cricket. I have a friend who does junior selection, and I know he travels a lot (as part of the job).

"He watches the players, he interacts with them. He's always keeping an eye out for up and coming talent. And he's a lot more involved than, let's say, me.

"And I do feel that there should be a whole lot more involvement. I mean, I personally would think that that's how selections can be made more accurately, because then you know exactly who you're talking about, what they do, what they have done in the recent times, how they're playing currently, things like that.

"In cricket, it is a much bigger thing, because it is a team sport. So everything hinges on that, you know, on the player being on the team or not.

"In tennis, it's completely the other end of the spectrum, because it's an individual sport for 95% of the time, and the only time you play for your country is in Davis Cup, Fed cup, or Olympics, or Asian Games Olympics once in four years.

"So unlike a sport like, say, cricket, where if you're not on the team, you're not even given an opportunity to make a mark. Here you can make a mark on your own.

"But I think at the end of the day, there should be more involvement for us, as opposed to what is just now, which is simply, 'here's a list. And, choose from this' kind of thing. I definitely think that more involvement in knowing who is doing what and how they're playing at the moment."

Sai said a more hands-on approach could begin with having the selectors travel to tournaments in



India. "I think there maybe, should be more (travelling). The chairman, Nandan (Bal), watches a lot of matches. And if something happens in Chennai, then I go and watch. But other than that, I think some amount of travel (is needed) so that you're actually aware of what the players are doing, you see how they are on court."

She acknowledged that the presence of selectors would act as a catalyst for the players to give their best, and compared it to the yesteryears when players gave more than their best to succeed at the Nationals.

"I do think so, because when I was playing, the Nationals was like the biggest tournament in the country, and everybody would give an arm

and a leg to have won it, (that) kind of thing," she said.

"It was like the biggest tournament that everyone marked out of their calendars and everyone was trying to win. It meant so much, you know, to be a national champion. Now it seems to sort of receded in everyone's consciousness.

"But it's a tough thing to do because you are trying to chase points, you are trying to get a better ranking. It's very tough, competitive sport because you're on your own and you're trying to plan all these things."

Mukund Sasikumar, who has been sanctioned for allegedly making himself unavailable for selection for three ties, had remarked that players represent the nation even when

they compete on the professional tour and not just in team competitions like the Davis Cup.

Mukund had also said that a player should not be punished merely because he chooses to play in the pro circuit instead of a Davis Cup match.

Without commenting directly on Mukund's views, Sai said: "Around the time I was playing of course, this was before social media and even the internet playing for the country was like the absolute, like the apex, you know. If you've played for your country, it was like, 'wow'.

"Even today, when I talk to people, you say you won the Nationals, you won so many tournaments, your ranking is so and so ... None of it makes as big a dent or an impression as when you say that you played for your country.

"So, I would still think playing for the country (ranks above) most other things. I mean, when you play the other tournaments ... Tennis is an individual sport. So you're not really representing the country as such.

"Yes, your name will be as, X, and the country name will be in brackets. But at the end of the day, it's an individual sport.

"I can't comment on individual player's choice. Why they did what they did. It's a tough choice to make, because you're sort of trying to do this on your own, and trying to make your way through it.

"If you're not chasing points, someone else is going to be doing that, and they're going to take your place. It's fairly competitive.

"Personally, speaking for me, I always consider playing for the country a very big honour and very privileged." Sai refrained from giving her opinion on whether a player should be penalized for being unavailable for national duty.

"Again, you're asking me a comment on something that I think those decisions are made by the executive committee or the association, it's completely out of our purview. It's something that I shouldn't comment on," she said. She, however, agreed it was worrisome that players - on the men's side at least for the moment - increasingly choosing to make themselves unavailable for India selection. "Yes, I definitely think so. Because, like I said, it comes down to the priorities that the player has. I guess you know where they are in their career and things like that," she said.



Ola Electric strengthens market leadership, launches electric motorcycles

Mumbai : Affirming its resolve to make India a global EV and new energy hub, Ola Electric has announced new products and a future roadmap across EV and energy verticals.

With the launch of the Roadster, the Roadster X, and the Roadster Pro, the company recently entered the electric motorcycle segment and further announced the integration of its cells in its own vehicles starting Q1 FY26, said the release today.

The company also showcased the indigenously developed Bharat 4680 cell and battery pack, the new Gen-3 platform, and MoveOS 5 at Sankalp 2024, Ola's annual launch event, at its Futurefactory in Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu.

Speaking at the event, Bhavish Aggarwal, Founder and CMD, Ola Electric, said, "Today, 2/3rd of India's 2W market consists of motorcycles, and with Ola's entry into this segment.



EV penetration is poised to further accelerate in the Indian 2W segment. We have already been successful in accelerating the EV adoption in the scooter segment, and with our futuristic portfolio of products, we are now focused on supercharging the EV

penetration through our motorcycles.

Coupled with the integration of our cells in our vehicles starting early next year, we are determined to chart a new course for mass EV adoption across India, according to the release.

IndiGo introduces gender-neutral 'Mx' option for flight bookings

New Delhi : IndiGo is preparing to introduce the gender-neutral honorific 'Mx' as an option during the flight booking process to promote inclusivity. Currently, the airline's website only allows passengers to choose between 'male' and 'female' options when booking.

Sukhjit S Pasricha, IndiGo's group chief human resources officer, stated that the new 'Mx' option will cater to transgender individuals who prefer not to identify with traditional gender categories. Additionally, the airline plans to double its workforce of individuals with disabilities.

While IndiGo is making this move, other airlines like Air India Express and Vistara already offer the 'Mx' option for passengers during ticket booking. Pasricha also high-



lighted that IndiGo has launched several initiatives to support the LGBTQ+ community, including employee referral programs that encourage

the hiring of LGBTQ+ individuals. The airline has successfully integrated LGBTQ+ employees across various functions, including flying roles.

IndiGo has implemented policies to create a more inclusive environment, such as partnering with agencies specializing in LGBTQ+ recruitment and

offering benefits like gender reassignment surgery and including live-in partners in medical insurance. These steps have helped attract more candidates from the LGBTQ+ community.

As of March 31, 2024, IndiGo employed 36,860 permanent staff members, including 5,038 pilots and 9,363 cabin crew, and over 240 individuals with disabilities in customer-facing roles across more than 60 cities.

The placement of employees with disabilities is determined by factors like safety, accommodation needs, and skill mapping, with a focus on merit-based hiring.

Most of these individuals work as customer service officers or executives in airport operations, with some also contributing to cargo teams.

India's gold loan market set for rapid growth amid rising prices; unorganized sector holds 63% share: PwC

New Delhi : The gold loan market in India is poised for significant growth, driven by rising per-gram gold rates and increasing customer demand. Currently, the market is largely dominated by the unorganized sector, which holds a 63 percent share, leaving the organized players, including banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), with a 37 percent share, as per a PwC report. This scenario presents a substantial opportunity for organized players to expand their footprint and capture a larger portion of the market.

Indian households are estimated to hold around 25,000 tonnes of gold, valued at approximately Rs 126 lakh crore. Despite this immense wealth, the gold loan market through organized channels is valued at just Rs 7.1 lakh crore, highlighting the untapped potential within household gold holdings. Currently, market penetration of gold loans in India stands at only 5.6 percent. Although not all gold is available for pledging due to religious, emotional, or financial reasons, there remains significant growth potential in the sector.

Historically, the gold loan market in India has been dominated by the unorganized sector. However, in recent years, organized players, particularly NBFCs, have started to gain market share. Banks are also making strides, especially through retail gold loans and a continued focus on agricultural gold loans.

This trend is expected to continue as organized



players leverage their formal lending structures, transparency, and customer trust to capture a larger share of the market.

According to Shaji Varghese, CEO of Muthoot FinCorp Limited, the potential for growth in gold loan assets is substantial, given that much of the market remains in the unorganized sector. Rising gold prices and a shift in how gold is perceived—as both an investment and a convenient option for raising funds—are also contributing to the sector's growth.

India remains one of the world's largest consumers of gold, with total demand reaching 747 tonnes in 2023. However, this figure represents a 3 percent decrease from the previous year, primarily due to rising gold prices, which dampened demand for gold jewelry.

The price of gold in In-

dia increased from Rs 55,375 to Rs 66,532 per 10 grams (22 carats) between November 2023 and May 2024, leading to a shift toward lightweight or lower-carat jewelry items.

Globally, demand for gold grew by 3 percent in 2023, with China emerging.

As the largest market. This global market expansion offers opportunities for Indian gold loan financiers to explore growth beyond domestic borders. The relationship between gold and the US dollar is a key factor influencing gold prices in India.

A weakening rupee often leads to higher gold prices, as gold is priced internationally in USD. This dynamic drives higher imports and increases the cost of gold in rupees, further fueling demand as investors seek a safe haven against currency fluctuations.

V.P. Nandakumar, Managing Director and CEO of Manappuram Finance Ltd, noted that the recent increase in gold prices has brought some stability to the gold loan portfolios of most players, and it is expected that gold prices will remain stable due to geopolitical factors, central banks' accumulation of gold, and the lasting appeal of the yellow metal.

Furthermore, the securitization of gold through various financial instruments offers new avenues for gold loan players to diversify their offerings. By using gold-based security as collateral, established players can introduce innovative loan products that leverage the intrinsic value of physical gold.

This approach not only diversifies their gold loan portfolio but also opens up opportunities for innovation in the gold loan ecosystem.

Fast-emerging robotics will expand job opportunities: Minister Rajeeve

Kochi : The rapid emergence of robotics will increase job opportunities in Kerala, belying the general notion that machines replace human labour, Minister for Industries, Law, and Coir P. Rajeeve has said.

As new-age technologies are broadening, their implementation leads to the emergence of allied sectors that would require robots to carry out the work, he noted after declaring open the landmark Robotics Round Table in the city.

"What we see in Kerala is the rising application of robotics in socially beneficial endeavours. This implies their stronger use in the coming years," the minister said at the opening session of the day-long event organised by Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC) under the aegis of the Department of Industries and Commerce at the Grand Hyatt in Bollatty Island.

The roundtable, which seeks to boost the government's efforts to make Kerala a global destination for innovative technology, began with the inauguration of an exhibition featuring 35 stalls. The inaugural ceremony was presided over by Principal Secretary (Industries and Commerce) A.P.M. Mohammed Hanish.

Rajeeve pointed out that Kerala's New Industrial Policy (2023) gives prominence to the state's development as a knowledge economy. "We are striving to bring more investments into sectors that focus on improved facilities for common people. The results are showing in the encouraging number of Kerala startups engaged in social development," he pointed out.

Asserting that Kerala already enjoys an upper hand in the digital sector, he said, "We have an impressive track record in e-governance, digitised banking, and mobile internet connectivity. Not surprisingly, the state has the best startup ecosystem in the country."

Hanish said the government's



prime objective has been to woo investors to the startups in the state.

Noting that IEDCs (Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Centres) merit stronger financial grants for commercial application of innovative concepts, he said Kerala has been working to meet the requirements from robotics, which is fast developing. "We ensure monetary, social, and administrative support to the sector," the official added.

KSIDC Managing Director S. Harikishore, also Director, Department of Industries and Commerce, said the roundtable focusses on the sector of AI and robotics listed 19th under the 22 priority sectors of the state in the New Industrial Policy. "Today's event is the third in the government's series of missions that seek to bolster the links between the state and the innovative technology sector so as to facilitate a suitable ecosystem," he said, welcoming the gathering.

Other speakers at the ceremony were KSIDC Chairman Paul Antony, Executive Director Hari Krishnan R. KINFRA Managing Director Santhosh Koshy Thomas, Kerala Startup Mission CEO An-

op Ambika, and Dr. Saji Gopinath, Vice Chancellor, Kerala Technical University and Digital University of Kerala.

Armada AI Vice President Prag Mishra and Industrial AI Accenture MD Derick Jose also spoke on the occasion.

This was followed by three rounds led by ten experts from various parts of the world helming discussions on what Kerala can expect on becoming a hub for robotics technology. A total of 195 startups attended the event, which had more than 400 delegates.

The round table comes in continuation of last month's opening event, an International Conclave on Gen AI held in association with IBM at Kochi. A subsequent Conclave on Continuing Investments was attended by 300 entrepreneurs who had brought in an overall investment of Rs 12,000 crore in the past three years. Recently, the KSIDC hosted a roadshow in Chennai for investors. More such roadshows will be held in Mumbai, Delhi, Dubai, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. The finale of the series will be a Global Investor Meet in Kochi in February next year.

Government's schemes boost domestic electric vehicle manufacturing

New Delhi : The Indian government's initiatives, including the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme with an approved budget of Rs 25,938 crore, have significantly bolstered the domestic electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing industry.

Of the 74 applications submitted by automakers for the PLI scheme in the EV sector, 50 have received approval, while the remaining 24 are still under review.

The PLI scheme offers a government grant of 13-15 percent of the annual sales value of EVs to automakers, which has been instrumental in driving sales and miti-



gating the higher costs associated with adopting new technologies.

As of March 31, investments under the main PLI scheme reached Rs 17,896 crore, with incremental sales surpassing Rs 3,370 crore among approved applicants.

In addition to the PLI scheme, the government has introduced other critical initiatives, such as the PLI Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) scheme with an outlay of Rs 18,100 crore for 50 GWh, the Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme (EMPS) with an allocation of Rs 778 crore, and the SMEC initiative designed to attract global EV investments with a minimum commitment of Rs 4,150 crore.

Uppercase raises USD 9M series B round with Accel

Pune : Uppercase, the innovative, sustainable luggage brand has raised \$9 Million in its Series B round led by Accel, a global venture capital firm.

The funding will support business expansion, aiming to increase its customer base across India. The Mumbai-based company, currently selling its travel gear online and through 1800 multi-brand stores across India, aims to achieve its Rs 500 crore goal by adding 250 exclusive retail stores over the next three years.

Uppercase was launched with a vision to revitalize the luggage market through innovative, consumer-centric designs that are visually striking. It offers innovative, customer-centric designs that break away from typical, monotonous styles.

The brand is committed to sustainability, emphasizing eco-friendly practices. Additionally, uppercase's focus on affordability ensures that high-quality, fashionable travel gear is accessible to a broader audience, said release.

With the USD 9M series B round led by Accel, uppercase's total funding now reaches Rs. 150 crores since its inception three years back.

"We are excited to have Accel join us as

we revolutionize the sustainable travel gear industry. Their investment reflects trust in our eco-friendly approach and 100% made in India business model. This partnership will help us to build our brand and distribution by expanding our exclusive retail channels.

With Accel's extensive international experience, we look forward to increasing our global footprint soon. We will continue to drive growth, innovation and impact the way the world travels and we will do it from India," expressed Sudip Ghose, Founder and Managing Director of uppercase, said release. uppercase which designs and manufactures 100% of their products in India, recently achieved a significant milestone by winning the prestigious Red Dot Award for their product, Bullet—becoming the first Indian luggage brand in 69 years to receive this honor. It is a smart durable eco-friendly bag which is made out of recycled plastic, ideal for environmentally conscious customers. This accolade highlights uppercase's dedication to innovation and excellence in design.

Barath Shankar Subramanian, Partner at Accel said, "uppercase is carving out a unique space in the market with its deeply rooted Indian identity and unwavering commitment to sustainability.