

# Good Morning Kashmir

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Office of LG J&K @OfficeOfLGJandK



Deeply saddened by the passing away of Dr. MS Swaminathan Ji. His pioneering work & contribution in transforming nation's agricultural landscape, ensuring food security will be remembered for generations. Condolences to his family and admirers.

## WORLD RABIES DAY 4,396 Bite Cases Reported To ARC SMHS In 6 Months

JAHANGEER GANAIE

SRINAGAR: A whopping 4,396 bite victims, mostly dog bites, were reported to the Anti-Rabies Clinic at Srinagar's Shri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) Hospital in the last six months, officials said.

The presence of dogs in the nook and corner of the valley has led to human-dog confrontation due to which the number of cases of dog bites has increased in the region, they said.

An official from Anti-Rabies Clinic SMHS •P-02

## Milad Immerses Kashmir Valley In Religious Fervour



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi, the birthday of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), is being celebrated with religious fervour across Kashmir Valley. The largest congregation is expected to be held at Hazratbal shrine. The devotees would have a glimpse of the holy relic after every prayer.

Besides Hazratbal, large congregational prayers are expected to be held at Asarisharif Kalashpora, Jenab Sahib Saura, Lal Bazar, Punjura Shopian, Khiram Sirhama Anantnag (Islamabad), Seer hamdan Kaba Marg Qaimoh Ahmshrief Bandipora and Hazrat Janbaz Wali (RA) Baramulla.

On the occasion, a festive look prevailed for the past several days as various Masjids and shrines in the city and elsewhere, besides various commercial malls in the civil lines areas were decked out with lights.

A festive look prevailed in Srinagar for the past several days as many markets and thoroughfares were decorated and illuminated with fluorescent lights while religious flags and bunnings were hoisted atop many buildings •P-02

## India-China Relations In 'Abnormal State' Since Galwan Clash: Jaishankar

AGENCIES

NEW YORK- India-China relations have been in an "abnormal state" since the 2020 Galwan Valley clash and it is a "possibly longer than medium-term issue", External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said, emphasising that none of the explanations given by Beijing for amassing its troops along the LAC are really tenable.

India has been consistently maintaining that the situation at the border in eastern Ladakh is not normal and that peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) were key for the normalisation of overall bilateral ties.

If the two biggest countries of the world have that degree of tension between them, "it has consequences for everybody else", Jaishankar asserted during a conversation at the Council on Foreign Relations to a question about India-China relations.

"You know, one of the pleasures of dealing with China is that they never quite tell you why they do things. So you often end up trying to figure it out. And it's always, there's a certain ambiguity out there," Jaishankar, who was India's Ambassador to China from 2009 to 2013, said.

"At various points in time, the Chinese have given us different explanations, and none of them are really tenable," Jaishankar said.

Indian and Chinese troops are locked in an over three-year confrontation in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh even as the two sides completed disengagement from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks.

"It is very hard to try to be normal with a country which has broken agreements and which has done what it has done. So if you look at the last three years, it's a very abnormal state," the minister said.

"Contacts have been disrupted, visits are not taking place. We have of course this high level of military tension. It has also impacted the perception of China in India," he said.

The perception was not positive in the 1960s and 70s because of the war in 1962.

"But we had started to put that behind us when this happened," he said.

"So I think there's both an immediate issue, as well as a medium-term issue, possibly longer than medium-term issue out there," Jaishankar said.

The external affairs minister outlined a historical perspective on the relations between Delhi and Beijing, adding that it has never been easy.

"It had a war in 1962. It had military incidents after that. But after 1975, there's never been a combat fatality on the border, 1975 was the last time," he said, adding that in 1988, India normalised the relationship more when then •P-02



## 'POWER GENERATION HIT' Prolonged Dry Spell Reduces Water Level In Water Bodies

OWAIS GUL

SRINAGAR: With prolonged dry spell leading to the reduction in water level in most of the water bodies across the Valley, the Kashmir-based power houses are generating less electricity, prompting the government to go ahead with power curtailment, causing immense hardships to the people.

Pertinently, •P-02

## Winds Of Change Blowing In Rural Economy Of Country: LG

GMK NEWS NETWORK

GHAZIPUR: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Thursday said that the dream of India as a global superpower has been realized and a new work culture and a new pro-growth mindset has taken root in the society under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji.

Unveiling the statue of Smt Tetara Devi at Mata Tetara Devi Sachidanand Girls Degree College in Ghazipur, LG Sinha said that the transformational changes of the last 9 years are



inspiring every citizen to contribute in realizing the vision of Viksit Bharat. The Lt Governor appreciated the College for being in the forefront of setting high •P-02

## Dwivedi Visits Forward Areas Along Siachen, Ladakh

UNI

JAMMU- The Northern Army Commander Lt General Upen-dra Dwivedi on Thursday visited the forward areas in Siachen Ladakh and "reviewed the operational preparedness", Army said.

Accompanied by General Officer Commanding of Leh-based Fire and Fury Corps Lt Gen Lt Gen Rashim Bali and Commander Siachen Brigade, the Army Commander complimented the troops deployed in the sector for their excellent standards of combat readiness despite inhospitable terrain.

"In the realm of Super High Altitude Areas, our resolve takes flight" #LtGenUpendraDwivedi #ArmyCdrNC accompanied by GOC @firefurycorps and Cdr #Siachen Brigade visited the Forward Areas along LC in #Siachen to review the operational preparedness," Indian Army's Northern Command said in a post on X.

The Army Commander felicitated the troops deployed in remote frontline areas for their excellent standards of combat readiness despite inhospitable terrain and exhorted them to continue to strive for excellence, it added.



## Centre Unveils Draft Notification For ESZ Around Dachigam National Park

NASIR AZAM

SRINAGAR: The Union Ministry of Forests, Environment & Climate Change has unveiled the draft notification for an eco-sensitive zone around Dachigam national park, Thajwas (Baltal) and Overa-Aru wildlife sanctuary.

The notification, proposes that an area to an extent varying from 200 meters to 13.15 kilometers around the boundary of Dachigam National Park, Thajwas (Baltal) Wildlife Sanctuary and Overa-Aru Wildlife Sanctuary and comprising an area of 448.00 sq.km," •P-02

the boundary of Dachigam National Park, Thajwas (Baltal) wildlife sanctuary and Overa-Aru Wildlife sanctuary shall form their ESZ.

"The extent of eco-sensitive zone shall be of 200 m to 13.15 km from the boundary of Dachigam National Park, Thajwas (Baltal) Wildlife Sanctuary and Overa-Aru Wildlife Sanctuary and comprising an area of 448.00 sq.km," •P-02



## 2024 GENERAL ELECTIONS PM, HM, Other BJP Bigwigs To Hold Rallies In J&K

YOGESH

JAMMU: To boost the morale of party workers and setting right tone for Lok Sabha elections due in April-May next year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah among top brass of Bharatiya Janata Party's stalwart (BJP) is all set to led party's campaign in Jammu and Kashmir by holding massive rallies after assembly polls in four states.

Party sources said that Modi, Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Road and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari among top leadership will be addressing rallies and launching various development projects from October -November onwards.

Sources said though the



calendar of VVIP visit is not final yet but it's likely to commence after the assembly elections in four states including Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Telangana.

Sources confirmed that Modi, Shah is expected to be in Jammu and Kashmir for minimum of two days and maximum three

## J&K People Enjoying Normal Life: DGP



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Director General of Police (DGP) Dilbag Singh on Thursday addressed 65 DySsP trainees at Sher-e-Kashmir Police Academy Udhampur and asked them to "focus on your work, don't worry about people who would try to bring you down, you are now part of a force which has an unparalleled legacy of martyrdom".

As per a statement issued, a police spokesman said DGP was on a day-long tour to the SKPA Udhampur & Subsidiary Training Center (STC) Talwara Reasi where he interacted with trainee officers & jawans and also inaugurated new buildings in these training institutes.

He was accompanied by the IGP Hqrs/CIV Police •P-02

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<p><b>JAWAN</b></p>  <p>2:45PM, 6:00PM (Hindi) UA</p>	<p><b>FUKREY 3</b></p>  <p>3:15PM, 6:30PM (Hindi ATMOS) UA</p>
<p><b>THE VACCINE WAR</b></p>  <p>6:45PM (Hindi) U</p>	<p><b>THE CREATOR</b></p>  <p>3:50PM (English) TBA</p>





Good Morning Kashmir

EDITORIAL

## Hit-And-Run Cases On The Rise

They are from posh localities of valley. Burly looking, bass-voiced, and drive cars very fast. Often these cars are owned by their influential parents and these young men- often spoiled brats - drive faster than the acceptable speed. Often their craze for speed leads to accidents. Most often they hit a person and run, knowing fully well the loopholes in the existing laws would ensure that they are out of jail in no time. A few days ago we had an accident in posh Parraypora wherein a vehicle owner hit about five cars and ran away. Just a few days earlier a woman in north Kashmir was hit by a car and the car owner fled in no time. A couple of years ago a young man in his twenties hit an on-duty cop and ran away, changed the color of his car to evade arrest for a good week-long time. This young man in particular was sent to judicial custody but got out in no time. The vehicle owners are in the know of things that as long as they have a valid driving license the quantum of punishment would be tolerably lesser making them braver and braver by the day. This getting away so freely is setting a bad precedent, emboldening more spoiled brats to overshoot the permissible speed limits. The new penal code has tougher regulations for hit-and-run cases. It is better than the archaic existing penal code laws for hit-and-run cases. A mere possession of a driving license does not give the license holder the right to hit people on the street and go scot-free. This bad trend of hit-and-run was unheard of in Kashmir. With people owning more and more cars and the novae riche of the city handing over keys of expensive cars to adolescent sons and daughters is wreaking havoc with the fabric of society. Parents must put in a moral code in place before handing over the keys of cars to their sons and daughters. Hit and run is a serious crime. We expect the tougher regulations of the new penal code would be set in place as soon as possible and implemented in letter and spirit.



DR. RAJKUMAR SINGH

A mentor is typically an experienced and knowledgeable individual who provides guidance, support, and advice to someone less experienced or knowledgeable in a particular field, skill, or area of expertise. The mentor-mentee relationship is often characterized by the mentor sharing their expertise, insights, and wisdom with the mentee, helping them to develop their skills, make informed decisions, and achieve their goals. The key aspects of mentoring include: a. Guidance and Support: Mentors offer guidance and support to their mentees, helping them navigate challenges, make important decisions, and overcome obstacles. b. Knowledge Transfer: Mentors share their knowledge and expertise with mentees, passing on valuable information and insights that can accelerate the mentee's learning and growth.

Mentors often introduce mentees to their professional network, helping them establish valuable connections in their field. d. Goal Setting: Mentors assist mentees in setting and achieving their goals, whether they are related to career advancement, personal development, or a specific project. e. Feedback: Mentors provide constructive feedback and help mentees improve their skills and performance. f. Role Modeling: Mentors often serve as role models, exemplifying the qualities and behaviors that the mentee aspires to emulate. g. Long-term Relationship: The mentor-mentee relationship can be short-term or long-term, depending on the goals and needs of both parties. Mentoring can occur in various contexts, including: h. Professional Mentoring: In a workplace setting, a senior colleague or supervisor may mentor a junior employee to help them develop their skills and advance in their career. i. Academic Mentoring: In educational settings, professors or teachers may mentor students to support their academic and personal growth. j. Entrepreneurial Mentoring: Entrepreneurs often seek mentors to guide them through the challenges of starting and growing a business. k. Personal Development: Mentoring can also occur in personal development contexts, where mentors help individuals achieve their personal goals and self-improvement objectives. The mentoring relationship can be formal or informal, and it's often based on mutual trust and respect.

### Need of mentor

Mentors play a crucial role in personal and professional development for a variety of reasons and they fulfill: a.

# Role Of Mentor: Significance And Prospects



Guidance and Direction: Mentors provide valuable guidance and direction to individuals who may be navigating unfamiliar territory, whether it's in their career, education, or personal life. A mentor's experience and expertise can help mentees make informed decisions and avoid common pitfalls. b. Skill Development: Mentors can help mentees develop specific skills and competencies. Whether it's acquiring technical skills for a job or developing soft skills like communication or leadership, mentors can offer hands-on training and feedback. c. Confidence Building: Interacting with a mentor can boost a mentee's confidence. Encouragement and positive feedback from a mentor can help mentees believe in their abilities and tackle challenges with greater self-assurance. d. Accountability: A mentor can help hold a mentee accountable for their goals and commitments. Regular check-ins and discussions with a mentor can ensure that a mentee stays on track and makes progress toward their objectives.

Perspective and Feedback: Mentors offer an external perspective and provide constructive feedback. They can help mentees see situations from different angles, challenge their assumptions, and offer insights that mentees might have missed. Motivation: Mentors can serve as motivators and role models. By sharing their own experiences and successes, mentors can inspire mentees to strive for excellence and persevere in the face of adversity. g. Personal Growth: Mentoring relationships can contribute to personal growth and self-awareness. Mentees may gain a better understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement through discussions with their mentors. h. Problem Solving: Mentors can help mentees solve specific problems or challenges they're facing. They may offer solutions based on their own experiences or guide mentees in developing problem-solving skills.

### Benefits for mentees

Mentorship offers a wide range of benefits for both mentors and mentees. The key advantages for a mentee include: a. Learning and Skill Development: Mentees can acquire knowledge and develop specific skills through the guidance and expertise of their mentors. This can accelerate their learning and help them become more competent in their field. b. Confidence Boost: Interacting with a mentor who believes in their potential can significantly boost a mentee's confidence. This increased self-assurance can help mentees take on challenges and pursue their goals with greater determination. c. Networking Opportunities: Mentors often have extensive networks within their industry or field. Mentees can benefit from these connections, which can lead to job opportunities, collaborations, and professional growth. d. Objective Feedback: Mentors provide constructive and objective feedback, helping mentees identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments. This feedback can be instrumental in personal and professional development. e. Career

### Advancement: Mentors

can offer guidance on career planning and advancement strategies, helping mentees set and achieve their professional goals. This can lead to promotions, salary increases, and greater job satisfaction. f. Problem Solving: Mentees can turn to their mentors for advice and assistance in solving specific challenges or issues they encounter in their work or personal life. g. Professional Role Models: Mentors often serve as role models, showcasing the qualities and behaviors that mentees should strive to emulate. This can have a positive influence on mentees' values and ethics. h. Personal Growth: Beyond professional development, mentors can

help mentees grow as individuals. They may offer guidance on work-life balance, time management, and personal goal-setting.

### Benefits for Mentors

Even for mentors the concept of coaching-professionally, personally and academically is beneficial in many ways which include: a. Sense of Fulfillment: Mentoring can be a deeply rewarding experience. Mentors often find satisfaction in helping others succeed and in passing on their knowledge and expertise. b. Improved Communication Skills: Mentors develop strong communication and coaching skills as they guide and mentor their mentees. These skills can be valuable in various aspects of life, including leadership and teamwork. c. Fresh Perspectives: Interacting with mentees can provide mentors with fresh perspectives and new ideas. Mentees may bring innovative solutions or approaches to challenges. d. Networking: Mentoring can expand mentors' professional networks as they connect with their mentees and potentially gain access to the mentees' networks as well. e. Enhanced Leadership

Abilities: Mentoring allows mentors to practice and refine their leadership skills, as they guide, motivate, and support their mentees.

Through mentorship, mentors contribute to the growth and development of the next generation, leaving a lasting impact on their field or industry. g. Personal Growth: Mentoring can also be a source of personal growth for mentors. They may reflect on their own experiences and gain new insights as they guide others. In summary, mentorship is a mutually beneficial relationship that offers numerous advantages for both mentors and mentees.

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## Heart Disease - Facts, Statistics, And You



DR BALBIR SINGH

Heart diseases contribute to more than one-third of all deaths worldwide and this means we need to develop ways and means to reduce this. Many Western countries have noticed a decline but in India, this is on the rise and has reached to epidemic proportion.

We also understand that many of these deaths are preventable and proper guidance to the population at large can halt these rising deaths due to heart diseases. In a recent study published in an important medical journal with a large number of participants (n =1518028) with a follow-up of around 10 years came to the important conclusion that 5 risk factors contribute to the major burden of heart disease. These 5 risk factors are hypertension, body mass index, non-HDL cholesterol, current smoking, and diabetes. These factors could contribute to contributing to the majority

of occurrences of heart attacks or deaths globally with India being depicted with red color due to the high burden of disease and deaths.

High Blood pressure: High blood pressure appears to be the major contributor to heart diseases contributing to 13.5% of all deaths thus offering the greatest potential for intervening and reducing the burden of heart diseases. In the European Hypertension guidelines, anyone with BP more than 140/90 in the office readings should be treated with a target treatment BP of less

than 130/80 mm. With this in mind, 50% of people don't even know they have hypertension since they never check their BP, those who are detected with hypertension don't get treated adequately. This leaves an immense opportunity of detecting and treating high BP.

Non-HDL cholesterol: Is a measure both LDL and triglycerides which are considered bad cholesterol as we understand more and more about this we realise how important is this parameter with the lower the better and there has been no adverse effects noted of very

low levels of cholesterol. So it is important for us to realize that checking for cholesterol and acting on it can save many heart attacks.

Diabetes: This is both a genetic and lifestyle disease, lack of physical exercise, high-calorie diets, and overweight all contribute to diabetes with India having the highest prevalence all over the world its time to act. A diabetic patient needs utmost care to keep HbA1c levels to less than 7 and has to check cholesterol in order to prevent heart ailments.

Smoking: This leads to

inflammation in the arterial tree which is the precursor of blockages and clotting. This clotting leads to heart attacks and many deaths. In young individuals smoking is the major cause of heart attacks and causes immense damage to heart muscles.

Obesity: Obesity contributes directly to other cardiovascular risk factors, including cholesterol, diabetes, hypertension, and sleep disorders. Obesity also can lead to the development of cardiovascular disease and cardiovascular disease mortality independently of other cardiovascular risk factors. More recent data highlight abdominal obesity, as determined by waist circumference, as a cardiovascular disease risk marker that is independent of body mass index. There have also been significant advances in imaging modalities for characterizing body composition, including visceral adiposity. Lifestyle modification and subsequent weight loss improve both metabolic syndrome and associated systemic inflammation and endothelial dysfunction.

Author is Group Chairman -Cardiac Sciences (Pan Max), Chief of Interventional Cardiology & Electrophysiology, Max Healthcare



# Are We Putting Money Where The Mouth Is To Reach The Missing Millions?



SHOBHA SHUKLA / BOBBY RAMAKANT

**U**nless we find people with TB and put them on treatment, how will we be able to reduce avoidable human suffering, and untimely deaths, and break the chain of infection transmission? Finding TB remains the critical entry point to the TB care pathway.

Amidst the growing call for finding new tools to prevent, diagnose, and treat TB, are we using the best of such tools we have today to the greatest possible extent? While we must fully fund and support TB science for better new tools, it is no less a compelling priority and a human rights imperative to ensure that all the new evidence-backed technologies we have today, are maximally deployed and utilized – everywhere. Scientific breakthroughs must be converted into public health advances, no excuse not to do so.

A day before the United Nations General Assembly High Level Meeting (UNHLM) on TB was held on 22 September 2023, we read news from Papua New Guinea. The island nation has 70 WHO-recommended molecular testing machines (Gene Xpert - which requires semi-centralised infrastructure) to diagnose TB in each of the 22 provinces or cities; but all are underused except one which is installed in its capital city at Port Moresby General Hospital. Despite 32% of those with TB could not be diagnosed in 2021, all but one of its molecular testing tools lie underused in the country in 2023.

Reasons cited for the underuse of Gene Xpert molecular tests were: "sputum transportation challenges, road conditions, etc." The real reason, which is not cited in the news, could be that Papua New Guinea has deployed Gene Xpert which is not laboratory-independent and requires semi-centralised infrastructure in place.

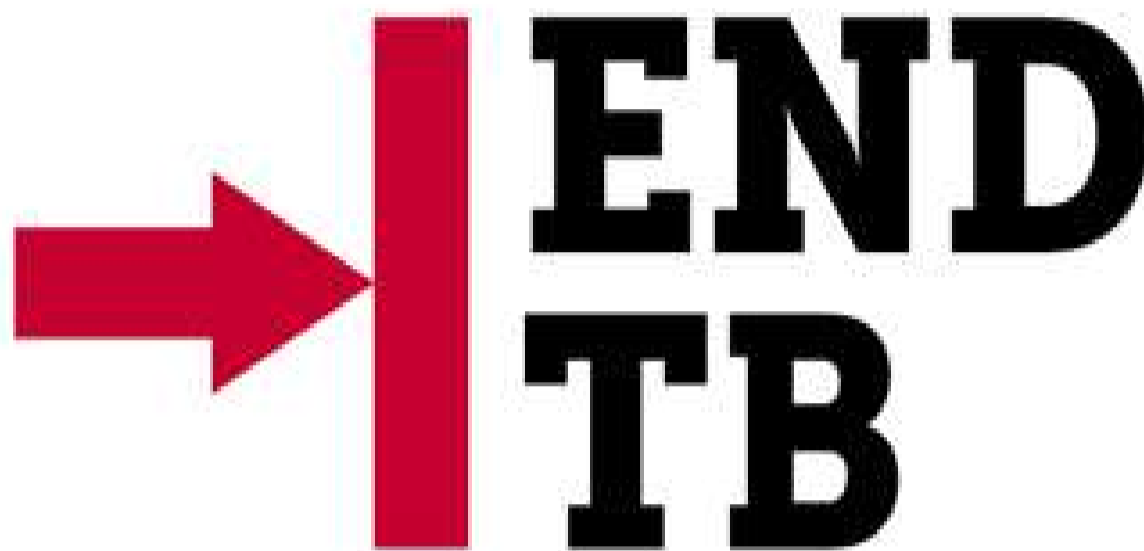
One wonders why the existing WHO-recommended point-of-care, laboratory independent and decentralized molecular test (Truenat) not deployed in Papua New Guinea instead, to resolve issues such as, "sputum transportation challenges, road conditions, etc."

## Are we missing a chance to make a change?

Among the WHO-recommended molecular tests, Truenat (made by Molbio Diagnostics in India) is the only laboratory-independent, portable, and low-maintenance platform solution that can replace microscopy for TB, and also perform multi-disease testing at the primary healthcare level. It works equally well in secondary or tertiary healthcare services too.

## Why are we knowingly making a wrong choice?

Today, thanks to scientific advancements, we have a far better and more proven choice to find and treat TB. So why are a large majority of people with TB still getting diagnosed using old archaic and inefficient tools (like sputum microscopy) and treated with drugs that are toxic, far less effective, and have a longer treatment duration? There is no reason why old tools, that are inefficient in preventing, diagnosing or treating TB, should not be done away with when we have better choices today.



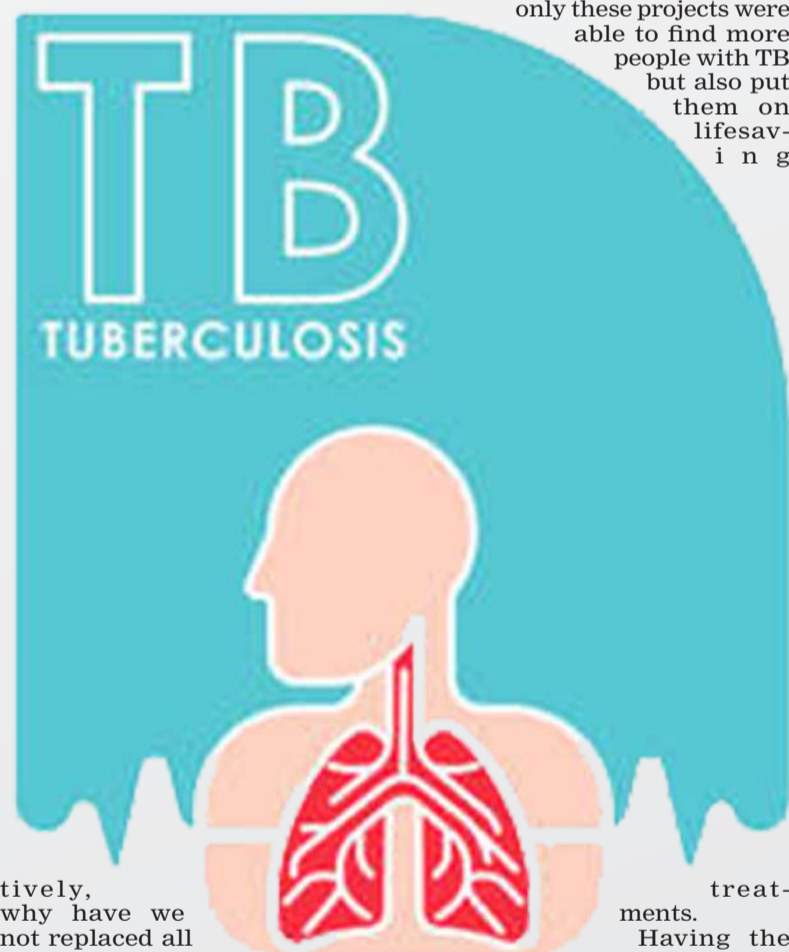
Let's do a reality check: In 2021, globally 39% of people with TB were not even diagnosed. During 2018-2021, a whopping 62% of those diagnosed with TB did not get a WHO-recommended molecular test – instead, they received the 140-year-old smear microscopy that underperforms to detect TB. Despite having the scientific evidence and WHO-recommended molecular tests that have proven to work effectively,

## is: Taking TB services to those unreachable

The WHO, Stop TB Partnership, national TB programs, affected communities, and partners have ably demonstrated that high TB burden countries can use innovative new tools to screen and diagnose TB and link people with TB to treatment and care. With the deployment of new innovative tools, not only these projects were able to find more people with TB but also put them on lifesaving

68% in a period of 4 years, said Dr Nguyen Binh Hoa, deputy manager of Vietnam's National TB Programme.

The best time for a paradigm shift was years back. Next best time is now. Science-based active TB case finding needs to be a norm and not confined to pilots anymore. We have to walk the talk on active case finding



tively, why have we not replaced all microscopy tests with molecular tests by now?

Perhaps, this is a moment of truth - have we truly invested to ensure that a person with TB gets the best of standard WHO-recommended diagnosis, treatment, care, and support? With the gaping chasm between what we know works and what we do, how do we hope to end TB in the next 27 months in India and 87 months worldwide?

Is it not time for people to demand that they be tested with WHO recommended molecular tests and treated with the one-month regimen for latent TB infection (TB preventive therapy), a four-month regimen for drug-sensitive TB, and a six-month regimen for drug-resistant TB?

## Rocking chair?

Every motion does not result in moving forward. There is a price we pay if we do not use the best of existing diagnostic tools or treatments: the price is so heavy and so inhumane – and so avoidable – in form of more human suffering, untimely deaths, and more infection spread. This is so unacceptable.

## Put money where the mouth

**O**ne wonders why was the existing WHO-recommended point-of-care, laboratory independent and decentralized molecular test (Truenat) not deployed in Papua New Guinea instead, to resolve issues such as, "sputum transportation challenges, road conditions, etc."

by using the best of screening tools recommended by the WHO (and not merely through verbal questioning for TB symptoms), and follow those with presumptive TB by offering a molecular test on their doorstep, and treatment, care and support to those found positive for TB.

## TB lab on wheels

Dr Arvind Mathur, WHO Representative to Timor-Leste shared how an innovative approach – "TB Laboratory on Wheels" – one stop mobile diagnostic van – is being used to find the missing people with TB.

TB Lab on Wheels has taken TB diagnostics closer to the communities. It is equipped with digital x-ray, WHO recommended molecular test Truenat, and an electronic medical record facility synchronized with Artificial Intelligence (AI) for reading the digital X-ray films. This van is helping to screen TB among different populations including high-risk people and in villages and hamlets.

"We were looking at how to increase case detection rate, how to go about screening large populations for TB in a short span of time. This molecular diagnostic tool (Truenat) is much more easily accessible, requires low maintenance, and gives quicker results. On one side we have digital x-ray with AI that can provide us a very

formal confirmation to some extent about where the problem is, and then at the same time we could run the molecular test (Truenat) to confirm diagnosis of TB, within the same settings and look into drug resistance in relation to the next step to be taken," said Dr Mathur to CNS (Citizen News Service).

The impact: "In a short span of time, around 7000 individuals have been screened with more than 600 people identified with presumptive TB. A 32% increase in detection has been observed as a result of using this technology," confirmed Dr Mathur.

TB lab on wheels approach is being adopted by many other countries (and customised to their contexts) such as Cameroon and Bangladesh, among others. Now, the big van is just a big car with a mounted Truenat molecular test and other best of TB screening tools.

## TB lab on utility boat goes from islet to islet in the Philippines

Dr Samantha Tinsay, Municipal Health Officer, Bantayan Municipality in Cebu, Philippines shared how Truenat molecular test machines, along with Fujifilm portable x-ray, were kept in a plastic tub and taken in a utility boat from islet to islet to screen and diagnose people with TB. "Case detection went up by over 317% and screening of presumptive TB went up by 1293%," said Dr Tinsay.

It is not difficult to imagine the huge positive public health outcomes if what Dr Mathur and Dr Tinsay have done in a limited manner was done on a larger scale in all high TB burden countries. What is holding us back from doing so? We can tailor the approach to find TB and treat TB in local contexts but if we continue to do 'business as usual', we will miss this opportunity to make a real difference by using the right tools at the right place and time.

## Finding the missing millions timely with appropriate tools

With TB elimination targets far off the track, the sense of urgency and purpose should drive us to turbocharge deployment of the best of tools we have to find and treat TB. We also need to turbocharge the efforts to find better new tools to prevent, find and treat TB too. This is not an "either/or" situation, but it is about doing both with compelling commitment and urgency.

Finding new tools is one part of the relay race, deploying them and ensuring full uptake of the services is another. Full scale deployment and uptake of new innovative tools to find and treat TB globally will also pave the way for better rollout of new tools that are in the research pipeline (if and when they come in future).

The 2nd UNHLM on TB (although attended by only one head of nation, Zimbabwe, among others) ended with an important political declaration. Next UNHLM will be in 2028. But answer to the question "will we walk the talk on the promise to end TB" will be written by us – especially donors and governments – if we can eliminate the divide between what-we-know-works and what-we-do.

It is high time to make the right turn to end TB, so do we believe.

Shobha Shukla and Bobby Ramakant are part of the editorial team of Citizen News Service. Both are on the governing board of Asia Pacific Media Alliance for Health and Development (APCAT Media) and PRB Public Health Reporting Corps. Follow them on Twitter: @Shobha1Shukla, @BobbyRamakant.

# India Sees Marked Improvement In Global Terrorism Index: FICCI CASCADE Report

SIANS

**NEW DELHI:** Sanjay Kumar Agarwal, Chairman, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said on Thursday that as India is rising as a global force in international trade and interconnectedness have transcended geographical boundaries, the challenge of illicit trade looms larger than ever before.

Addressing the inaugural of the two-day 9th edition of 'MASCRADE 2023', organised by FICCI CASCADE, Agarwal said: "Illicit trade undermines national security, risks legitimate manufacturing, leaks government revenue, jeopardises public health and safety, and erodes the trust of consumers and investors alike."

"Tackling this issue is fundamental for safeguarding India's economic stability, ensuring fair competition, and fostering an environment conducive to sustainable growth and ease of doing business. CBIC plays a crucial role in the fight against illicit trade in its entirety."

Speaking on the rising figures of GST revenue, Agarwal said that month after month the GST revenue has crossed the mark of Rs 1.6 lakh crores.

"The GST revenue collection was Rs 1.87 lakh crores in April this year, the highest ever. The buoyancy of revenue collection is 1.43 of nominal GDP growth, meaning thereby that growth in revenue collection is not only by GDP growth, but a major contribution is made by increased compliance levels."

He said that the government is taking all steps to encourage self-compliance.

"An environment is being created so that the fraudsters are not allowed to enter in the ecosystem and pollute it. The recent decisions taken in successive GST Council meetings,

to make the suitable changes in return filing are in that direction only, so that menace of fake ITC is curbed," he said.

To enhance the compliance, Agarwal said that the department has taken steps from soft approach of nudging the taxpayers for timely and accurate filing of returns, to selecting for return scrutiny or Audit.

Speaking on the Customs, Agarwal said that the department is fully committed in the country's efforts to bring down the logistics cost from level of 13-14 percent of GDP to the level of 8 per cent in line with such levels in developed world.

"For success of 'Gati Shakti' program, each and every component in logistics chain is important and need to be closely monitored. Customs is leaving no stone unturned," he said.

On anti-smuggling front, Agarwal said that whether it is a case of outright smuggling or by concealment in trade consignments, customs officers are keeping a vigilant eye over the perpetrators and syndicates involved in such illegal activities.

"CBIC is also actively exploring to harness cutting-edge technologies to enhance its operations, including Big Data Analytics, AI, Image Analytics, Natural Language Understanding, Network Analytics, and Open-Source Intelligence in the realm of Customs and GST. Such initiatives are leveraging innovative technology to manage risks and ensure compliance," he added.

Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, Secretary General of, World Customs Organisation said that to combat these threats and smuggling risks, customs administrations need to prioritise risk management and profiling based on timely and accurate information, intelligence exchange and analysis, including advance cargo and passenger information.



"Customs agencies must strengthen their cooperation with e-commerce platforms and intermediaries to ensure responsible and compliant trade practices, thereby preventing adverse effects on governments, consumer protection, and conventional consumer retailers," he said.

Anil Rajput, Chairman, FICCI CASCADE said: "In recent time, PM Modi has been emphasising on the need to eliminate the streams of terror funding in order to protect our communities and economies. In line with this thought, the theme of MASCRADE this year has been inspired in the context of our war against terror financing. It is indeed heartening to see that the government has accorded top priority to this."

"Purposeful interventions such as establishing the world's first National Forensic Science University; developing national and global databases on crimes such as terrorism, narcotics, and economic offenses; creation of the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Center among others have been made."

"Clearly, the fight against terror funding and illicit trade are beyond any country, region or industry. A collective partnership of all compliant nations with the aim of promoting legal industry across the world, punishing the illicit traders and choking the flow of finance for terror funding is imperative."

"Additionally, internal security is a critical pivot for the nation's prosperity. After all, when a country can ensure the safety and wellbeing of its citizens, it paves the way for economic growth, development and an improved quality of life," he added.

Anil Sinha, Former Director, CBI and Think Tank Member, FICCI CASCADE said that we need to collectively strategise against the activities of illicit trade.

"This is the time of action and we must move in this direction," he added.

During the event, FICCI CASCADE-TARI report 'Illicit Markets: 'Hidden Stream: Linkages between illicit markets, financial flows, organised crime and terrorism' was released.

The first-of-a-kind report examines intricacies in various forms of illicit operations and highlights the intricate nexus between the illegal economy, terror and organised crime.

India is one of the fastest growing nations in the world and the nation is also displaying good progress in addressing security concerns, as evidenced by its improved scores in the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) and crime index.

The report notes that India has a GTI score of 7.43 and a crime index score of 44.7, reflecting positive developments in these areas compared to the levels observed in 2016.

This is evident through the decrease in both terror incidents and fatalities from 2016

to 2020, as well as the recent reduction in crime cases.

The Global Organised Crime Index (2021) shows a low prevalence of organised crime actors in India at 4.3 on a scale of 1-10, compared to the average benchmark of 5.2 for 122 countries.

India also does not have a high propensity to export counterfeit products, according to the Global Counterfeiting Index.

The 6 Cs approach will help India safeguard itself against the ill-effects of illicit financial flows and remove barriers to economic growth. The Indian economy crossed the \$3 trillion economy mark in 2021 with the total amount of money laundering in India as per UNODC estimates pegged at \$159 billion, showing the magnitude of the problem driven by the rise of illicit markets and non-market actors.

As India strives to transform its economy into a \$5 trillion powerhouse in the coming years, the current trade composition at 30 percent would make the trade value at \$1.5 trillion.

The report recommends adopting 6 Cs as a policy playbook to negate the threats.

Cognisance of Terrorism and Organised Crime under regulatory framework; continuous and critical evaluation of illicit financial flows; central nodal agency for greater coordination; creating awareness and changing consumer preferences; combatting trade based money laundering; and cooperation and coordination at international level.

The report also investigates the hidden linkages in 122 countries and decodes the relationship between organised crime actors and the illegal economy, including trade-based money laundering, counterfeiting, arms and drug trafficking and terrorism and crime.

It is a first-of-a-kind report that sheds light on the intricate nexus between the illegal economy, terror and organised crime. The report also provides linkages and empirical relationships based on data gathered.

The report relies on secondary data sources and indicators from international and other agencies on terror and crime, such as the Global Terror Index (GTI), Crime Index and Global Organised Crime Index (GOCI) to understand the subject across 122 countries.

Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) indicators on counterfeiting, Global Financial Integrity (GFI) indicators on Illicit Financial Flows and other governance indicators provided by the World Bank were used to establish linkages and relationships.

In 2021, the economic impact of violence was estimated at \$1.17 trillion, which accounts for approximately 6 percent of the country's GDP in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) and violence per capita impact is estimated at \$ 841 per PPP.

It is estimated that nearly 80 percent of such containment costs relate to security and as the economy grows (along with it the illegal economy), India's cost of addressing terror and crime will be significant.

The report highlights the role played by criminal networks in a number of illicit activities, including drug and human trafficking, smuggling of cigarettes, alcohol and illegal trade of wildlife products. The United Nations estimates that the global amount of money laundered in a year is estimated to range from 2 to 5 percent of the global GDP.

## 150 Students From Jharkhand School Admitted To Hospital After Complaining Of Uneasiness



**KOLKATA:** Around 150 students from a residential school at Jharia in Jharkhand's Pakur district, which is in close proximity to the Bengal-Bihar borders, were admitted to a local hospital in West Bengal's Birbhum district.

The students were admitted on Wednesday night as they reportedly complained about feeling uneasy after having the dinner.

All the school kids, who were rushed to the Rampurhat Government Medical College & Hospital at Rampurhat in Birbhum district of West Bengal, were reportedly completely out of danger. The hospital authorities feel that the sickness was more of panic rather than actually food poisoning.

In fact the school authorities have communicated to the hospital authorities that a couple of students complained

of stomach uneasiness and vomiting tendency after having the dinner. Then one of the students claimed to have spotted a lizard limb in one of the dinner dishes and following that claim some other students made the similar complaint of stomach uneasiness and vomiting tendency.

Considering that lizard limbs are highly poisonous and can result in major hazards, the school authorities did not want to take a risk. They immediately contacted the authorities Rampurhat Government Medical College & Hospital, as it is closest to the residential school and arranged the admission of all 150 students to the emergency ward of the hospital.

However, the students who mainly complained about stomach uneasiness and vomiting tendency after dinner, have been kept under watch till Thursday morning.

## BJP To Contest Raj Assembly Polls On Lotus And PM Modi's Face: Sources



**JAIPUR:** The BJP will contest the Assembly polls in Rajasthan on Lotus and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's face, sources said on Thursday.

The decision was taken in a meeting called in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP National President JP Nadda and party National General Secretary (Organisation) BL Santosh on Wednesday night which continued till 2 a.m.

In the meeting, Shah and Nadda expressed disappointment over various issues in the party's Rajasthan unit, reports of factionalism and poor crowd in BJP Parivartan Yatras.

They discussed why the crowd did not gather in the Parivartan Yatras at many places and questioned if the factionalism of the leaders was the reason behind it.

Those present in the meeting included Union Ministers Arjun

Ram Meghwal, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Kailash Chaudhary, former Chief Minister Vasudhara Raje, state president CP Joshi, Leader of Opposition Rajendra Rathore, State Election in-charge Pralhad Joshi, election in-charge Arun Singh, state co-election in-charge Vijaya Rahatkar, Kuldeep Bishnoi, Deputy Leader of Opposition Satish Poonia and MP Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore.

Rathore was the first to leave the meeting followed by Deputy Leader of Opposition Satish Poonia, but both the leaders did not talk to the media. The meeting continued till late even after these leaders left the meeting.

When asked whether MPs would contest elections, Shekhawat said, it is for the party leadership to decide.

BJP state president Joshi said that the upcoming programmes of the party were discussed.

"The Central Election Committee will decide whether the

formula for making MPs contest elections is applicable in Rajasthan or not," CP Joshi said.

He said that no senior leader of the party is being ignored, everyone is moving together.

BJP's election in-charge Pralhad Joshi said, "We have discussed many topics. The basis of selection of candidates has been discussed. The programmes have been fixed till the announcement of elections. The decision of MPs contesting elections will be considered further."

Sources said that Raje had plans to organise a few major programmes. The Rajput community has called a mega gathering in the first week of October where Raje is the chief guest. Also in Hadoti, a few other programmes have been organised.

The veterans in the party held discussions on how the party should go out with a united face without showing signs of factions, said the sources.

## Wanted Criminal, Active Member Of Atiq Gang Saddam Arrested



**LUCKNOW:** Abdul Samad alias Saddam, a wanted criminal and an active member of slain mafia-turned-politician Atiq Ahmad gang, was arrested by the Special Task Force (STF) of Uttar Pradesh police from Malviya Nagar area of New Delhi, an official spokesman said here on Thursday.

The spokesman said that Saddam, who carried a cash reward of Rs 1 lakh on his arrest, was arrested from DDA flats opposite Select City Walk Mall in Malviya Nagar in New Delhi around 2 am.

"He has been arrested in connection with a case lodged at Bithri Chainpur police station in Bareilly under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Prevention of Corruption Act and Criminal Law Amendment (CLA) Act," he said.

It may be noted that Saddam is brother-in-law of Atiq's brother and former MLA Khalid Azim alias Ashraf. Atiq and Ashraf were shot dead by three shooters in Prayagraj district on the night on April 15 while being taken for medical examination during police remand in connection with murder of advocate Umesh Pal and his two security personnel.

The spokesman said that information about the absconding active member of Atiq gang Abdul Samad alias Saddam, a resident of Pura Mufti in Prayagraj district who was residing in a rented house in Khushboo

Enclave under Baradari police station in Bareilly, was being received by the STF for the last few days.

"During intelligence gathering information about Saddam living in a hideout in New Delhi was received after which he was arrested," he said.

The spokesman said that after being arrested by the STF, Saddam revealed that in a bid to evade arrest, he was shifting his base to different locations in Delhi, Karnataka and Mumbai. "The arrested criminal revealed that he came to Delhi to meet his paramour."

He said that when questioned, Saddam revealed that he was living in a rented house in Khushboo Enclave as his brother-in-law Ashraf was lodged in Bareilly jail. "Saddam not only supplied essentials to Ashraf inside the jail in connivance with the prison staff, but was also involved in sale and purchase of land on his behalf," he said.

He said that Saddam was responsible for handling money given by the friends of his brother-in-law Ashraf. "He along with Lalla Gaddi, Nazish, Syed Saheb and Furkan used to earn money by interfering in the disputed lands in Bareilly."

The spokesman said that the Additional Director General of Police (ADG) Bareilly zone had announced a cash reward of Rs 1 lakh on the arrest of Saddam. "Saddam has been brought to Bareilly and further legal action is being taken by Bithri Chainpur police," he said.

# US Mission in India processes over 1 mn non-immigrant visas in 2023



IAN S

**NEW DELHI:** The US Mission to India said on Thursday that it has reached and surpassed its goal to process one million non-immigrant visa applications in 2023.

Stating that Indians made over one in 10 visa applications worldwide, the Mission said it has already surpassed the total number of cases processed in 2022 and is processing almost 20 percent more applications than in pre-pandemic 2019.

"Our partnership with India is one of the United States' most important

bilateral relationships, and in fact one of the most important relationships in the world," US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti said.

"The ties between our people are stronger than ever, and we will continue our record-setting volume of visa work in the coming months to give as many Indian applicants as possible the opportunity to travel to the United States and experience the US-India friendship firsthand," Garcetti added.

The Ambassador on Thursday handed over the passport to the one millionth

visa holder and said: "... this year we are so proud... we have processed over 1 million visa applications."

Last year, over 1.2 million Indians visited the US, making this one of the most robust travel relationships in the world.

Indians now represent over 10 percent of all visa applicants worldwide, including 20 percent of all student visa applicants and 65 percent of all H&L-category (employment) visa applicants.

Recognising the continued high demand for its visas, the Mission said that

the US continues to invest heavily in our operations in India.

In the past year, the Mission said it expanded its staffing to facilitate more visa processing, and made significant capital improvements to existing facilities, such as the US Consulate in Chennai, and inaugurating a new Consulate building in Hyderabad.

The Mission said that beginning next year, it plans to implement a pilot program that would allow domestic visa renewal for qualified H&L-category employment visa applicants.

# Taiwan unveils first domestically-made submarine

IAN S

**TAIPEI:** In an effort to bolster its defences against a possible Chinese attack, Taiwan on Thursday unveiled its first domestically-made submarine which will be delivered to the navy by the end of 2024.

The \$1.54 billion diesel-electric powered submarine named 'Haikun' -- a mythical massive fish that can also fly which appears in classic Chinese literature -- was launched during a ceremony presided over by President Tsai Ing-wen in the port city of Kaohsiung, reports the BBC.

According to military officials, the submarine will now undergo several tests, while another one is currently in production.

The Haikun uses a combat system by American defence company Lockheed Martin and will carry US-made missiles.

Taiwan aims to eventually operate a fleet of 10 submarines -- including two older Dutch-made boats -- and equip them with missiles, the BBC reported.



Admiral Huang Shu-kuang, head of Taiwan's domestic submarine programme, told reporters last week that the goal of designing and building its own submarine was to fend off any attempt from China to encircle Taiwan for an invasion or impose a naval blockade.

He also said that it would also buy time until US and Japan forces arrive to aid

Taiwan's defence.

Adm Huang further said that he had personally approached military contacts in the US, Japan, South Korea and India for help but did not specify which country eventually agreed.

The submarine's launch came a day after China confirmed it had been conducting military drills this month to "resolutely

combat the arrogance of Taiwan independence separatist forces".

In recent weeks, China has ramped up its warship presence in the Taiwan Strait and military jet incursions into airspace around the island, the BBC reported.

US military and intelligence officials have given varying timelines for a possible Chinese invasion.

# 33 schoolchildren injured in bus accident in Israel



UNI

**JERUSALEM:** At least 33 children were injured on Wednesday evening when a school bus overturned at a crossroad west of Jerusalem, Israeli authorities said.

At least 33 passengers aged 8-12 were evacuated to hospitals, two of whom sustained serious injuries, one was in a moderate condition and 30 sustained light injuries, Zaki Heller, a spokesman for Israel's Magen David Adom rescue

service, said in a statement.

The condition of the driver was not immediately clear.

An initial police investigation indicated that the bus was heading towards the Eshtaol intersection, west of Jerusalem, and suddenly veered to the right side of the road, overturning for reasons that have yet to be determined, according to a police statement.

The police are examining whether a brake failure led the driver to lose control of the bus.

# Israel detects bird flu outbreak at northern petting zoo



IAN S

**JERUSALEM:** The highly pathogenic avian influenza, also known as bird flu, was detected in northern Israel, the state's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development said in a statement.

The viral disease was discovered in a petting zoo in the village of Sde Yaakov in the Jezreel Valley, and about 250 birds, including peacocks, ducks, pigeons, and ornamental chickens, were infected.

This is the first outbreak of bird flu in Israel since early 2023 after 11 outbreaks were reported in coops throughout the coun-

try between late November 2022 and early January 2023, according to the Ministry on Wednesday.

Following the latest detection of the subtype H5N1, the Ministry quarantined all chicken coops within 10 km of the infected petting zoo and called on ornamental bird breeders and coop owners to keep the animals inside buildings to reduce infection risk, Xinhua news agency reported.

The Ministry also called on the public to buy only packed and labelled eggs at regulated sales places and consume poultry and eggs only after they have been fully cooked, baked, or fried.

# Czech Republic to buy 24 US fighter jets



IAN S

**PRAGUE:** The Czech government has approved a plan to purchase 24 US F-35 fighter jets, it was announced.

The country's Ministry of Defence said on Wednesday that the state will pay a total of 150 billion Czech crowns (\$6.48 billion) for the jets. This makes it one of the most expensive purchases in the history of the Czech Republic.

At present, the country is renting 14 Gripen jets from Sweden, but this lease should expire by 2027, according to local media.

The first F-35 aircraft from the new order should be available to the Czech Republic in 2029, and the last in 2035, Xinhua news agency reported.

While some opposition political parties view this purchase as an excessive expenditure at a time when the state budget needs stabilising, army representa-

tives say it is necessary.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Jana Cernochova said, "I can guarantee that other modernisation projects of the Army of the Czech Republic are not threatened by this project, on the contrary, they complement each other with regard to the capabilities being built." The move will have positive effects on domestic industry, the Minister added.

Up to 14 projects related to the purchase are planned, and these should involve Czech companies.

On Wednesday, the Czech government approved a draft state budget for next year, with a deficit of 252 billion Czech crowns.

The country's defence spending, totaling nearly 160 billion Czech crowns, will exceed 2 per cent of GDP for the first time in 2024, according to the Ministry. (1 US dollar = 23.16 Czech crowns).

# Greece struck by storm Elias



IAN S

**ATHENS:** Central Greece faced severe weather conditions as it was struck by a storm known as "Elias", which has led to extensive flooding in parts of the region.

Some affected areas had already endured the consequences of the recent storm "Daniel" just three weeks ago, which resulted in 17 casualties and significant damage to infrastructure, residential areas, and agriculture, reports Xinhua news agency.

Residents in the port city of Volos were requested to stay indoors on Wednesday afternoon due to floods from heavy rainfall, Greek national news agency AMNA reported.

Meanwhile, residents of three villages near the cities of Larissa, Karditsa and Lamia were alerted by authorities to prepare for

possible evacuations given rising river waters.

On the island of Evia, streets in three towns turned into raging torrents, with homes and businesses experiencing flooding, according to AMNA.

The island's main road axis, which connects the south and the north, has been blocked by a landslide and many villages are facing power cuts and water supply problems.

From the start of the storm on Tuesday until Wednesday evening, the Fire Brigade received 10,495 calls for help in the Thessaly region, 125 on Evia Island, and 70 in the Attica region, which were related to evacuating people to safety, pumping out water and removing fallen trees, authorities said.

Meteorologists forecast that the adverse weather system will recede on Thursday.

# Musk's X disables feature to report misinformation about elections

IAN S

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Tech billionaire Elon Musk has disabled a feature on X that let users report misinformation about elections, the media reported on Thursday -- a move which has created furore as several countries like the US, Australia and India gear up for key elections in the next months.

The tool, available in the US, Australia and South Korea since 2021, was expanded to other countries last year.

According to digital research group Reset. Tech Australia, the move is "extremely concerning", as the country is set to hold a key referendum next month to give Indigenous people more rights as well as the 2024 US presidential elections.

"A recent change to your reporting process appears to have left Australian users unable to report electoral misinformation. This is because the categories for reporting in Australia offer no option to report electoral misinform-



mation," Reset. Australia said in an open letter.

"Users are offered inappropriate categories such as hate speech, abuse, spam, imitation etc. Previously Australian users could select 'It's misleading' about the 'Politics' category. This may leave violative content subject to an inappropriate review process and not labelled or removed in compliance with your policies," the letter added.

Australian authorities say the spread of electoral misinformation is the worst it has seen yet, reports the BBC.

"There now appears to be no channel to report electoral misinformation when discovered on your

platform," the research group said.

Musk or X were yet to comment on the report.

The move could also affect voters' ability to report misinformation ahead of the 2024 US presidential elections.

According to Reset. Tech Australia, the feature remains available in the European Union (EU).

A recent EU study claimed that X had the largest "ratio of discoverability" of disinformation.

"My message for X is: you have to comply with the hard law. We'll be watching what you're doing," said Vera Jourova, EU's Values and Transparency Commissioner.

# Israel reopens Gaza crossing after two weeks of closure



IAN S

**JERUSALEM:** Israel on Thursday reopened its main crossing point with the Gaza Strip after closing it for two weeks amid protests.

The sole pedestrian Erez Crossing between Gaza and Israel, has been reopened for Palestinian workers to enter Israel, the Office of the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), an Israeli Defence Ministry unit that coordinates with the Palestinians, announced in a joint statement.

The crossing will remain open "depending on the assessment of the situation and the security stability", Xinhua news agency quoted the statement as saying.

Israel closed the crossing for the Jewish new year holiday on September 15, citing security concerns.

Approximately 18,000 Gazans hold permits from Israeli authorities to work in Israel, bringing much-needed funds into the economy of the Palestinian enclave, which has been under an Israeli-Egyptian blockade since 2007.

# UK DM pledges more military aid to Ukraine



UNI

**LONDON:** UK Defence Secretary Grant Shapps pledged further military support to Ukraine during a meeting with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kiev on Thursday, the defence ministry said.

"The Defence Secretary met President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his counterpart Rustem Umerov and promised further military support from the UK," the press statement read.

This is Shapps' second trip to the Ukrainian capital in as many months.

He traveled to Ukraine in August in his former role as UK energy security secretary.

The United Kingdom has so far supplied Ukraine with main battle tanks, long-range cruise missiles, hundreds of thousands of artillery shells and more. Military aid totaled 2.3 billion pounds (\$2.8 billion) in 2022, with the same amount pledged for this year. This is in addition to millions of pounds in economic aid and a military training program that aims to have 30,000 Ukrainian recruits trained by the end of the year.

# One killed, 162 injured in explosion, fire at warehouse in Uzbekistan

UNI

**TASHKENT:** One teenager was killed and 162 people were injured as a result of an explosion and fire at a warehouse in Uzbekistan's capital of Tashkent, the Uzbek Health Ministry said on Thursday.

Earlier in the day, the Uzbek Ministry of Emergencies said that a powerful explosion had occurred overnight at a warehouse in Tashkent and caused a fire.

"As a result of the emergency, a teenage boy born in 2006 died on the spot. The total number of people injured as a result of the incident is 163," the ministry wrote on Telegram.

