

OPINION 6

REGRESSION IN  
AFGHANISTAN

WORLD 9

LANKA MULLS REPEALING  
CONTROVERSIAL ANTI-TERROR LAW

MONEY 10

DELOITTE EXPECTS INDIA TO POST  
6.5-7.1% GROWTH THIS FISCAL

NEW DELHI, MONDAY NOVEMBER 21, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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12 SPORT

# COP27: Rich nations to finally pay for their sins

Climate summit ends with historic compensation fund; delivers less on other issues

PNS/PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The rich nations have finally agreed that the poor ones are paying for their sins on the climate front.

In a historic breakthrough at the UN climate summit at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt the rich nations approved a deal that would create a fund for compensating poor nations that are victims of extreme weather worsened by rich countries' carbon pollution.

An overall larger agreement still was up in the air because of a fight over emission reduction efforts.

Going into the final session, battle lines were drawn over India's request to change last year's agreement that called for a phase-down of unabated coal to include a phase-down of oil and natural gas, two other fossil fuels that produce heat-trapping gases. While European nations and others keep pushing for that language, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Nigeria have been insistent on keeping it out.

India engaged constructively and actively on the subject of loss and damage, which refers to the destruction caused by climate change-induced disasters, during the course of discussions at COP27.

The decision was approved at the COP27 closing plenary that started around 7:45 AM



Simon Stiell, UN climate chief, speaks during a closing plenary session at the COP27 UN Climate Summit on Sunday  
AP photo

(India time) after negotiators debated the updated drafts of the deal throughout the night.

The success of the talks hinged on a corpus to address the loss and damage fund, which was proposed by the G77 and China (India is part of this group), least-developed countries and small island states. Vulnerable countries had said that they would not leave COP27 without a loss and damage finance facility.

"History was made today at

#COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh as parties agreed to the establishment of a long-awaited loss and damage fund for assisting developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change," the official Twitter handle of the UN climate summit in Egypt posted.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres said COP27 has taken an important step towards justice.

"I welcome the decision to

establish a loss and damage fund and to operationalise it in the coming period. Clearly, this will not be enough, but it is a much-needed political signal to rebuild broken trust," he tweeted.

The decision establishes a fund for what negotiators call loss and damage. It is a big win for poorer nations which have long called for cash sometimes viewed as reparations because they are often the victims of climate-worsened floods,

droughts, heat waves, famines and storms despite having contributed little to the pollution that heats up the globe.

It is also long been called an issue of climate justice.

"This is how a 30-year-old journey of ours has finally, we hope, found fruition today," said Pakistan Climate Minister Sherry Rehman, who often took the lead for the world's poorest nations. One-third of her nation was submerged this summer by a devastating flood and she and other officials used the motto: 'What went on in Pakistan will not stay in Pakistan'.

Maldives Environment Minister Aminath Shauna told the AP on Saturday, "That means for countries like ours we will have the mosaic of solutions that we have been advocating for."

Outside experts hailed the decision as historic.

This loss and damage fund will be a lifeline for poor families whose houses are destroyed, farmers whose fields are ruined, and islanders forced from their ancestral homes, said Ani Dasgupta, president of the environmental think tank World Resources Institute, minutes after the early morning approval. This positive outcome from COP27 is an important step toward rebuilding trust with poor countries.

Continued on Page 2

## Re-elect BJP Govt for progress, PM urges Guj

Modi slams  
Cong for Patkar  
joining padyatra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Prime Minister on Sunday unleashed a blitzkrieg in Gujarat by addressing four poll rallies in Saurashtra and slamming the Congress for allegedly being in the company of "anti-Narmada dam" elements. The Prime Minister asked people to re-elect the 'double-engine' Government of the BJP for continuity of development.

Earlier in the day, the Prime Minister first visited the Somnath temple and offered prayers there. He is also chairman of the Somnath temple trust. Modi is on a three-day election tour of Gujarat. On Monday, Modi will hold three rallies in Surendranagar, Bharuch and Navsari in Central, South and south-eastern Gujarat.

The election heat is up by many degrees in Gujarat with Modi and Union Minister Amit Shah on a whirlwind tour of the State along with AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will also address two rallies in Gujarat on Monday.

Addressing a public meeting in Dhoraji town of Rajkot district in Gujarat, Modi lashed out at Congress leaders and "so-called social workers who delayed the Narmada project."

Modi's comments came after Medha Patkar, who led the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives to offer prayers at the Somnath temple in Gir Somnath district on Sunday  
PTI

movement opposing the Narmada Project joined the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra.'

Modi spoke at length about the water revolution that took place in Gujarat during his tenure as the Chief Minister first and the Prime Minister later and how it was achieved with the spirit of people's power. At the same time, Modi hit out at people whom he accused of "delaying" the projects related to the Narmada River.

"A Congress leader was seen taking out a padayatra with a woman who stalled the Narmada dam project for three

decades," Modi said, addressing a rally at Dhoraji in the poll-bound State without mentioning the name of Rahul.

"There has been so much delay in the Narmada project. Pandit Nehru laid the foundation stone of the Sardar Sarovar Dam and it took so much time to complete that Narendra Modi had to come for the inauguration of the same. Just imagine how much time and money was wasted by this delay. And so many people came in between to resist the project for their own reasons", Modi said.

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## Mehrauli redux: Wife, son kill ex-Navy man, dump 5 body parts

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a blood-curdling rerun of the Mehrauli murder case — where a man first killed and then cut his live-in partner into 35 pieces — a wife and son strangled to death a former Indian Navy personnel, sawed his body into five pieces and disposed them of in a nearby pond.

The incident took place at Baruipur in South 24 Parganas 25 km off Kolkata. The police have arrested the mother-son duo for the ghastly murder.

The victim has been identified as Ujjwal Chakrabarty, 55 and after his retirement, he was working as a guard with a security agency. His wife Shyamali and their college-going son Joy allegedly killed him by strangulating him, police said.

Joy had reportedly asked his father for ₹3,000 for clearing his examination fees on Thursday night. The son, a student of carpentry at a poly-



technic, then strangled him.

"When his father refused to pay the money an altercation followed ... the man allegedly pushed his son aside ... this infuriated Joy who then strangled him to death," a senior police officer of the district said.

"After killing Chakraborty, his wife and son dragged his body to the bathroom. The son then used a hacksaw from his carpentry class kit bag to cut his father's body into six pieces. Afterwards, he dumped them in and around their neighbourhood," the police officer said.

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Cooker blast inside auto an act of terror, says Karnataka DGP

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The explosion inside a moving autorickshaw near a police station in Mangaluru was triggered by explosives concealed in a cooker and it is an act of terror intended to cause damage, Karnataka Director General of Police, Praveen Sood said on Sunday.

The suspect, who was the passenger in that vehicle had terror links, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said and added that sleuths of the National Investigation Agency and Intelligence Bureau have joined the State Police in probe.

According to preliminary probe, it appeared to be a low intensity Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and further investigation would bring out more details, Bommai told reporters here.

The chances of a Tamil Nadu link also surfaced as it has now emerged that the suspect was in possession of two fake Aadhaar cards, one with an address from Tamil Nadu, and another with a Hubballi address.

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## Cong revamp with faces from cow belt on anvil

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

With the major "faces" of the party, including the newly-elected president Mallikarjun Kharge hailing from southern India, a revamp of the party organisation is on the cards to give equal weightage to leaders from the cow belt in Kharge's new team.

AICC sources said Kharge is gearing up for a full revamp based on the blueprint of the Udaipur Declaration conducted in May this year and is keeping in mind three major elements: Organisation, communication, and resources.

To revive the party's moribund organisation, the Congress is set to form six new departments for election management and training, etc. The party has also decided to form a Public Insight Department and ensure that 50 per cent of office bearers in the entire organisation are below the age of 50.

As of now Kharge, AICC General Secretary Incharge of



Organisation K C Venugopal, AICC General Secretary Incharge of Communications Jairam Ramesh, and Indian Youth Congress president Srinivas BV all hail from the southern States.

Others hailing from southern States and holding important positions within the party are Manickam Tagore (Steering Committee member and a close confidante of Rahul Gandhi), former Defence Minister AK Antony (heading the disciplinary committee), and former Union Minister P

Chidambaram who is all set to take over as Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha after Kharge's elevation as the party's president.

A general secretary of the party hailing from the Hindi belt said a formula is being readied which would give important positions in the party to leaders like Sachin Pilot, Tariq Anwar, Harish Rawat, Ajay Maken, Randeep Surjewala, Depender Hooda among others for a proper representation from north India.

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## Rahul to campaign for Assembly polls in Gujarat today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/AHMEDABAD

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi will campaign for the party in the Gujarat Assembly elections on Monday when he is scheduled to address a rally each in Rajkot and Surat.

Rahul will take a break of two days from his 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' before he enters Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday after finishing off the Maharashtra leg of the tour on Sunday. The yatra will have rest days on November 21 and 22, and Rahul Gandhi will use the opportunity to campaign in Gujarat on November 21.

Rahul did not campaign in Himachal Pradesh where voting was conducted on November 12, while Gujarat is scheduled to vote on December 1 and 5 in two phases.

"Rahul Gandhi will address two poll rallies in Surat and



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with filmmaker Amol Palekar and his wife Sandhya Gokhale during the party's 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', in Buldhana district, on Sunday  
PTI

Rajkot on November 21, when the Bharat Jodo Yatra will have a rest day," informed AICC general secretary KC Venugopal.

The Congress is seeking to oust the BJP from power in Gujarat, where it has been the ruling party for the last 27 years in a row.

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## 12 killed in Bihar road accident; PM announces ₹2L ex gratia for kin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

At least 12 people, including women and children, were killed when a speeding truck rammed into a religious procession in Bihar's Vaishali area on Sunday, officials said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the loss of lives in the road accident and announced an ex-gratia of ₹2 lakh each for the next of kin of the deceased.

The incident took place around 9 PM and local RJD MLA Mukesh Roushan, who had rushed to the spot, said "12 people died".

## Milk to cost more from today in Delhi-NCR as Mother Dairy hikes prices for fourth time

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Get ready to pay more for milk in the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) from Monday. Faced with a rise in input costs, Mother Dairy has increased prices of full-cream milk by ₹1 per litre and token milk by ₹2 per litre.

This is the fourth round of hike in milk prices this year by Mother Dairy, one of the leading milk suppliers in Delhi-NCR, with volumes of more than 30 lakh litres per day. However, the company hasn't altered the rates of full-cream milk sold in 500 ml packs.



"Mother Dairy has increased the prices of full-cream milk by ₹1 to ₹64 per litre," a company spokesperson said. Token milk (bulk vended milk) will be sold at ₹50 per litre from Monday as against ₹48 per litre now.

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## Qatar kicks off Mideast's 1st World Cup

AP ■ DOHA

The first World Cup in the Middle East finally began on Sunday night with a flashy opening ceremony and a match between Qatar and Ecuador without any beer for sale in the stadium. The beer ban imposed before the start of the tournament was the latest controversy for a global event already under scrutiny for Qatar's human rights record and the emirates' frantic push to ready the nation for the most compact World Cup in history.

Thousands of attendees were turned away from a Saturday night concert in the official fan zone because of overcrowding, as 1.2 million visitors are expected to begin arriving this week to the tiny



nation on the Arabian Peninsula.

Qatar is home to 3 million people, most of them migrant workers, and has spent more than \$200 billion for improvements across the energy-rich country that's roughly the same

size as the state of Connecticut or the island of Jamaica. Among the additions are seven new purpose-built venues, including the 60,000-seat Al Bayt Stadium that hosted Sunday's opening ceremony and the first match.

### INJURIES

Two of the best players in the world were ruled out of the tournament with injuries before it even began. France striker Karim Benzema, the Ballon d'Or winner, is out after hurting his left thigh during training on Saturday.

Senegal forward Sadio Mane, runner-up to Benzema in voting for world player of the year, is out with a leg injury he picked up last week while playing for Bayern Munich. Previously, France midfielders Paul Pogba and N'Golo Kante were ruled out, as was Germany striker Timo Werner. Belgium striker Romelu Lukaku and South Korea captain Son Heung-min arrived in Qatar with lingering injuries.

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### KICKSTART

ENGLAND VS IRAN

6:30 PM

SENEGAL VS NETHERLANDS

9:30 PM

USA VS WALES

12:30 AM

### Ecuador beat Qatar

AP ■ AL KHOR

Qatar's first-ever World Cup match ended in dismay with Qatar getting outplayed and embarrassed in a 2-0 loss to Ecuador in front of 67,372 fans at Al Bayt Stadium.



NCR PULSE

EXPERTS STRESS ON MORE AWARENESS OF TOILET USE



**New Delhi:** Sanitation experts and academicians on Saturday stressed the need for more awareness towards the use of toilets and safe sanitation. The symposium was organised by Sulabh International to mark “World Toilet Day”. In his opening remarks, the Founder of Sulabh movement Dr Bireswar Pathak said that the World Toilet Day is a day to raise awareness about all people who do not have access to a toilet—despite their human right to water and sanitation.

AIR QUALITY IN DELHI ‘VERY POOR’, AQI SETTLES AT 314

**New Delhi:** Air quality in the national Capital was recorded in the ‘very poor’ category on Sunday with the 24-hour Air Quality Index settling at 314, according to Central Pollution Control Board data. The maximum temperature in Delhi settled at 26.8 degrees Celsius, a notch below normal and the minimum at 9.6 degrees Celsius, three notches below normal, the India Meteorological Department said. The relative humidity oscillated between 90 per cent and 36 per cent, it said.

HOME GAURD ON TRAFFIC DUTY HIT BY CAR, HOSPITALISED

**Gurgaon:** A home guard on traffic duty was rushed to a hospital in an injured state after being hit by a car here that was signalled since the driver was not wearing a seat belt, police said Sunday. The car driver managed to flee following the Saturday evening incident at AIT Chowk on the Golf Course Road and an FIR has been registered against the accused on the complaint of home guard Dinsh, they said.

Mehrauli redux...

From Page 1

The son carried the body parts wrapped in plastic in at least six trips in his cycle and dumped them around 500 m away at Khas Mallick and Dehmedan Malla areas, he said.

“Chakraborty’s legs have been recovered from under a garbage dump, while his head and stomach were fished out of a pond in Dehmedan Malla,” he said.

Search is on for other parts of the body, including hands, the police officer said.

The incident took place on Thursday night. In a smart move reflective of a hardened criminal’s mind the boy then filed a “missing persons” diary

at the nearby police station and even cried before the media on Friday wondering who might have killed his father.

Shyamali and Joy were arrested on Sunday after the police found inconsistency in their versions. Shyamali later alleged, “regular torture” by the victim.

“My son and I have never lived in peace ... he retired about 20 years ago and since then he had been beating us ... he was a drunkard and would refuse to share the responsibility of the

family ... he would beat me up regularly and when my son intervened he too was beaten up,” she said.

Police find skull parts as search for Shraddha’s remains intensifies

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police on Sunday recovered parts of skull and some bones from a forest area and deployed teams to drain a pond in South Delhi’s Maidangarhi as it intensified its search for the remains of Shraddha Walkar that were allegedly dumped by her live-in partner after murdering her six months ago. The police have only three days to conduct searches and find evidence in the presence of the accused as his custody will end Tuesday.

Police took accused Aaftab Poonawala to the flat where he and Walkar lived to gather more evidence. Also, the officials of Delhi Police and Rohini’s Forensic Science Laboratory held a meeting as they prepared to conduct a narco-analysis test through which they are hoping to get some vital clues from the accused. “We have taken up the matter. Our teams of forensic experts had an elaborative dis-



cussion with the officials of Delhi Police regarding the narco analysis test to be conducted and are preparing for the same,” a senior official from Rohini’s Forensic Science Laboratory said.

Sources said they recovered part of the skull and a few other body pieces (bones) Sunday after their searches. The same will be sent for forensic examination to verify if they were human bones. Sources said the bones were recovered from different forest areas and look like ‘human bones’. “We again went to the Mehrauli forest and

have recovered base of a skull, parts of jaw and bones. After recovering the remains, we have sent them to a forensic lab to get a proper report,” said sources.

The police also sent a team to Maidangarhi Sunday to search for evidence in a small lake. Visuals from the spot show officers trying to pump out water from the lake to conduct searches. It is suspected that Aftab threw body parts and other pieces into the lake. We again went to the Mehrauli forest and have recovered base of a skull, parts of jaw and bones. After recovering the remains, we have sent them to a forensic lab to get a proper report,” sources added.

The exercise began following Aftab’s claim that he had thrown her head and some other remains in the water body. “We have heard that some body parts are dumped here and the search for them is underway. They are taking out the water from the pond. This

pond supplies water to the tubewells in the area,” said Mahavir Pradhan, president of the RWA of the village.

He said that they are ready to help the police but there could be another way of finding the body parts, rather than emptying the pond. “Divers could have been deployed to look for the body parts,” he said.

On Sunday, a team went to Gurgaon for the third consecutive day to look for the murder weapon, Shraddha’s body parts, and her phone. Teams conducted searches around DLF Phase 3 forest area and other localities.

Meanwhile, a team of Delhi police reached Vasai, in Mumbai interrogated a person named Govind Yadav at Naya Nagar Police Station on Mira Road. Sources said Aftab had couriered a consignment for Rs 20,000 to a Delhi address through a Mira Road-based logistics company run by Yadav.

Ex-lover held for chopping woman’s body in 6 parts in UP’s Azamgarh

PTI ■ AZAMGARH

An ex-lover has been arrested in the killing of a woman whose chopped body was found in a well here, officials said on Sunday.

Prince Yadav was hit by a bullet in a gunfire encounter with the police on Sunday when he was taken to a spot for the recovery of the head of the woman, police said in a statement.

According to police, Yadav, who was arrested on Saturday, had concealed a country-made pistol at the spot and used it against police in an attempt to flee from their custody.

Man arrested for threatening to kill Kumar Vishwas

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A man has been arrested from Indore for allegedly threatening to kill poet and politician Kumar Vishwas, police said on Sunday.

Indirapuram Police has brought Lokesh Shukla, the accused on transit remand from Sudama Nagar in Annapurna Purna Police Station area of Indore Madhya Pradesh.

Shukla allegedly used to send threatening emails to former AAP leader Vishwas, whenever he made an adverse comment about Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, they said.

Anti-conversion law: MP Govt to move SC against interim relief from action to interfaith couples

PTI ■ JABALPUR

The Madhya Pradesh Government is going to move the Supreme Court to challenge the high court’s interim order restraining it from prosecuting interfaith couples who enter wedlock without informing the district magistrate.

The high court, in an interim order, directed the State Government not to prosecute under section 10 of the MP Freedom of Religion Act (MPFRA) adults who solemnise their marriage on their own volition.

A division bench of Justices Sujoy Paul and PC Gupta on November 14 observed that section 10, which makes it obligatory for a citizen desiring (religious) conversion to give a (prior) declaration in this regard to the district magistrate, is “in our opinion ex facie, unconstitutional in the teeth of aforesaid judgments of this court”.

The state government is going to move the Supreme



Court to challenge the high court’s interim order, which restrains it from prosecuting under section 10 of the MPFRA adults who solemnise their marriage on their own volition.” Advocate General Prashant Singh told PTI on Sunday.

The MPFRA forbids conversions by misrepresentation, allurement, use of threat of force, undue influence, coercion, marriage or by any other fraudulent means.

“We are going to file a plea in the honourable Supreme Court shortly,” Singh said.

The high court’s interim direction came on a bunch of seven petitions challenging provisions of the MPFRA, 2021. The petitioners sought interim relief to restrain the state from prosecuting anyone under the Act.

Excavation of tunnel of Bansagar project completed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHOPAL/NEW DELHI

With the excavation of the primary tunnel of the Bansagar project now completed, the farmers of Vindhya will be empowered to cultivate Rabi crop in the off season, which will exponentially increase the earnings. The completion of the Bahuti Canal and Tunnel project promises to being prosperity to the farmers of Rewa and Satna regions.

“We have completed the excavation work. By June, we will have also completed the lining of the project. We are confident and proud to say that we will have full capacity to provide year round irrigation



facility to the farmers before the onset of the next Rabi season,” said C M Tripathi, Executive Engineer, of the Bahuti Project. With the massive success of the Bahuti Canal the Bansagar Multi-Purpose Irrigation Project, both sides of the tunnel are now connected and water will soon be distributed through it. This will facilitate the irrigation of over 65,000 hectares of land and thus directly benefit 3 lakh farmers across 5 tehsils of Rewa and 2 tehsils of Satna.

Re-elect BJP Govt for...

From Page 1

“Recently, a photograph was published. A Congress leader is seen in that photograph. Ask him, with what face would he come to you to seek votes”, Modi said hitting out at Rahul.

He said, “Narmada was the only way to provide drinking water to our people living in the Kutch and Kathiawad regions. The water of this Narmada River was stopped from reaching your homes for more than three decades. Decades went

into courts and procedures. Problems were created. Dirty agitation movements were started to ensure the water did not reach here. Gujarat was being defamed in order to ensure that no one in the world including the World Bank invests money in or gives money to Gujarat. “

In Gir Somnath district, he appealed to the people to make the ruling BJP victorious in all the polling booths.

Addressing another rally in Veraval town near Somnath Temple, the Prime Minister also urged the people to turn up in large numbers on polling day and break all the previous records of voter turnout.

“I want you to make sure the BJP wins each and every booth here. Will you do it for me? This time, my focus is to win in all the polling booths. If you help me in achieving this, these four BJP candidates will

automatically reach the Assembly,” Modi said.

At a rally in Botad, Prime Minister said that the upcoming elections in Gujarat will not be for the next five years, but will determine how the state will look after 25 years.

At Amreli, he asked people what did they get by electing Congress from the constituency which did no development work in the area. In his public rallies in Saurashtra, the Prime Minister sought people to elect the ‘double-engine’ BJP government to ensure ‘continuity of development’.

Saurashtra is a strong bastion of the Congress where they won 28 seats in 2017 up from 15 in 2012 assembly elections.

A day before, Modi had addressed a rally in the Valsad district of south Gujarat, invoking Gujarati pride and appealed to the people to be wary of those who “defame Gujarat”.

Milk to cost more from...

From Page 1

The hike in milk prices will hit household budgets at a time when food inflation is already at a high level.

Mother Dairy attributed the hike in prices to an increase in its procurement cost of raw milk from dairy farmers. “This year, the entire dairy industry is witnessing a huge gap in the demand and supply of milk,” the spokesperson added.

The availability of raw milk has been impacted due to the increased cost of feed and fodder, and erratic monsoon, putting stress on prices of raw milk, Mother Dairy said. Moreover, Mother Dairy said the demand for processed milk has gone up.

“The ongoing mismatch in the demand-supply, even after the festive season, has further led to the firming of raw milk prices. We are therefore constrained to partially pass on the impact with revision in consumer prices of certain variants,”

the spokesperson said. The revision in prices will enable the company to continue supporting farmers with the right remuneration while ensuring quality milk for consumers, Mother Dairy said.

Mother Dairy passes on about 75-80 per cent of prices paid by consumers to the milk producers. On October 16, Mother Dairy increased prices of full-cream milk and cow milk by Rs 2 per litre in Delhi-NCR and some other markets in North India. Rates were raised by Rs 2 per litre for all variants in March and August as well.

Mother Dairy has 9 company-owned processing plants for dairy. The firm also undertakes processing at third-party facilities. The total milk processing capacity is over 50 lakh litres per day. For fresh fruits and vegetables, the company has its own 4 plants, while for edible oils it manufactures through 16 associated plants.

Qatar kicks off Mideast...

From Page 1

**SHOW ME THE MONEY** Awarding the World Cup to Qatar has been a financial boon to FIFA as the governing body of soccer said it earned record revenues of \$7.5 billion in the four years of commercial deals tied to this year’s tournament.

The money haul is \$1 billion more than income from the previous commercial cycle of the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

The extra money this year was boosted by local sponsorship deals, including Qatar Energy, which joined as a top-tier sponsor. Qatari bank QNB and telecoms firm Ooredoo are also sponsors.

New to the sponsorship packages this year is crypto.com, the first new American sponsor in more than a decade.

WHAT’S NEXT

The United States returns

to the World Cup after missing the 2018 tournament in Russia and opens play on Monday against Gareth Bale-led Wales.

Bale has been playing for Los Angeles FC and helped them win the MLS Cup earlier this month.

The United States has one of the youngest squads in the 32-team tournament. Three of the Americans - Gio Reyna, Joe Scally and Yusuf Musah - were only 11 years old the last time the national team played a World Cup match.

DeAndre Yedlin, a 29-year-old defender, is the only holdover from the American team eliminated by Belgium in the second round eight years ago. Yedlin, Christian Pulisic, Kellyn Acosta and Tim Ream are the only four players who were on the squad when it failed to qualify for Russia.

OTHER GAMES

The first full day of competition also includes a Group

Revamp of...

From Page 1

“We will shed the decrepit traditional strategy and rather apply an aggressive strategy and will involve similar kinds of people in the sphere of elections. New faces, new ideas, latest technology with newer methods are on the anvil,” a general secretary told The Pioneer.

Further, an AICC plenary session is being mullied after the Bharat Jodo Yatra ends in February 2023. Kharge, on his part, has asked for detailed reports about the performance of each state unit, department, and frontal organisations of the party. Also, instructions have been given to keep day-to-day documentation of each and every activity in the Pradesh Committees.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**TULIP 3P MEDIA PRIVATE LIMITED**

Regd. Office: F-14/22, Model Town-II, New Delhi-110009

Corporate Office: 207-B, 2nd Floor, NDM-2, Plot No. D-1, 2 & 3, Netaji Subhash Place, Pitampura, New Delhi-110034

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**FORM INC 26**

(PURSUANT TO RULE 30 OF THE COMPANIES (INCORPORATION) RULES 2014)

Before the Central Government, Regional Director, Northern Region

In the matter of Subsection (4) of section 13 of Companies Act, 2013, and Clause (a) of Sub Rule 5 of Rule 30 of the companies (incorporation) rules, 2014

And

In the matter of **TULIP 3P MEDIA PRIVATE LIMITED** having its registered office at F-14/22, MODEL TOWN-II, NEW DELHI-110009

Petitioner

**Notice** is hereby given to the General Public that the Company proposes to make application to the Central Government under section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 seeking confirmation of Alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the company in terms of the Special Resolution passed at the Extra Ordinary General Meeting held on 19th November, 2022 to enable the **Company to change its Registered office from the National Capital Territory of Delhi to the State of Haryana.**

Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change of the registered office of the Company may deliver either on the MCA-21 portal (www.mca.gov.in) by filing investor complaints form or cause to be delivered or send by registered post of his/her objection supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and grounds of opposition to the Regional Director, Northern Region, B-2 Wing, 2nd Floor, Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex, New Delhi-110003, within fourteen days from the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the applicant company at its registered office at the address mentioned below.

**Regd. Office:** F-14/22, Model Town-II, New Delhi-110009

For and on behalf of the applicant

**TULIP 3P MEDIA PRIVATE LIMITED**

Sd/-

Parveen Kumar Jain (Director)

DIN: 00222255

Date : 21.11.2022

Place: New Delhi

**THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS**

**CHANGE OF NAME**

**I, Azeem Ahmad, S/o. Naseem Ahmad, R/o. D-1/2, Abul Fazal Enclave-II, Shaheen Bagh, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-110025** have declared that my Daughter's name has been wrongly mentioned in her School's record as Alizah Khan instead of Alizah Ahmad.

**PD(90203)A**

**THANKSGIVING**

**Thank you holy spirit for all blessings celine**

**PD(90204)C**

COP27: Rich nations to...

From Page 1

It’s a reflection of what can be done when the poorest nations remain unified, said Alex Scott, a climate diplomacy expert at the think tank E3G.

“I think this is huge to have governments coming together to actually work out at least the first step of ... how to deal with the issue of loss and damage, Scott said. But like all climate financials, it is one thing to create a fund, it’s another to get money flowing in and out,” she said.

The developed world still has not kept its 2009 pledge to spend \$100 billion a year in other climate aid designed to help poor nations develop green energy and adapt to future warming.

The agreement offers hope to the vulnerable people that they will get help to recover from climate disasters and rebuild their lives, said Harjeet Singh, head of global political strategy at Climate

Action Network International.

Loss and damage is a way of both recognizing past harm and compensating for that past harm, said Dartmouth climate scientist Justin Mankin, who calculated dollar amounts for each country’s warming. These harms are scientifically identifiable.”

In many ways we’re talking about reparations, said University of Maryland environmental health and justice professor Scoby Wilson. It’s an appropriate term to use he said, because the rich northern countries got the benefits of fossil fuels, while the poorer global south gets the damage in floods, droughts, climate refugees and hunger.

The Egyptian presidency, which had been under criticism by all sides, proposed a new loss and damage deal Saturday afternoon and with-in a couple hours an agreement was struck, but Norway’s negotiator said it

was not so much the Egyptians but countries working together. Germany climate envoy Jennifer Morgan and Chilean Environment Minister Maisa Rojas, who shepherded the deal on the agenda and to the finish line, hugged each other after passage, posed for a photo and said yeah, we made it”

According to the agreement, the fund would initially draw on contributions from developed countries and other private and public sources such as international financial institutions. While major emerging economies such as China would not initially be required to contribute, that option remains on the table and will be negotiated over the coming years. This is a key demand by the European Union and the United States, who argue that China and other large polluters currently classified as developing countries have the financial clout and responsi-

bility to pay their way.

The fund would be largely aimed at the most vulnerable nations, though there would be room for middle-income countries that are severely battered by climate disasters to get aid.

Bleary-eyed rumpled delegations began to fill the plenary room 4 a.m. local time Sunday without seeing the overarching cover decision.

“We are extremely on overtime. There were some good spirits earlier today. I think more people are more frustrated about the lack of progress,” Norwegian climate change minister Espen Barth Eide told The Associated Press.

He said it came down to getting tougher on fossil fuel emissions and retaining the goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times as was agreed in last year’s climate summit in Glasgow.

Rahul to campaign for Assembly...

From Page 1

The Congress had given a good contest to the BJP in the last Assembly elections in Gujarat in 2017, when the Congress won 77 seats and the BJP 99. Addressing a press conference on the last day of the Maharashtra leg of the padyatra, Congress chief spokesperson Jairam Ramesh claimed people were looking for an alternative and wanted to get rid of the BJP and the RSS.

Ramesh said the Bharat Jodo Yatra is a “revolutionary moment” for national politics as well as the party and not an event, and converting it into electoral success will take a while.

Ramesh said the yatra will take a break on November 21 and 22 in Maharashtra and will proceed to Madhya Pradesh on November 23.



# AAP, BJP, CONG STAR CAMPAIGNERS HIT THE ROAD



Chief Minister of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Hemant Biswa Sarma campaign for candidates of the forthcoming MCD elections on Sunday



Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer/PTI

## City’s known Poorvanchali face joins AAP Don’t vote for those who want to stop work: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A head of the crucial MCD polls, former Congress MP and a prominent Poorvanchali face in Delhi politics, Mahabal Mishra, joined the AAP on Sunday in the presence of AAP convener and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy Manish Sisodia at a ‘Jansamvad rally’ in Paharganj.

His son Vinay Mishra is the AAP MLA from Dwarka. Mishra was suspended from the Congress for anti-party activities’ when his son joined the AAP in 2020 and contested Assembly polls.

Welcoming Mahabal to the party, Kejriwal said, “Mahabal Mishra who is a popular leader of Purvanchal community in Delhi, has joined the Aam Aadmi Party family. With your experience amongst the people and the society, we all will take the country forward together.”

After his induction, Mahabal on social media said he will work to strengthen the party. “I have continuously served the people for the last 30 years. Now I will strengthen the party in the entire nation,” he said. Mahabal’s son, Vinay Mishra, who is the AAP MLA, said that he was certain that his father too would join the party,



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy CM Manish Sisodia with former Congress MP Mahabal Mishra in New Delhi on Sunday. Mishra joined the AAP on Sunday.

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

even though he was “unhappy” about his decision two years ago. Taking to social media, Vinay wrote, “When I joined Aam Aadmi Party, my father was very angry.

I assured him that this is a party of common people, they have vision for the public and he too would join AAP one day. He further said that the party has always worked for the society and that they will continue to do it in the future as well.

Senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia said that the former Congress MP has become a

part of AAP’s “revolution” and that he will strengthen AAP’s aim to provide finest education, health facilities to everyone.

Mahabal is a known purvanchal face in Delhi politics. The AAP leadership will use Mahabal to woo purvanchal’s voters across the city during the MCD polls.

Poorvanchal votes, which over the years have become a strong factor from local to parliament elections in Delhi.Poorvanchal voters are spread in almost all wards of the MCD. It is estimated that

there are 30-40 poorvanchalis voters in the national capital. He is originally a resident of Siriyapur of Madhubani district in Bihar. He has been living in Delhi for several years and is a prominent leader of the Purvanchal community in the national capital.

Mahabal started his political career in 1997 as a Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) councillor from the Dabri ward in West Delhi.

He was subsequently elected to the Delhi Legislative Assembly thrice and the Lok Sabha once. He was first elected to the Delhi Assembly in the election held in 1998 from the Nasirpur seat.

He got re-elected from the same seat in 2003, and won from the Dwarka seat in the 2008 Assembly election. In the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress fielded him from the West Delhi constituency, in which he defeated his nearest rival, the Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP’s) Jagdish Mukhi by 129,010 votes.

Upset over party leadership, several Congress leaders Shoaib Iqbal, Ram Singh Netaji, Prahlad Singh Sawhney, Dhanvanti Chandela had already left the party and joined the AAP since its emergence.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday urged people not to vote for those who want to stop the development and welfare work in the city in the forthcoming civic body polls. Speaking at the MCD poll campaign in central Delhi’s Paharganj, he talked about his Government’s intervention in building schools and hospitals as well as providing free electricity and water. He further urged people to vote for those who work for Delhi, not those who stop works in Delhi.

He also claimed a conspiracy by the BJP to stop the free supply of power to Delhi residents. “They (BJP) have hatched a conspiracy. But Kejriwal won’t let them succeed,” he added. “Is free electricity your right or revdi? They want to stop free electricity in Delhi but dont worry, till Kejriwal is alive, electricity will be free. Till your son is alive, till your brother is alive, your electricity will be free.”

He launched the AAP’s campaign for the MCD polls with the slogan “Sarkar Kejriwal Ki, Parsad Kejriwal Ka”.

The chief minister alleged that the BJP, which has ruled



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy CM Manish Sisodia while campaigning for MCD election at Paharganj in New Delhi on Sunday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

the civic body for 15 years and is seeking a fourth term, is planning to create another garbage mountain in Delhi. Kejriwal was accompanied by his deputy Manish Sisodia. The event was disrupted by protesting Anganwadi workers and helpers.

The Chief Minister said, ‘I have not come to lecture you today, I’ve come to talk to you. Who is responsible for picking up garbage in Delhi? Who is responsible for cleaning Delhi? A lot of people have a wrong impression. Some people tell me you have fixed schools, hospital, made mohalla clinic, why haven’t you fixed the garbage

problem in the city. I told him I’m not responsible for cleaning the garbage in the city. Give us one chance this time, we will clean Delhi also.’

The chief minister said the BJP is ‘planning’ to create another garbage mountain at Basant Road.”They (BJP) will collect garbage from Karol Bagh and throw it on Basant Road. There will be a garbage mountain within a year. There will be a foul smell in the entire area, and mosquitoes and flies will breed at the landfill site. I guarantee you that we will not let them create a garbage mountain at any cost,” he said. He, however, rued that the

dispensation could not do much for improving sanitation in the city as he said “the responsibility of the same lies with the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD)”.

In our tenure, we improved schools and hospitals, provided free electricity and water besides installing CCTVs and building ‘mohalla clinics’, but we feel sad that we could not do anything about improving sanitation as is the responsibility of MCD. “Give us one chance to clean Delhi.

We will deliver results,” he said. The AAP supremo also promised to not allow ‘garbage of mountains in Delhi”. He, however, rued that the dispensation could not do much for improving sanitation in the city as he said “the responsibility of the same lies with the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD)”.

He also hit out at office of Lieutenant Governor and the BJP for hindering work of the Delhi government. “The BJP has deployed L-G sahib to stop my work. Do not vote for those who stop progress of Delhi,” he said. Exuding confidence of winning December 4 MCD polls, Kejriwal said, “We will win MCD polls, it is just that we want to see how many seats we get.

## What BJP couldn't do in MCD in 15 years, AAP will achieve in 5 years: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Sunday said that what BJP could not do in MCD for 15 years, AAP will achieve in just five years.

The Deputy Chief Minister held a samvad in Dwarka Assembly constituency where he interacted with local residents to discuss various civic issues they faced as a result of BJP’s maladministration and corruption during its rule in MCD spanning over 15 years.

The party has fielded Capt Shalini Singh from Dwarka A and Sudha Sinha from Dwarka B ward. AAP MLA from Matiala, Gulab Singh was also present.

“Primary responsibility of the BJP-ruled MCD was to clean Delhi; But instead, BJP wiped the pockets of citizens with its corruption in past 15 years,” he said while interacting with people.

Cautioning the voters to

exercise their voting power effectively, the deputy chief minister said that voting for anyone other than AAP equal to a waste of vote.

“Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal’s councillors will resolve all the issues faced by the people and bring development in their area; they will ensure regular cleanliness of their wards.

If you elect a councillor of any other party by mistake, they will stall the work done for citizen’s welfare and will pick fights with Kejriwal all day long.

People in every society of Dwarka are fed up with piles of garbage lying across their constituency and with the pathetic state of parks maintained by BJP-ruled MCD,” Sisodia added.

Senior AAP leader also tweeted, “I have two questions for those garbage-warriors of BJP who are seeking votes for MCD elections.

## BJP launches mega poll campaign with 14 bigwigs under Nadda

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP on Sunday launched a mega campaign for the MCD elections with its 14 senior party leaders and Union Ministers under the leadership of national president Jagat Prakash Nadda held Vijay Sankalp roadshows across the city and appealed to the public about the importance of voting for BJP. They appealed to people to vote for the BJP in the upcoming MCD elections.

“Delhiites are looking towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the development of the city and they have faith in the BJP,” thundered BJP National president, Jagat Prakash Nadda, while conducting Vijay Sankalp Road Show, ahead of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) elections. Nadda with MP Ramesh Bidhuri started the roadshow from Hamdard Mor

in South Delhi and concluded at Sangam Vihar.

Hundreds of people gathered at 14 different locations across the city to witness the mega roadshow conducted by the big leaders of the party. All the party workers and the people were seen with the saffron-colored strap around their necks, and flags with the ‘lotus’ symbols were seen waving in Delhi.

The people welcomed the leaders and were seen chanting the name of the PM ‘Modi-Modi’ continuously as the road show proceeded in the city.

Union Defense Minister Rajnath Singh and MP Pravesh Sahib Singh carried out the Vijay Sankalp Road Show from Rama Park Uttam Nagar to Vikaspuri Corporation wards.

The people of the area welcomed Singh by wearing a turban and showering flowers on him. Singh expressed confidence that the people of the city will once again give the BJP an opportunity to serve in the Municipal Corporation elec-

tions to bring about all-around development in the city.

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar started from Ramdev Chowk of Narela Vidhan Sabha and concluded at Lampur Chowk. MP Hansraj Hans, State General Secretary Shri Kuljeet Singh Chahal, District President Shri Vinod Sehrawat, corporation election candidates and thousands of party workers participated in the road show. Khattar said that Arvind Kejriwal does politics in every matter, but he does not know how to govern.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma’s Vijay Sankalp roadshow started from the fifth Pusta Ghonda assembly and ended at Bhajanpura Chowk. MP Manoj Tiwari, BJP State General Secretary Dinesh Pratap Singh, MLA Ajay Mahawar, District President Mohan Goyal, President of Purvanchal Morcha Kaushal Mishra, corporation election candidate and thousands of party workers participated in roadshow.

## BJP launches offline, online poster war against AAP

SAURAV GUPTA ■ NEW DELHI

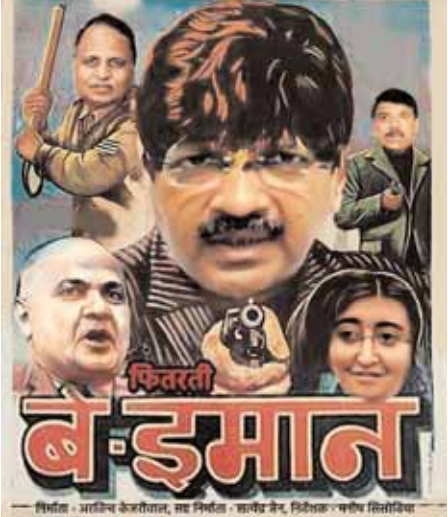
A day after jailed Minister Satyendar Jain’s A video went viral in which he was seen taking a massage from a physiotherapist and meeting people in his prison cell, the Delhi BJP has launched a massive offline and online poster war against the AAP leader by posting multiple poster on social media mocking party leaders.

The party came up with multiple posters showing Kejriwal running a spa center from Tihar, and giving massage to Jain.

A poster from BJP Delhi official twitter handle, posted on Sunday in which the Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has a gun in his hand and Jain is standing behind him dressed as a Jailer with a stick and on Sanjay Singh was dressed as a mafia, also carrying a pistol.

Deputy CM Manish Sisodia and party leader Atishi also featured in the poster and “AAP is dishonest by nature!” is also written on it. However, the attack does not end here, as the party social media handle has also tweeted another banner in which the picture of the Satyendar Jain taking Massage at the Tihar jail was featured at the bottom, while on the top of the it a picture was placed of the India Gate with the picture of London, means compairing Delhi to London.

“Delhi London Bane na Bane, AAP ne Tihar ko Thailand zarur Bana dia” was written on the banner. While posting the banner, it also com-



mented, “AAP KA SPA, TIHAR BANA THAILAND !!! Thank you Kejriwal ji.” Poster saying “Directed by: Arvind Kejriwal” and “Massage-E-Azam” with picture of Satyendar Jain was also posted by the party’s official twitter handle. The poster was created in a way that if it a banner of any movie. “P-AAP presents, Massage-E-Azam, Starring: Satyendar Jain, Direction: Arvind Kejriwal” was also commented by BJP Delhi, while criticising AAP.

## 1,349 candidates to try their luck in MCD polls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A total of 1,349 candidates are left to try their luck at the hustings for a seat in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. According to the data shared by the State Election Commission, the 250 wards, for which elections will be held on December 4, will see 709 women and 640 men as contestants.

A total of 67 candidates withdrew from the fray on the last date of withdrawing candidatures for the upcoming civic polls. Apart from this, political heavyweights such as BJP and AAP have also given tickets to more women candidates with the saffron party’s number standing at 136 and AAP’s numbers at 138. Of the 2,585

candidates who filed nominations for upcoming civic body polls in Delhi scheduled to take place on Dec 4, 1,169 were rejected by election commission on account of various technical shortcomings. After withdrawals, the final tally stands at 1,349, including 709 female candidates.

This time, the count has gone down making it a relatively tightly contested race compared to 2017 when 2,809 candidates took part in municipal elections.

According to the data shared by State Election Commission, Of the total withdrawals which included 34 male and 33 female candidates, the highest were observed among Independent candidates with total standing at 55.



People through the India International Trade Fair 2022 at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi on Sunday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

## Tiwari demands probe against those meeting Jain in prison

New Delhi: BJP MP Manoj Tiwari on Sunday demanded investigative agencies to probe the people meeting with jailed AAP Minister Satyendar Jain in his prison cell. His remarks come a day after videos purportedly showing Jain receiving massage and meeting visitors in jail emerged.

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia had on Saturday backed his cabinet colleague, saying Jain was undergoing physiotherapy for a spinal injury suffered from a fall in the prison. He had also accused the BJP of making a mockery of Jain’s treatment and hatching a conspiracy to keep him in jail in a “frivolous” case. “Sometimes even God intervenes to expose the dishonest and culprits,” Tiwari



said over AAP’s allegations that videos were leaked.”The question is not who or how videos were leaked, the question is what was Jain doing there,” he asserted.

The former Delhi BJP chief also demanded that probe agencies find out whom all Jain met in prison and hinted that findings could help in investigation of money laundering case in which the minister is an accused.

SR



# Indian Navy to hold Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue on Nov 23

With China adopting aggressive stance in Indo-Pacific, security experts will review its impact on region

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With China adopting an aggressive stance in the Indo-Pacific, security experts and strategic thinkers will review its impact on the region during the three-day conference here beginning November 23. It is part of the Indian Navy's annual international meet called the "Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue" (IPRD). The overarching theme of



this year's conference is Operationalising the "Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative" (IPOI) Programme. The discourse is being led by the National Maritime Foundation (NMF), which is also the Indian Navy's knowledge partner, officials said here on Sunday.

In 2018, the initial conception of an IPRD was made. With the exception of 2020, when it had to be postponed owing to the Covid-19 epi-

demic, the event has been hosted annually since its initial year in 2018. The IPRD reviews the current geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific region and identifies opportunities, dangers, and problems that might be present. It is difficult to exaggerate how important the IPRD is since it is not only essential to India's own policy-formulation but also to all other nations in the region.

Additionally, IPRD remains crucial to its interests

because one of the main goals of the NMF is to conduct analyses of international relations and geopolitical factors that are important to India strategically, with the aim of proposing maritime Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) and amplifying maritime cooperation among seafaring nations as well as to achieve a sustainable security environment in the Indo-Pacific Region.

As the term "Indo-Pacific," recognises the geopolitical unity of littoral nation-states of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean across a primarily oceanic regional-expanse, it has become intrinsic to global political, economic, and strategic discourse over the past ten years, and as such the Indo-Pacific region continues to be synonymous with the IPRD.

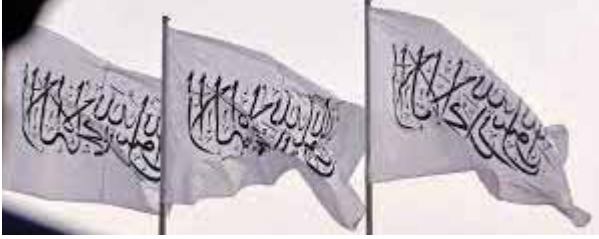
# Will recognise Taliban only if world community accepts regime: Pakistan

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Pakistan has ditched the Taliban by reversing its stand from seeking recognition from the international community in favour of the ruling regime in Afghanistan to claiming that the world's patience has run out for it.

Post the takeover of Afghanistan by Taliban in August last year, Pakistan had then asserted that it will seek international recognition for the new regime in Kabul. Following this, the Taliban has been seeking help from Pakistan for winning international recognition for its regime in Kabul.

But Pakistan is staring at an existential crisis and is not in a position to extend help to the Taliban. This led Islamabad to change its stand and assert that it will recognise only if the world community recognises the Taliban. "Pakistan's rever-



sal of stand on the issue of garnering support to the Taliban in seeking recognition from the global community is tantamount to a diplomatic volte-face," a counter-terrorism and geopolitical analyst said.

The ties between the Taliban and the Pakistan army have also soured during the last over one year in the wake of claims and counter-claims along the Durand Line which is not recognized by the Taliban. However, Pakistan has been seeking to encroach the areas till the Durand Line which it claims as the boundary between the two countries.

Reports have suggested there have been bloody skirmishes between the two sides with Taliban even fatally firing at the Pakistan army personnel.

Besides this, the Afghans settled in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region face humiliation at the hands of the Pakistan army personnel who man border gates at unsettled border between two countries.

Some agitated Afghans seeking to cross over through the border gates have even resorted to killing Pakistan army personnel. However, in a face saving measure, the Pakistan army has not con-

firmed such developments.

For record, Pakistan has said it will not recognize the Taliban government without a consensus on issue globally. On November 18, Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said at a Press conference in Islamabad, "As far as recognizing them [Taliban] is concerned, Pakistan does not want to act alone and prefers this process (of consultation) and follow international consensus."

In a balancing act, Zardari, however, emphasized that Pak government backs sustained international engagement with Taliban to help prevent a humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan.

Zardari also exhorted Taliban to fulfill its commitments to Afghans and world to fight international terrorism and respect human rights of all Afghans, including grant of access to education to women.

# Def Min to review ties with ASEAN counterparts

India and Cambodia will co-chair maiden India-ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will take part in the maiden India-Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Cambodia for two days beginning November 22. He will also review bilateral ties with his counterparts of the ASEAN nations on the sidelines of the high-profile event.

Giving details of his schedule here on Sunday, defence ministry officials said Rajnath is visiting Cambodia at the invitation of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence of Cambodia



Samdech Pichay Sena TEA Banh. Cambodia, as the chair of ASEAN Defence Ministers Plus (ADMM Plus) meeting, is hosting the 9th annual meeting at Siem Reap, Cambodia and Rajnath will address the forum on November 23, 2022.

He will also call on the Prime Minister of Cambodia. To commemorate 30 years of India-ASEAN relations, India and Cambodia will co-chair the maiden India-ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting on November 22, 2022, presided over Rajnath, they said. Various initiatives to boost India-

ASEAN partnership are planned to be announced during the meeting.

India became the dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1992 and inaugural ADMM-Plus was convened in Hanoi, Vietnam on October 12, 2010.

Since 2017, ADMM-Plus Ministers have been meeting annually to further dialogue and cooperation amongst ASEAN and the Plus countries. India and ASEAN elevated their relationship to a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' in November 2022.

Apart from ADMM-Plus meeting and India-ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting, Rajnath will hold bilateral discussions with Defence Ministers of participating countries. During talks, he will discuss defence cooperation matters and ways to further strengthen mutually beneficial engagements.



The Rashtrapati Bhavan, Parliament House, North and South Block, India Gate and historical monuments across India #GoBlue in solidarity for child rights.

PNS

# India to take over chair of Global Partnership on artificial intelligence

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India will take over the chair of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence for 2022-23 at a meeting of the body in Tokyo on November 21, the Ministry of Electronics and IT said on Sunday.

In the election to the Council Chair, India had received more than a two-thirds majority of first-preference votes while Canada and the United States of America ranked in the next two best places in the tally - so they were elected to the two additional government seats on the Steering Committee, the ministry said in a statement.

Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar will represent India at the handover ceremony in Tokyo.

"Close on the heels of assuming the presidency of G20, a league of world's largest economies, India will take over the chair of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), an international initiative to support responsible and human-centric development and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)," the statement said. GPAI is a congregation of 25 member



countries, including the US, the UK, the EU, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, and Singapore. India joined the group as a founding member in 2020. "Rajeev Chandrasekhar will represent India at the GPAI meeting to be held in Tokyo on November 21, 2022 for the symbolic takeover from France, which is the outgoing Council Chair," the statement said.

For the 2022-2023 Steering Committee, the five government seats will therefore be held by Japan (as Lead Council Chair and Co-Chair of the Steering Committee), France (Outgoing Council Chair), India (Incoming Council Chair), Canada and the United States. "India occupying the

chair also signifies how the world today perceives India as a Trusted Technology partner and one that has always advocated for the ethical use of technology for transforming citizens' lives," the statement said.

AI is expected to add USD 967 billion to the Indian economy by 2035 and USD 450-500 billion to India's GDP by 2025, accounting for 10 per cent of the country's USD 5 trillion GDP target.

GPAI is a first-of-its-type initiative for evolving better understanding of challenges and opportunities around AI using the experience and diversity of participating countries. The alliance will look to bridge gap between theory and practice by supporting advanced research and applied activities on AI-related priorities.

# SC to hear PIL seeking setting up of judicial body to probe Morbi tragedy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A plea is listed in the Supreme Court for hearing on Monday for setting up a judicial commission to probe the case of Morbi bridge collapse in Gujarat which claimed nearly 140 lives.

A bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justice Hima Kohli will hear the PIL filed by advocate Vishal Tiwari. The PIL seeks a judicial commission under the chairmanship of a retired judge of the apex court contending that the accident showed the negligence and utter failure of the authorities.

On November 1, Tiwari had mentioned the matter for urgent listing, and the top court said it would take up the matter soon.

"From the past decade, various incidents have taken place in our country wherein due to the mismanagement, lapse in duty, and negligent maintenance activities, there have been cases of huge public casualties which could have been avoided," Tiwari has said in his PIL. The more than a



century-old bridge, located around 300 km from state capital Gandhinagar, had reopened five days back after extensive repairs and renovation. It was crammed with people when it collapsed around 6.30 pm on October 30.

The plea has sought directions to the states to form a committee to survey and conduct assessment risk of old and risky monuments and bridges to ensure environmental viability and safety.

It has also sought a direction to the states to constitute a construction incident investigation department so that fast and prompt probes can be done whenever such incidents occur.

The plea said such departments should also enquire about the quality and safety of any public construction taking place.

# Health Ministry includes coronary stents in National List of Essential Medicines, 2022

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry has notified the inclusion of coronary stents in the National List of Essential Medicines, 2022, a move that will help make these life-saving medical devices more affordable.

The move is based on the recommendations by an expert committee constituted to review the inclusion of stents in the list based on requirement.

The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) will now fix the price of coronary stents.

On November 6, the Standing National Committee on Medicines (SNCM) had submitted its recommendation for inclusion of coronary stents in the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM), 2022 in two categories -- Bare Metal Stents (BMS) and Drug Eluting Stents (DES) which include metallic DES and bioresorbable vascular scaffold (VBS)/biodegradable stents.

According to minutes of the SNCM meeting, vice chairman Dr Y K Gupta stated that coronary stents were earlier included in NLEM, 2015 through a separate notification based on the recommendations of an expert committee. "As far as medicines are



concerned, SNCM has already submitted its report on NLEM, 2022 and the same has been adopted by the government," an official source said. The SNCM had deliberated on the essentiality, categorisation and other relevant aspects of coronary stents. It also stated that coronary artery diseases (CAD) is a public health issue which is associated with high morbidity and mortality. There is an enormous need for percutaneous coronary interventions requiring implantation of coronary stents.

Therefore, coronary stents should continue to be essential medical devices, committee members agreed.

"After taking into consideration all aspects of coronary stents, the committee recom-

mended that coronary stent is an essential medical device which has been notified as a 'drug' under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and therefore, it should be included in NLEM, 2022," an official said.

Authorities for the purpose of NLEM in respect of coronary stents should consider various coronary stents separately under the categories of Bare Metal Stents and Drug Eluting Stents, he said.

The Indian Council of Medical Research and other relevant institutions may also consider to take necessary initiatives to generate data for assessment of post marketing safety and performance of coronary stents being used in various hospitals/institutions, the members stated.

# Kathua rape-murder case: Victim's family awaits trial of accused

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking justice for over four years, the family of the eight-year-old Kathua rape-murder victim is eagerly waiting for the start of the trial against Shubam Sangra, who will be treated as an adult following a Supreme Court order.

The lawyer for the victim's family, Mubeen Farooqi, told PTI from Malerkotla in Punjab that the trial should take place in Punjab as was done for the other accused and not anywhere else. If needed, they will approach the Supreme Court again to get clarity on this issue, he said. "We can't have two appellate courts for the



same case," the lawyer said. Farooqi cited the 2018 order of the Supreme Court under which the trial of the case was transferred to Pathankot in Punjab and a day-to-day hearing was

ordered after some lawyers in Kathua had prevented the Crime Branch officials from filing a charge sheet. "Now this is clear that the trial of the case has to be held in Pathankot only and if need be, we will approach the Supreme Court again to get clarity on this issue," he said.

The three-member bench of the Supreme Court headed by the then chief justice Dipak Misra had ordered shifting of the trial from Kathua and also made it clear that the District and Sessions Judge of Pathankot shall himself take up the trial and not assign it to any additional judge. Besides ordering daily in-camera hearings, the bench, which also comprised Justice

D Y Chandrachud, who is now the Chief Justice of India, and Justice Indu Malhotra, had made it clear that "as this court (Supreme Court) is monitoring the matter, no court shall entertain any petition pertaining to the case".

"Though the apex court in 2018 gave all protection to Sangra, who was treated as a juvenile at that time, things have changed after Wednesday's order. Hence, the trial should start at Pathankot only," Farooqi said. Mohammed Yusuf, who had adopted the girl, was also hopeful that the trial in the case would begin as soon as possible. The special court had on June 10, 2019 sentenced three men to

life imprisonment till their last breath for the ghastly crime that shook the nation.

Sanji Ram, the mastermind and caretaker of the 'devasthanam' (temple), where the crime took place in January 2018; Deepak Khajuria, a Special Police Officer, and Parvesh Kumar, a civilian - the three main accused - were spared death penalty, a punishment sought by prosecution during the year-long in-camera trial.

The three were convicted under Ranbir Penal Code (RPC) sections relating to criminal conspiracy, murder, kidnapping, gang rape, destruction of evidence, drugging the victim and common intention.

# Govt to publish frameworks to check fake reviews on e-commerce websites

**New Delhi:** The Government will publish next week frameworks to counter fake reviews and unverified star ratings on e-commerce websites, hotel and travel booking platforms, according to Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh.

Since e-commerce involves a virtual shopping experience without any opportunity to physically view or examine the product, consumers heavily rely on reviews posted on platforms to see the opinion and experiences of users who have already purchased the goods or

services. But fake reviews and star ratings mislead consumers into buying online products and services.

To check fake reviews, Singh said the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) has finalised frameworks after studying the present mechanism being followed by the e-commerce entities in India and best practices available globally. "After consultation with stakeholders, we have finalised frameworks to counter fake reviews.

(PTI)



# BJP suspends 7 leaders for filing as Independents in Guj

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Gujarat on Sunday suspended seven party leaders, including two former MLAs, for filing nominations as independent candidates for the upcoming state Assembly elections after they were denied tickets.

The seven candidates are contesting from the seats that will go to polls in the first phase of the elections scheduled to be held on December 1.

The party suspended former MLAs Arvind Ladani, who had won from Keshod constituency in 2012, and Harshad Vasava from the Scheduled Tribe-reserved seat of Nandod, after they filed their nominations as independents from these seats.

The BJP has fielded Dr Darshana Deshmukh from Nandod and Devabhai Malam from Keshod.

The saffron party also suspended Chhatarsinh Gunjariya,

a district panchayat member from Surendranagar, after he filed his nomination as an independent from Dhrangadhra seat.

Other suspended leaders include Ketan Patel, Bharat Chavda, Uday Shah and Karan Baraiya, who have filed their nominations as independents from Pardi, Rajkot, Veraval and Rajula seats respectively.

The BJP, in a release, said, "These leaders have filed their nominations as independent candidates against the candidates declared by the party. They are being suspended on the direction of the state BJP president C R Paatil."

Paatil had earlier told reporters that it is a norm to suspend leaders who seek to contest as independents against party candidates after they fail to withdraw their nominations on the last day of withdrawal.

Several BJP leaders have come out in the open to express their unhappiness for being denied tickets and have



declared to contest as independents.

Six-time MLA Madhu Shrivastav from Vaghodia, who was denied a ticket, has also filed his nominations as an independent. The BJP has fielded Ashwin Patel from the seat.

Another former BJP MLA Dinesh Patel aka Dinu Mama of Padra seat in Vadodara district has also filed his nominations as an independent.

The BJP has given the ticket to Chaitanyasinh Zala on the seat.

Both Vaghodia and Padra will go to polls in the second phase of elections on December 5. The BJP has not yet suspended the two former MLAs Shrivastav and Patel.

At least 788 candidates are in the fray for the first phase of the elections to 89 seats, which will be held on December 1.

The second phase of the polls for 93 constituencies will be held on December 5 and the counting of votes for all 182 Assembly seats will take place on December 8.

# Kerala HC order on KUFOS V-C not tenable, says Kerala higher edu dept

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The CPI(M) led Government in Kerala remains unperturbed over last week's High Court verdict quashing the appointment of Riji John, Vice Chancellor of the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences. A petition filed by Riji John challenging the High Court order has been scheduled for hearing by the Bench consisting of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justice Hima Kohli.

The Department of Higher Education as well as the KUFOS officials point out that the High Court has erred in its observation that the University Grants Commission regulations were violated by the Government of Kerala in the appointment of Riji John.

A release by the KUFOS says that if the apex court upholds the Kerala High Court verdict unseating Riji John for not following the UGC regulations, it would lead to the

termination of services of all vice-chancellors in the country's agricultural and fisheries universities. The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear the plea by Riji John on November 25.

The release by KUFOS says that all vice chancellors of the seventy agricultural/fisheries universities in India (numbering 70) were selected by committees that included the representatives of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. "All these universities come under the jurisdiction of ICAR and none of them get any kind of financial assistance from the UGC. This means that the UGC has no role in the selection of vice chancellors of these institutions," said the release by KUFOS.

The University Grants Commission was established on 28 December 1956 while the ICAR was in operation since 16 July 1929. Since the day of its formation, the ICAR was the agency tasked with the appointment of vice-chancellors of the universities that



come under it," said the release.

As per Indian Constitution, agricultural education figures in the State List and this automatically empowers the State the right to make all appointments to the agricultural universities. Moreover, the UGC itself has termed the Agricultural, fisheries and veterinary universities in the State as State Universities with rules formulated by the State Government.

Sources close to Governor Arif Mohammed Khan said the Constitution is right. "But is there any possibilities of the judges overlooking this impor-

tant issue while pronouncing the verdict quashing the appointment of the KUFOS vice-chancellor?" they ask.

The Higher Education Department of Kerala is in a state of turmoil following the stand off between the Governor and the State Government over appointment of vice-chancellors and faculty members in the Universities. The CPI(M)-led Government has promulgated an ordinance unseating the Governor from the post of Chancellor of the Universities in the State. The ordinance would come into effect only after the Governor affixes his signature on the ordinances.

# New Bengal Governor may take oath on Wednesday STATE BJP APPEALS TO BOSE TO TOE DHANKHAR LINE

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

New Bengal Governor CV Anand Bose would take oath of office on Wednesday, Government sources said. Bose will replace acting Governor La Ganesan who was in charge of both Bengal and Manipur.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had called him up on Saturday and requested him to take oath either on Monday or Wednesday. Bose had opted for the second date. Banerjee while greeting the new incumbent on his appointment as the State's Governor had requested to take charge as early as possible saying her Government was making all the necessary arrangements for the purpose.

Meanwhile, controversies erupted once again after the State BJP leaders publicly appealed to Bose to follow in the footsteps of former Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar



who had a bitter relationship with the State Government.

Expressing unhappiness with the way acting Governor La Ganesan who had taken charge of Bengal after Dhankhar was elevated to the post of Vice President senior BJP leaders of the State said that they hoped Bose would not ignore the misdeeds of the State Government and the ruling Trinamool Congress and expected he would tow the Dhankhar line.

Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari earlier said, "though it is not appropriate for me to say what a high constitutional authority like the Governor would do or not do but what we have come to know about him what he has said about his duty vis a vis the Constitution we are hopeful that he will do what the then Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar did to uphold the values enshrined in the Constitution ... we hope he will definitely work towards improving the condition of Bengal."

Another senior BJP MLA Manoj Tigga too said that the "role that can be played by the Governor has already been showed by Jagdeep Dhankhar ... just like TN Shesha showed how an Election Commission should function ... though it is not for me to tell how a Governor should act."

Earlier Bose had in an

interview said that he knew Bengal was a politically active state and that he would do his bit to act as a "rainbow bridge between the State and the Centre." He also said that her preferred "a resolution of conflicts as for any problem there is a solution," adding "I would say what the Constitution expects - that the Governor has to know the way, show the way and go the way."

In his little less than three years tenure Dhankhar and Mamata Banerjee had numerous war of words that often snowballed into writing mutually hard-hitting words in public letters and sometimes the Chief Minister even comparing him to a horse.

Things reached such a pass that the State Government accusing the Raj Bhavan of sitting over important files for months even removed the Governor as the Chancellor of

the Universities and replaced him by the Chief Minister.

The Left and the Congress however, interpreted the "make believe" trading of fires between the Nabanna (secretariat) and Raj Bhavan as a ploy not only to turn attention from real issues --- like corruption, law and order, unemployment, flight of capital, rising inflation --- but also to create a false TMC-BJP polarisation and help the saffron outfit --- which was fast losing ground post 2021 Assembly elections --- remain politically afloat in the State.

"TMC and BJP are the two sides of the same coin ... they are comrades in deeds and comrades indeed ... that are trying to create a polarised atmosphere through TMC's soft communalism and BJP's aggressive communalism," said CPI(M) leader Sujana Chakrabarty.

# Isha Ambani, hubby Anand Piramal blessed with twins

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Kicked off massive celebrations in the households of India's leading industrialists Mukesh Ambani and Ajay Piramal, their children Isha and Anand have been blessed with twins—a boy and girl.

In a joint announcement made here on Sunday, proud grandparents Nita and Mukesh Ambani, and Swati and Ajay Piramal said: "We are delighted to share that our children Isha and Anand have been blessed by the Almighty with twins on November 19 (Saturday)".

"Isha and the babies, baby girl Aadiya and baby boy Krishna are doing well," the excited grandparents said.

"We seek your blessings and good wishes for Aadiya, Krishna, Isha and Anand in



this most important phase of their life," the two families said.

It may be recalled that scions of two top business conglomerates - Isha Ambani and Anand Piramal -- had entered into a wedlock on December 12, 2018. Several prominent personalities from various walks of life, including former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, former President Pranab Mukherjee, business tycoons, film stars, sports celebrities had turned out for the "roya" wedding.

Apart from Hillary Clinton

and Pranab Mukherjee, Hillary Clinton, Union ministers Rajnath Singh and Maneka Gandhi, then chief ministers of Gujarat and Maharashtra Vijay Rupani, Devendra Fadnavis, film personalities Amitabh Bachchan, legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar, Shah Rukh Khan, Rajinikanth and Aamir Khan had already arrived at the wedding venue.

Jaya Bachchan, son Abhishek and daughter-in-law Aishwarya, Karan Johar, Aamir Khan's wife Kiran, SRK's wife Gauri, Salman Khan, Katrina Kaif, Priyanka Chopra and her husband Nick Jonas, Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh, Vidhu Vinod Chopra and prominent persons from business and corporate world like Sanjiv Goenka, K V Kamath, Deepak Parekh, Sashi and Anshuman Ruia were among those who had made it to the wedding.

# Modi Govt weakening laws framed by UPA to empower tribals: Rahul

PTI ■ BULDHANA

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday accused the Narendra Modi-led central government of weakening laws framed by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) to empower tribals, and said his party will strengthen them further after coming to power again.

Addressing the Adivasi Mahila Workers' Sammelan at Jalgaon-Jamod in Maharashtra's Buldhana district, Gandhi said tribals are the "first owners" of the country and have equal rights like other citizens.

The Modi government was

weakening laws like the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, Forest Rights Act, Land Rights, Panchayat Raj Act and the reservation for women in local bodies, Gandhi said.

He said PM Modi calls tribals as 'vanvasis'. There are different meanings of the words 'adivasi' and 'vanvasi', he said.

"Vanvasi means you can live only in jungles, not in cities, you can't become doctor and engineer and can't travel by plane," he said.

Gandhi alleged that the PM wanted to take away the tribal land and give to his industrialist friends.

"When we come to power,



we will strengthen these laws and frame new legislations for your welfare," he said.

Gandhi said his grandmother (former prime minister) Indira Gandhi would say

adivasis were the first owners of the country.

"You will not understand the country if you don't understand the culture and history of tribals," he said.

# In a show of unity, Akhilesh touches Shivpal's feet at rally

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a show of unity and bonhomie in the first family of the Samajwadi Party, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday touched the feet of his uncle Shivpal Singh Yadav during the campaigning for the Mainpuri Lok Sabha bypoll.

Akhilesh asserted that there was never a strain in his relationship with his uncle.

Reciprocating the gesture of his nephew, Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia) chief Shivpal that the family was united to take on the Bharatiya Janata Party. He added that the Manipuri bypoll was a high stake contest.

Addressing an election

rally in the family bastion Saifai, Akhilesh asserted that his party would register a historic win in the bypoll.

Dimple Yadav, the wife of Akhilesh, is the SP candidate from the seat, which was represented by SP patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav.

"The bypolls are taking place at a time when 'Netaji' (Mulayam Singh Yadav) is not among us. The entire country is watching this election, and I can say that the entire country will see how the Samajwadi Party registers a historic win," Akhilesh said.

After remaining at loggerheads since 2017, Akhilesh and his uncle had decided to patch up before the 2022 UP



assembly polls. Both had put up a united front at the behest of Mulayam. However, cracks appeared again after the polls and they parted company.

"At times people say that there is 'dooriyaan' (distance). There was no 'dooriyaan' between 'chacha' (uncle) and

'bhatija' (nephew). 'Dooriyaan' was there in politics. I had never considered any 'dooriyaan' between the uncle and the nephew. And, I am happy that today the 'dooriyaan' in politics has also ended," Akhilesh said to a rousing applause from the public.

# Want to establish India as global content hub: Thakur

PTI ■ PANAJI

Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Anurag Thakur on Sunday said the Government aims to establish the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) as the one-stop destination for content creation, filmmaking and shooting.

The 53rd edition of the nine-day festival is set to kick-start here with film personalities including Ajay Devgn, Kartik Aaryan, Pankaj Tripathi, Manoj Bajpayee, Suniel Shetty, Varun Dhawan, and Sara Ali Khan in attendance at the opening ceremony. The festival runs till November 28.

"The IFFI is Asia's largest film festival and we are in the 53rd edition... We want to establish this as a platform where eminent filmmakers, directors, and artists of the country and the world get an opportunity to showcase their films. We want to make India a global content hub, be it for

content creation, co-production, filmmaking or shooting," Thakur told reporters ahead of the opening ceremony here.

In the 75th year of India's independence through the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav initiative, the Union minister said the focus is not only on celebrating excellence in cinema but also creating a collaborative ecosystem for the Indian film industry to go global through its Film Bazaar (market).

The film market, which will be organised for five days, aims at discovering, supporting and showcasing South Asian content and talent in filmmaking, production and distribution for collaborations with international film fraternity.

"As we celebrate Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, our plan is to develop India as the most sought-after destination for filmmakers, co-production, post-production and a larger market place of the world.

"I am sure India has all the capabilities and possibilities with the trained and skilled

manpower. Also, the way technology is being used in India, now we have the power to make the regional content international," the Union minister said.

For the first time, the Market Area will include pavilions for countries, states as well as private organisations. States participating in the market include Bihar, Punjab, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. Russia and France will also have a major presence at the Film Bazaar.

Calling India the "land of stories", Thakur said the world is still unaware of the capabilities of Indian storytelling. As a cinema-loving nation, the need is to further and utilise this soft power, he added.

"India is a country full of stories. No other country can offer such stories and also the manpower, which is skilled and less expensive...



al film, has become an international film. The movie has not only done business but has also showcased the power of Indian storytelling," he said.

The Union minister also informed that almost 40 per cent of the movies being showcased at the festival, under the in- and out-of-competition segments, are either directed or fronted by women.

"Much like real-life, cinema is incomplete without the participation of women. We are trying to make sure that their work is showcased and promoted as much as possible.



A cheetah walks inside an enclosure of the Ramnabagan Mini Zoo in Burdwan on Sunday.

(PTI)



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PAPER WITH PASSION

# Conciliatory note

Chief Justice of India Chandrachud has agreed to reconsider the collegium system

The Government's unhappiness over the collegium system of appointing Supreme Court and High Court judges is quite well known. Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud has struck a conciliatory note by agreeing to reconsider the collegium system. This means that a writ petition seeking the revival of the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) will be listed in due course. This will also bring back the old NJAC versus collegium debate. The NJAC came into being after the Ninety-ninth Constitutional Amendment, 2014. The commission comprised six people—the Chief Justice of India, the two most senior judges of the Supreme Court, the Law Minister, and two 'eminent persons.' The eminent persons were to be nominated for a three-year term (with the condition that there would be no re-nomination). A committee consisting of the Chief Justice, the Prime Minister, and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha would nominate the two persons. The validity of the commission was successfully challenged in the Supreme Court, where it was struck down by a four-one verdict. The Government's argument at that time was that judges appoint judges, which was not fair practice. There has been little change in that stand. Law and Justice Minister Kiren Rijiju recently termed the collegium system as "opaque." In fact, he claimed that a majority of judges agreed with him: "Judges are not happy with the collegium system today." He went on to assert that when there is a provision of judges selecting judges, there is politics. Worse, he added, "the politics of us politicians is nothing to what goes on in the judiciary."



The Government has a point. Three or half of the now disbanded NJAC consisted of top judges only; two other members were also appointed in a manner in which government representation was in a minority. That seems fair enough, and yet the top court rejected it. And while the incumbent Chief Justice has agreed to reconsider the collegium system, his immediate predecessor, UU Lalit, has already made it clear that no change is warranted as the collegium system is "perfect." It looks like the prominent members of the judiciary are opposed to any change because they fear that this would allow the Government to unduly interfere in judicial matters. The trust deficit has increased in the last few years because of the perception that the Government is trying to fill all organisations, including the Constitutional and statutory ones, with persons sympathetic to its cause. The perception may not be illusory. At any rate, the need of the hour is an understanding between the executive and the judiciary, for the two organs cannot remain antithetical to each other for long. For one, there are delays in appointments, which is not good for the judicial system that is already overburdened with cases. By reconsidering the collegium system, the Chief Justice has made rapprochement possible.



People visit the India International Trade Fair (IITF), in New Delhi

# Data protection bill

Digital personal data protection bill, 2022 obliges the multinationals while doing little for Indian users

After shelling the data protection bill in August 2019 the government has come up with a new data protection bill. The proposed law would be the latest regulation that would regulate how companies like Facebook and Google process and transfer data in India. In fact, the earlier bill on data protection was withdrawn due to hectic lobbying by the multinational companies that have made a killing using the data of Indian users. The earlier privacy bill had proposed stringent restrictions on cross-border data flows. Though the Modi government had initially tried to reign in the multinational companies by making data sacrosanct, then succumbed to the pressure of tech giants who had been clamouring for easing of the regulations and lessening the compliance burden on them. The multinational companies in fact used the US pressure to dilute the privacy bills. India has presently more than 760 million internet users and a huge amount of data is generated which is available to the companies operating in the digital space. Ironically the European country has stringent rules for data protection where the same companies work without much fuss. The Indian government has said that it would specify countries to which entities managing data can transfer the personal data of users. The law would also come with financial penalties of up to 2.5 billion rupees for breaching the provisions of the law. The government would have powers to exempt state agencies from provisions of the bill "in the interests of sovereignty and integrity of India" and to maintain public order, as per the draft proposal, which is open for public consultation until Dec. 17.



A big drawback of the latest privacy bill is that it gives a lot of leverage to the government. It would allow the government to access and use the data if it so desired in the national interest. The government has said it acknowledged that "national and public interest is at times greater than the interest of an individual". Allegedly global best practices have been studied and reviewed data legislation in Singapore, Australia, and European Union while making the new proposal. At the end of the day, the new law would enable the government to have unconditional access to any data if it invoked the national security clause, thereby accessing any individuals data and using it without his consent throwing the maxims of personal data protection to winds.

# Regression in Afghanistan

Taliban further curbs women's rights and tramples human rights and anything civil as the world looks the other way

While the world's attention is riveted on the war in Ukraine, Afghanistan's Taliban regime is moving determinedly to make their present rule a clone of their earlier obscurantist and retrogressive one from 1996 to 2001. In the wake of a slew of measures restricting human rights, particularly of women, comes the recent decision to impose Sharia or Islamic laws and further curtail women's freedoms.

The Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, tweeted late on November 13, 2022, that the organisation's supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, had issued an obligatory command to "carefully examine the files of thieves, kidnappers, and seditionists," and "those files in which all the Sharia conditions of hudud and qisas have been fulfilled, you are obliged to implement." He is quoted to have added, "This is the ruling of Sharia, and my command, which is obligatory."

Hudud stands for crimes against God, which include zina (unlawful sexual intercourse such as adultery) or false accusations thereof, consumption of alcohol, highway robbery, and some forms of theft. These can be forgiven neither on behalf of the victims nor by the State. The punishments, ranging from flogging, and stoning to death, amputation of limbs to crucifixion, have to be carried out in public. Qisas means retaliation and provides, as punishment to the offenders, exactly what they did to the victims, the essence of which is often summed up in the much-used expression, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Under the provisions of Sharia, the accused, or if he cannot be produced, a member of his family or tribe who is of comparable status has to be handed over to the family or tribe of the victims. The latter can either punish him as provided or let him off in lieu of financial compensation or forgive him. The punishments are as draconian as in the case of hudud.

Modern systems of jurisprudence shun the punishments prescribed under Sharia on the



ground that these are inhuman. The Taliban's implementation of Sharia during their first stint in power was searingly criticized globally. The initially-harbored view that the Taliban may not tread the same path again now lies in smithereens, as does their promise that women would be able to be educated and work according to the provisions of the Sharia. While some women still work in sectors like healthcare and education, most, particularly those employed by the government and other public institutions, have had to seize work after the Taliban swept back to power. Protest demonstrations by them have been violently broken up and some of those arrested were tortured with cables, pipes, and whips.

Remarkably, the world has done precious little besides freezing Afghanistan's funds abroad, which has had virtually no effect as the Taliban have set up an effective system of tax collection. This once again conveys the message that morality and professed concern for freedom and democracy plays no role in international relations. If the democratic countries are looking the other way as women are being enslaved in Afghanistan, they did the same in the case of Jews who were

MODERN SYSTEMS OF JURISPRUDENCE SHUN THE PUNISHMENTS PRESCRIBED UNDER SHARIA ON THE GROUND THAT THESE ARE INHUMAN. THE TALIBAN'S IMPLEMENTATION OF SHARIA DURING THEIR FIRST STINT IN POWER WAS SEARINGLY CRITICIZED GLOBALLY

marched to concentration camps or gas chambers or tortured horrendously in the name of "medical experimentation," when Hitler was carrying out the "final solution" of the Holocaust. Some, especially in Britain, even tacitly supported the Nazi regime as a bulwark against the spread of Soviet influence—their attitude is summed up in the slogan, "Let the Nazi dog eat the Bolshevik dog."

Western democracies have not learned from history that such indifference can have disastrous consequences. The indifference to the fate of the Jews and inaction against Hitler when they could have thwarted his rise led to World War II, which Hitler unleashed once the German armament industry had been adequately built up in violation of the terms of the Versailles Treaty, and the Wehrmacht—as Germany's unified armed forces were called between 1935 and 1945—was ready to strike.

More recently, the United States forgot all about Afghanistan after the last Soviet troops left it on February 15, 1989, and took little meaningful action while the Taliban turned it into a graveyard of human rights, particularly those of women. As a result, the Taliban har-

boured Osama bin Laden and all-Qaeda and became a spawning ground of global terrorism. And then there was 9/11. The killing of Aymen al-Zawahiri, in Kabul on July 31, 2022, by a US drone firing two AGM-114R9X hellfire missiles, clearly showed that the Taliban had been sheltering the al-Qaeda. Nothing else can explain his functioning from an exclusive locality in Kabul. It has also been harbouring organisations like the Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Toiba.

These terrorist organisations seek to establish Sharia rule worldwide and are pathologically hostile to the western countries whose lifestyles they consider to be degenerate and which they consider to be the biggest obstacle to achieving their global aim. So is the Taliban, its initial emollient attitude to the West was an attempt to get their frozen funds released. They will strike when they are ready and the weapon will be terrorism. While they may not be able to repeat 9/11, nothing prevents them from hitting Americans and their interests abroad. Turbulent times are ahead.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

## SOUND BITE

We will see it when it happens. The Modi government feels no pressure. I have no fear or anxiety. The market will deal with the logistics issue if it arises.

Hardeep Puri — Union Minister

Threats from the United States and its allies pursuing a hostile policy have prompted my country to substantially accelerate the bolstering of its overwhelming nuclear deterrence.

North Korean dictator —Kim Jong Un

Educated women also have double standards, which is so sad... women are their own enemies.

Actor — Jaya Bachchan

The first option which comes to my mind is Prithvi Shaw. The guy is naturally destructive, he is disruptive. .... I am saying check his numbers, he is the guy who just takes off.

Former cricketer — Akash Chopra

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has become 'Spa and Massage Party.' Jain can be seen enjoying massage and meeting visitors in his cell in total violation of rules and prison laws.

BJP spokesperson — Gaurav Bhatia

## Musk destroying Twitter



It is said that being the bigger person in a situation requires humility and restraint. He is equally polite and decent. But from the nature of Elon Musk, the richest man in the world, it doesn't seem that he deserves this status. No owner could ever do to their business the way he is playing

ing with Twitter over the past fortnight. Running an information technology and social media establishment based on the automobile industry is a stupid move. The wholesale firing of employees. Issuing orders on them to work 80 hours a week or else go home. Which industrialist does such madness?

If you don't have the maturity, calm demeanor, ability to listen to others, consensus building ability to run a big company then you are not fit to be CEO. In his latest whim, he made all of Twitter's offices close down until Monday, November 21st. By the way, shouldn't it be said that this prison can also be the beginning of the end? Whereas Elon Musk had touched the sky with the help of Tesla, now it seems that he is going to fall to the ground with Twitter as fast as possible.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Shraddha Walker and Aftab Ameen Poonawala reportedly had a spat over marriage. He is undoubtedly a psychopath, a sadist, a brainless brute, and a butcher. Rage is a lethal weapon. In cold blood, he cut her body into 35 pieces and dumped it in a 300-liter fridge leaving the entire country dumbfounded and flabbergasted. Promises made by lovers in the heat of passion very often prove to be all the moonshine. All Love Marriages are not successful and long-lasting. A love marriage often leads to a cat and dog life. They don't get on well together. Love Marriage requires patience and fortitude. Undoubtedly Poonawala seems to be a psychopath, a sadist, a brainless brute, and a butcher.

Shraddha Walker, a 26-year-old who was employed at the call center of a multinational company in Mumbai. She came across Poonawala and struck up a friendship that turned into a live-in relationship with a chef, a love story that culminated in a formidable and gruesome murder. Poonawala was not at all a suitor for Shraddha Walker. Inspired, infatuated, and lured by Poonawala she abandoned her parents, and friends and quit her job at a multinational company in Mumbai.

Having trusted her beau she eloped with him to New Delhi and landed herself in a mess and lost her life. It was just a flirtation and an infatuation, not true love. Some youths and youngsters as soon as they reach the age of puberty leave their parents for their girlfriends and boyfriends without the slightest compunction, penitence remorse. They don't realize and don't know the adage 'Love is blind and mad.' They fall in love without caring about the consequences and ruin their life.

Zubair Khan | Hyderabad

## STARTUPS GET A BOOST

Sir — The Launch of Vikram-S, the first private rocket is a boost to the new startups. Many more companies have the potential to become big players in the space sector and ISRO is playing the role of facilitator and helping in developing technologies. ISRO has successfully stepped into the commercial satellite launch market which is the trillion-dollar market shortly. This will give a financial boost to ISRO.

Mohit Rawal | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

WE MUST TAKE SHELTER IN HIM

We all are living in orphanages without the shelter of almighty God




RAJYOGI **BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI**

The Covid-19, the worldwide pandemic that started way back in 2019 and is still active in several countries, has taken away many lives. In this pandemic situation, children, who were never the face of this pandemic, have unfortunately been the biggest victims with no fault of theirs at all. With so many untimely deaths, we see thousands of children left with no parent or guardian. Just imagine! How does it feel to live in a world and be brought up without the security and loving care of one's mother and father?

Though many such children would end up growing up in orphanages, they would definitely miss the pleasures and protection of a warm home. One would agree with the famous opening lines of 150-year-old opera song 'Home, Sweet Home' that says, "Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam, be it ever so humble, there's no place like home".

Truly, a home is considered to be the sanctuary for all its members, where the children feel free to express themselves, and are assured of peaceful and firm guidelines for their behaviour, growth and development. It is for this comfort that each of us yearns to be back home at the end of a long day, where we could unmask ourselves to parents who are ever ready with an accepting heart, where we could rest while the others are on guard, where we could return to recharge.



A person devoid of such natural rights has to be on his own. There is no doubt that he may receive on and off support from others on his way, but the perennial overflowing resource of parental backing is missing. Just think about it: Can we find anyone today who is completely free of worry and fear like a little child is at home? How many of us sleep at night as a child would when his parents are by his side? Not many, of course. Because, most of us carry the baggage of things to be done and anxiety for the future all the time, as a result of which we sometimes hesitate to trust even the closest of our companions.

We sometimes do not know where we truly belong to, who we are truly connected to, or where we are heading. This hollowness is because we have been separated from our eternal father for a long time now and are unable to find our way back home. At such a time the Eternal Father has to come Himself to the earth to find HIS long-lost children. He reveals to us that we are not bodies but souls, belong to Him, the Supreme Soul, as spiritual children and are bonded to each other as brother souls. We originally lived in the soul world, a place far away from this planet, and came down to play our part in this eternal drama of life. Even when everything material perishes, these truths remain intact.

Ignorant about our own basics, most of us are today living like orphans. We may be believers but we have not been able to experience the protection that comes from being the children of the Almighty Authority. The flow of deep, unconditional love of our eternal mother and father needs to be revived so that our lives could become green from barren. We really have missed our spiritual shelter for too long now. Just as we feel the need to anchor ourselves in our physical home at the end of each day, we must unwind and prepare ourselves for a return journey to our eternal home.

*(The author is a spiritual educator)*

# Aspirational Gujarat, stale political punditry



SUMET BHASIN

## Political commentaries are greatly influenced by biases, but changes take place without reaching such pundits

In the last 27 years, Gujarat has seen several stages of events which helped the state break free from the past. Gujarat is now a global village. The people in the state are more aspirational. They want the foundation that has been laid in the last 27 years to help them fulfil their dreams without migrating to any other country. Yet, the political pundits want to look at Gujarat with their Hindutva lens.

Political commentaries are greatly influenced by biases one holds and past perceptions. But changes take place without reaching such pundits and they demand to be taken note of whenever an unbiased analysis is done of the works done in nearly three decades by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This calls for the political pundits to change their glasses and look afresh at Gujarat.

Communal riots were common in Gujarat in the 1970s, 1980s and even later for a few years. The Gujarati society was sharply divided in the binary of Hindu-Muslim. The mafias lorded over in some parts of the state to carry out their unscrupulous activities. Prevalence of violence deprived Gujarat of the economic benefits. The industries made their bases in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka or other states. Gujarat thus earned an image of a state always witnessing communal tension, which made the political pundits to form the perception that the state is a Hindutva laboratory. This needs to be challenged.

Kutch in Gujarat was parched. Saurashtra in Gujarat was parched. Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and others together suffered the pain of water scarcity. The water crisis was not communal. This made people migrate to other states or to the other parts of Gujarat. Neighbouring Rajasthan reeled under severe water crisis. Availability of water is the basic requirement for any economy. Parched areas never support the economy. Bundelkhand of the past in Uttar Pradesh is a clear example.

Millions of people migrated to other states, and with them they took away the labour forces without which no economy can function. Farmers in Gujarat grew one crop in such parched regions. In the last 27 years, farmers in Gujarat are growing a minimum of two crops and even three crops. This benefit has also been shared with the farmers of Rajasthan. The work done in the last 27 years to ensure that no person in Gujarat faces water scarcity has changed the face of the state. Sardar Sarovar Project, which made the Narmada waters available in the erstwhile parched areas, brought happiness on the faces of the people irrespective of caste, creed or religion. That was possible because Narendra Modi as Chief Minister of Gujarat was busy working with the engineers while the political pundits were busy searching for Hindu-Muslim conflicts in the state. They

continued bashing Modi for their biases even while he brought prosperity to the people of the state.

While the political pundits were busy pushing their Hindu laboratory narrative, Modi worked with his politics of economy as a tool to empower the people of Gujarat. The pace of industrialization in the last 27 years in Gujarat has been rapid. Several of the state policies have become templates for the other states to attract investment. The land pool policy is now being followed by several of the states. But this was started by Modi as Chief Minister of Gujarat. The single window clearance for the investment proposals was pioneered by Modi. He institutionalised an administrative culture which had no place for red-tapes and no money had to be paid to get clearance of the files, as the message spread that there existed centralised monitoring with the involvement of technology.

Bureaucracy has been transformed to work for improving the ease of doing business in Gujarat. The bureaucrats honed their technical skills and expeditiously executed the vision of Modi. Investment came along and Gujarat prospered. The administration was given freedom from interference of politicians. The law and order situation improved, and the state forgot the years of communal violence. Muslims too reaped the benefits of peace in the state as they poured their full energy to the economic activities. This has enabled even the Muslims now voting for the BJP in some parts of the state.

The BJP in the last 27 years has gained the credibility of the people for its competencies to work to fulfil the aspirations of the people. This work culture in the BJP and administration led by the party in the state capital and the urban municipal corporation and the Gram Panchayat has been institutionalised.

The administration knows that the people are aspirational and they must stay ahead of the time. Thus, even after Modi became Prime minister in 2014, the governance model in Gujarat has remained the same. Anandiben Patel, Vijay Rupani and Bhupendra Patel have been Chief Ministers of Gujarat after Modi served the state for two decades. It has been evident that the process-based governance model continues to evolve and scale up in their response to the needs of the people.

Gujarat is leading the way in the adoption of green energy. The state is at the forefront in adoption of solar energy. Villages in Gujarat are opting for roof top solar panels to become self-sufficient in their needs for electricity. The state government has encouraged solar power farming by covering irrigation canals, drains, community buildings, and other assets with solar panels. This is helping Gujarat to promote solar power at a great speed. What is more heartening is that the corporate campuses too have taken the leaf from the Gujarat book of the administration to go for captive solar power plants to become self-sufficient in their electricity needs. Gujarat is an industrialised state. Gujarat is the

manufacturing power of India. The success of the democratisation of the usage of solar power in Gujarat is a gift of India to the world and a lesson in governance with actionable examples to fight climate change.

Politics is never stagnant. There should be renewal of the resources. The BJP is a cadre-based party, which is attracting youngsters in a large number. The BJP workers are also aspirational and they want to rise the ladder in the party on the basis of their performance. The BJP has ensured that the young workers in Gujarat keep growing up. The party is providing space to them at every stage. From the local bodies to the legislative Assembly to even becoming ministers in the state, the BJP has shown that the party has addressed the aspirational dreams of the party workers in Gujarat, which again is an example for other parties.

But the politics of development is not sensational. Political pundits are still learning that Modi brought the era of the aspirational democracy in Gujarat and the country. Aspirational democracy in Gujarat overwhelmed identity politics. Divisions on the lines of castes, creeds and religions have become politically irrelevant, because all want to live in peace and partake in the economic journey of Gujarat. The gains of aspirational democracy far outweigh the lure of identity politics, as seen in the qualitative transformation in the lives of the people in the state in about three decades.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

WHAT WE EUROPEANS HAVE BEEN DOING FOR THE LAST 3,000 YEARS, WE SHOULD BE APOLOGIZING FOR THE NEXT 3,000 YEARS BEFORE STARTING TO GIVE MORAL LESSONS. — FIFA PRESIDENT **GIANNI INFANTINO**



THE QATAR WORLD CUP KICK STARTED DISCUSSION ABOUT SPORTS WASHING AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN FOOTBALL AND IT HAS BEEN VERY STEEP LEARNING CURVE FOR US ALL. — NORWAY SOCCER FEDERATION PRESIDENT **LISE KLAVENESS**

# Musk leads global IT mayhem, triggering job cuts

## Global inflation following the war in Ukraine is driving IT majors into slowdown, forcing job losses; more difficult times to follow

The dismissal of Meta and Twitter workers, now mass resignations and closure of its offices for a week, signify deeper economic malaise, as the IT majors are facing difficult situations due to income loss, rising inflation and Ukraine War-led global tensions and recession fear.

Elon Musk, who took over Twitter for \$44 billion on October 28, says the company is losing \$4 billion a day. Even the Indian sector is feeling the heat and with a view to reducing fab getting rid of workers under the ruse of moonlighting, a common phenomenon so far that benefitted the industry in cost-cutting as well as prospecting other expertise.

Cautious economists visualise the setting in of a looming recession in the US and

growth slowdown across the technology, making investors apprehensive. In September, the US unemployment rate dropped to 3.5 per cent, matching the lowest level since 1969 but there are fears of it being a short-term affair. If the primary sector is in crisis, can a secondary IT sector thrive?

It singles out even the Indian IT sector, whose margins have thinned. All majors are on job cuts in the name of moonlighting, putting the blame on the workers. Even PayTM stocks tanked as Japanese SoftBank sold 2.9 crore shares. The purchasers are French Societe Generale, Morgan Stanley Asia Singapore and European BoFA Securities.

Almost all majors like

Microsoft to Amazon have gone on to cut strength and freeze on hiring. Microsoft has given pink slips to about 1000 employees, Netflix sacked about 500, Snapchat 1000. Amazon has reduced its workforce to 27000 but denies any firing, saying it happened through normal attrition.

These are in addition to the announced Meta reduction of 11000 workers, 13 per cent of workforce amid TikTok assault and Twitter's 7500. The two companies are having sharp cuts in advertising and other incomes of late. It has also lost \$31 billion in privacy update payment with another software major.

A global funding slowdown is leading to an evolving crisis for companies cutting

back on costs and apparent stiff competition leading to layoffs. Entire IT sector is facing a problem post-pandemic, and being a secondary sector finds the heat more as it gets less outsourced work, forcing it to restructure for sustaining itself. In this scenario, the IMF has cut India's economic growth estimate for FY23 to 6.8 per cent but still it is better than most other countries.

The sector is in a wait and watch mode, believing that the US recession may have least impact on them. But actual experiences may vary. Most Indian companies — Infosys, Wipro, TCS and even the educational platform Byju — are reducing their staff numbers.

Infosys confirms employees losing their jobs due to moonlighting or dual employment a month after Wipro sacked nearly 300 employees. Infosys says that it hired 40,000 freshers in the first half of the current financial year. Part of it is to match regular attrition. It says that it is financially sound and its profits soared to Rs 6021 crore from Rs 5360 crore. It is banking on US and European banking, manufacturing, retail, healthcare and utility firms. But its profitability is stated to be coming down. Its overall earnings have come down by 3.6 per cent in a year. HCL Technologies reduced hirings to about 2,000, also had lower margins at 17 per cent.

The IMF baseline survey says growth slows from last year's 6.1 per cent to 3.2 per cent this year and 2.9 per cent



SHIVAJI SARKAR

*(The author is a policy analyst)*



# ‘Tyranny, turmoil’ in Russian invasion: US Defence chief

AP ■ HALIFAX (CANADA)

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin warned Saturday Russia's invasion of Ukraine offers a preview of a world where nuclear-armed countries could threaten other nations and said Beijing, like Moscow, seeks a world where might makes right.

Austin made the remarks at the annual Halifax International Security Forum, which attracts defense and security officials from Western democracies.

"Russia's invasion offers a preview of a possible world of tyranny and turmoil that none of us would want to live in. And it's an invitation to an increasingly insecure world haunted by the shadow of nuclear proliferation," Austin said in a speech.

"Because Putin's fellow autocrats are watching. And they could well conclude that getting nuclear weapons would give them a hunting license of their own. And that could drive a dangerous spiral of nuclear proliferation."

Austin dismissed Putin's claims that "modern Ukraine was entirely created by Russia," calling it a vision of "a world in which autocrats decide

which countries are real and which countries can be snuffed out."

He added that the war "shows the whole world the dangers of disorder. That's the security challenge that we face. It's urgent, and it's historic.

But we're going to meet it. ... The basic principles of democracy are under siege around the world," he said.

US President Joe Biden last month declared that the risk of nuclear "Armageddon" is at the highest level since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis; Russian officials have raised using tactical nuclear weapons after suffering massive setbacks in the nearly nine-month invasion of Ukraine.

While US officials for months have warned of the prospect that Russia could use weapons of mass destruction in Ukraine in the face of battlefield setbacks, Biden administration officials have repeatedly said nothing has changed in US intelligence assessments to suggest that Putin has imminent plans to deploy nuclear weapons.

CIA Director Bill Burns recently met with his Russian intelligence counterpart to warn of consequences if Russia were to deploy a nuclear



weapon in Ukraine.

Austin said nuclear weapons need to be responsibly controlled, and not used to threaten the world.

"Ukraine faces a harsh winter. And as Russia's position on the bat-

tlefield erodes, Putin may resort again to profoundly irresponsible nuclear saber-rattling," he said.

Austin also compared Russia to China, saying Beijing is trying to refashion both the region and the

international system to suit its authoritarian preferences. He noted China's increasing military activities in the Taiwan Strait.

"Beijing, like Moscow, seeks a world where might makes right,

where disputes are resolved by force, and where autocrats can stamp out the flame of freedom," he said.

Austin called Putin's invasion the worst crisis in security since the end of the Second World War and said the outcome "will help determine the course of global security in this young century," Austin said.

Austin said the deadly missile explosion in Poland this week is a consequence of Russian President Vladimir Putin's "war of choice" against Ukraine. "The tragic and troubling explosion in Poland this week reminded the whole world of the recklessness of Putin's war of choice," Austin said.

On Tuesday, two workers were killed when a projectile hit a grain-drying facility close to Poland's border with Ukraine. While the source of the missile is under investigation, NATO officials have said they suspect it was fired from a Ukrainian missile battery.

Officials from Poland, NATO and the United States have blamed Russia for the deaths in any case, saying a Ukrainian missile would not have misfired had the country not been forced to defend itself against heavy Russian attacks that day.

Russian officials have cast the conflict as a struggle against NATO — though Ukraine is not a NATO member even if it has been receiving aid from NATO member states.

Austin said NATO is a defensive alliance and poses no threat to Russia.

"Make no mistake: we will not be dragged into Putin's war of choice. But we will stand by Ukraine as it fights to defend itself. And we will defend every inch of NATO territory," Austin said.

A Polish investigation to determine the source of the missile and the circumstances of the explosion was launched with support from the US and Ukrainian investigators joined the probe on Friday.

Andriy Yermak, head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, said in an interview broadcast live at the forum that "It's not right to say it's a Ukrainian rocket, or a Russian rocket, before the investigation is over."

In its 14th year, about 300 people gather each year at Halifax International Security Forum held at Halifax's Westin hotel, where about 13 Ukrainian refugees now work.

## Kyiv's Mayor: Extraordinary, in extraordinarily tough times

AP ■ KYIV

The body armour propped against a radiator, ready for use, the spent shell casing adding to clutter on his desk, the boxing memorabilia and the sign asking visitors to leave firearms at his door: All shout that this is the office of an extraordinary mayor, in extraordinarily difficult times.

Other, more personal touches fill out the picture: The book on a sideboard about British wartime leader Winston Churchill is signed "With best wishes" by the author, former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

And then there's the plastic toy figure of a muscular boxer, with clenched fist raised — a reminder of how physically imposing, fearsome even, Vitali Klitschko was in his world titling-winning, opponent-pummeling heavyweight boxing prime.

That much hasn't changed. His handshake is crushingly firm, his gaze steely.

But the pressures on the shoulders and on the time of the 51-year-old mayor of Ukraine's capital city are heavier now than they ever were when his fortunes were measured in three-minute rounds that ended with clangs of a bell.

"If I tried to explain to you all the challenges that I have, we (would) need weeks," Klitschko said.

As was also the case during his years as a professional prizefighter, the fight for survival he's engaged in now is primal.

But it's more essential, too: To prevent power from going out entirely in his city of 3 million people, to ensure that families don't freeze in the cold that



winter's onset is bringing, and to keep Ukraine's hyper-digital capital hooked up to the outside world.

All this in a horrifying war against an invader, Russia, seemingly intent on destroying all those things — with repeated barrages of missiles and exploding drones that have battered Ukraine's power grid and other key infrastructure.

"It's terror," Klitschko said, delivering the word like a punch in an Associated Press interview in his City Hall office on the invasion's 268th day.

"They (left) us freezing," he said. "Without electricity, without heating, without water."

Power still comes on — sometimes — but it can no longer be relied upon.

In a city with ubiquitous wifi and where most anything could be done online, rolling hours-long electricity cuts are the horrid new norm for many.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says Russian strikes have damaged around half of Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

In blacked-out Kyiv restaurants, diners feel their way through meals in near-darkness,

served by waiters carrying candles.

Residents wake in the dead of night — if that's when it's their turn to get a few hours of power again — to shower and do laundry. "Huge challenge," Klitschko said.

So what's the worst-case scenario? How much worse can it possibly get?

"I don't like to talk about that," he said. "But I have to be prepared."

Part of the answer is out of Klitschko's very large hands. How difficult life will become depends, in part, on how many more missiles Russian President Vladimir Putin has left in his arsenal to throw at Kyiv and other cities.

But on the plus side, based on the most recent strikes, fewer missiles and drones appear to be getting through the capital's air defenses, because they've been beefed up with Western-supplied systems to shoot down projectiles.

On a surprise visit Saturday to Kyiv, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak came with more help, pledging 125 anti-aircraft guns and other defences against

exploding, Iran-supplied drones that Russia has used.

"It's much better than before. Definitely," Klitschko said. "But it's not enough. ... We need more to protect other cities."

Klitschko's guess is that Putin's strategy is to heap so much misery on Ukrainians that they give up fighting.

It won't work, the mayor predicted. "After every rocket attack, I talk to the people, to simple civilians. They (are) not depressed," he said. "They were angry, angry and ready to stay and defend our houses, our families and our future."

A Ukrainian flag affixed to the wall behind his desk reinforced his argument: "Together to victory" and "We will win," soldiers wrote on it.

Driving home his point, Klitschko cited a message he said he'd received from a Kyiv soldier telling him that on his front line, there is "no heating, no water, no electricity, no services."

"We're fighting for every one of you. If you complain, think about our condition," Klitschko said, recalling the soldier's plea.



## Will look into alleged prisoner shooting video, says Ukraine

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine says it will investigate video footage circulated on Russian social media which Moscow alleged shows that Ukrainian forces killed Russian troops who may have been trying to surrender, after one of the men seemingly refused to lay down his weapon and opened fire.

"Of course Ukrainian authorities will investigate this video," Olha Stefanishyna, Ukraine's deputy prime minister overseeing the country's push to join the European Union, said on the sidelines of a security forum in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Stefanishyna, speaking late on Saturday, said "it is very unlikely" that the short, edited snippets show what Moscow claims.

Russian authorities announced the opening on Friday of a criminal investigation based on the snippets posted on Russian Telegram channels and relayed on other social media. They present a muddled and incomplete picture.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova claimed the footage shows an "execution" and said Russia wants an international investigation.

Stefanishyna, however, said Ukrainian forces are "absolutely not interested in the execution of anybody" and are under

direct orders to take "as many prisoners of war as we can" so they can be swapped in prisoner exchanges with Russia.

"Every potential executed Russian soldier is some Ukrainian that is not able to be exchanged, so the spirit and logic is not there," she said.

The UN's Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine called for further investigation.

"HRMMU is aware of the video and is looking into it," it said in a statement to The Associated Press.

"We reiterate our call that all such allegations should be properly and promptly investigated by respective authorities."

Asked if Ukraine will allow an international investigation, Stefanishyna said: "We will see. No problem with that."

In the nearly nine-month invasion, Moscow's forces have committed widespread abuses and alleged war crimes, according to the United Nations, rights groups and reporting by The AP.

Matilda Bogner, who heads the UN monitoring mission in Ukraine, said earlier this week that Ukrainian troops are suspected of some abuses, too.

"We have received credible allegations of summary executions of persons hors de combat, and several cases of torture and ill-treatment, reportedly committed by members of the Ukrainian armed forces," Bogner said. The video snippets that Russia claimed pointed to an

execution could not be independently verified.

The longest snippet, 36 seconds long and with cuts, shows a group of about 10 men in full military gear, some lying on the ground and others emerging one by one from an outbuilding with their hands raised, apparently unarmed.

Under orders shouted by someone off-camera, they join the others already on the ground.

Some of the men wear red bands on their lower legs. Red or white identifying marks are sometimes worn by Russian and Russia-aligned troops to identify them as members of the Kremlin's invasion force.

The video also features other men watching them, shown to be armed and wearing flashes of yellow on their arms, legs and helmets.

Ukrainian forces often wear bits of yellow, blue or green to identify themselves on the battlefields. One man with a yellow armband appears to be holding the camera. Another, also with a yellow armband, is shown lying on the ground with a heavy machine gun and belts of ammunition.

At least two other armed men wearing glimpses of yellow also appear to be watching the apparent surrender.

In the last few seconds of the video, a man emerges from behind the outbuilding. He appears to be armed.



## Japan's PM sacks 3rd Minister in a month

AP ■ TOKYO

Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida sacked his internal affairs minister on Sunday over funding irregularities, in a blow to his scandal-prone Cabinet that has already lost two ministers in one month.

Internal Affairs Minister Minoru Terada has been under fire over several accounting and funding irregularities.

In one, he acknowledged that one of his support groups submitted accounting records carrying a dead person's signature.

"I apologise for the series of resignations," Kishida said. "I'm aware of my heavy responsibility for their appointment."

He told reporters that he will announce Terada's replacement on Monday.

Terada showed up at the Prime Minister's Office and told reporters that he had submitted his resignation Kishida, though he did not say he was asked to do so.

"I made up my mind because I must not interfere with parliamentary discussion of key legislations because of my problems," Terada said.

Terada, who has been grilled over the scandal for over a month, said his feelings were swayed between his hope to contribute to the Kishida Cabinet while being concerned about causing trouble because of his funding problems.

Kishida summoned Terada to his office and had him submit the resignation, NHK national television said.

Kishida, when asked last Friday about a possible dismissal, did not defend Terada and only said he was going to make his own decision.

Kishida said Sunday he believed Terada submitted his resignation in response to the comment he made in Bangkok after wrapping up the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit.

Terada had said he did not break any law, promised to fix the accounting issues and showed determination to stay on.

Opposition lawmakers said funding problems for the internal affairs minister, whose job is to oversee political funds, are serious and demanded his resignation.

Recent media surveys also showed the majority of respondents supported Terada's resignation.

## Nuclear agency warns of renewed shelling at Ukrainian plant

AP ■ KYIV

Powerful explosions shook Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region that is the site of Europe's largest nuclear power plant on Sunday morning, the global nuclear watchdog said in a statement, calling for "urgent measures to help prevent a nuclear accident" in the Russian-occupied facility.

Rafael Mariano Grossi, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said two explosions — one on Saturday evening and another on Sunday morning — near the Zaporizhzhia plant abruptly ended a period of relative calm around the nuclear facility that has been the site of fighting between Russian and Ukrainian forces since the start of the war on February 24.

Fears of a nuclear catastrophe have been at the forefront since Russian troops occupied the plant during the early days of the invasion of Ukraine. Continued fighting in the area has raised the spectre of a disaster.

In what appeared to be renewed shelling both close to and at the site, IAEA experts at the Zaporizhzhia facility reported hearing more than a dozen



blasts within a short period of time on Sunday morning, the statement said, adding that the IAEA team could see some explosions from their office windows.

Several buildings, systems and equipment at the power plant — none of them critical for the nuclear safety and security of the plant — were damaged in the shelling, the IAEA statement said, citing information provided by the plant's management. There were no reports of casualties.

Grossi said reports of shelling were "extremely dis-

turbing." He added: "Whoever is behind this, it must stop immediately.

"As I have said many times before, you're playing with fire!" Grossi said, and appealed to both sides in the conflict to urgently agree and implement a nuclear safety and security zone around the nuclear facility.

Russia has been pounding Ukraine's power grid and other key infrastructure from the air, causing widespread blackouts for millions of Ukrainians amid frigid winter weather with snow blanketing the capital, Kyiv, and other cities.

## Incumbent expected to win Kazakh presidential poll

AP ■ ASTHANA

Kazakhstan's incumbent president is widely expected to secure an easy victory in Sunday's snap election that came after bloody unrest shook the country this year and he moved to stifle the influence of his authoritarian predecessor.

Five candidates were on the ballot against President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

With a short campaign period that began in late October, they had little opportunity to mount significant challenges. Tokayev, apparently confident of holding a strong advantage, stayed away from a nationally televised election debate.

The national elections commission said voter turnout averaged 69% in 10 of the country's 15 regions by the time polls closed. The election for a seven-year term came as Tokayev has taken steps to keep Kazakhstan's distance from longtime ally and dominant regional power Russia.

He pointedly said the country did not recognise the Ukrainian regions that Russia declared to be sovereign states at the outset of the conflict that began in February.

## Uncertainties hang over McCarthy replacing Pelosi as US House Speaker

ANS ■ WASHINGTON

The Republicans might have nominated Kevin McCarthy for the post of Speaker of the House but it's still not certain if he will make it to the goal post, and there is still a slim chance that Nancy Pelosi could return on the post.

Even if McCarthy becomes Speaker, he will be in name only as Marjorie Taylor Greene controls the Republican caucus in the House and if he doesn't do their bidding "he (McCarthy) will be blown away," says the Guardian.

Both Mitch McConnell and Kevin McCarthy do not enjoy the best of relationship with former President Donald Trump, and the McConnell's victory as minority leader of the Senate could throw up surprises in the House for the Speaker's post. He won 37 to 10 despite Trump calling him names showing the chasm in the party.

Trump, as per media reports, blamed McConnell for siding with the Democrats and enabling them to win more seats in the Senate to retain their majority at 50, which included Democrats stealing the Nevada seat from the Republicans.

With the December 6 run



off between Herschel Walker (R) and Raphael Warnock (D) for the Georgia seat set to go the Democrat way due to rising unpopularity of the former with abortion scandals hunting an anti-abortion activist, it would mean the Democrats will win a clear majority of the Senate at 51 to 49.

Trump candidates Kari Lake and Lauren Bobert, both won by very low margins after being led by Democratic candidates particularly the latter had to fight Democrat Adam Frisch to the finish. Both Lake, a TV star, and Bobert, an exhibitionist, as described by the US media, are unabashed Trump supporters subscribing to his view that the 2020 election was stolen. And after the midterm losses, Republicans feel most of Trump's candidates adopted the wrong strategy.

Trump's favourite Rick Scott

lost the race for nomination for the Senate minority leader losing to seasoned McConnell, whom Trump described derogatorily as the "Old Crow".

The unrest in the Republican Party over Trump announcing his candidature for 2024 is being thoroughly enjoyed by the Democrats who feel if Biden were to contest in a rematch, he would win again.

On the speaker issue, in the numbers game, Republicans have 221 seats, the required majority in the House against Democrats is 214. The question, according to media reports is, what if Pelosi reconsiders her decision to run for Speaker again given the slim majority the Republicans have, gambling on the odds that supporters of Rick Scott could cross vote for her? Or any new Democratic candidate if Pelosi doesn't run.

McCarthy has to win another vote in January to secure the role of Speaker of the House.

As Republicans have taken the house with 221 seats, McCarthy has won his party's nomination to be Speaker in the new Congress. In a closed-door vote on Tuesday, he secured 188 votes in his bid for leadership of the House with 31 opposing, media reports said.



# VP Harris to visit front line Philippine island in sea feud

AP ■ MANILA

Vice President Kamala Harris will underscore America's commitment to defending treaty ally the Philippines with a visit that started on Sunday and involves flying to an island province facing the disputed South China Sea, where Washington has accused China of bullying smaller claimant nations.

After attending the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Thailand, Harris flew on Sunday night to a red-carpet welcome in Manila.

On Monday, she meets President Ferdinand Marcos Jr for talks aimed at reinforcing Washington's oldest treaty alliance in Asia and strengthening economic ties, said a senior US administration official, who was not identified according to practice, in an online briefing ahead of the visit.

Harris said her trip to Thailand was "quite successful" as she reiterated the US commitment to the region Sunday afternoon at a roundtable discussion on climate change.

The panel of climate activists, civil society members and business leaders focused on clean energy and the threat climate change is posing to the Mekong River, which more than 60 million people in Southeast Asia use for food, water and transport. Harris announced the US plans to provide up to



USD 20 million in funding for clean energy in the region via the Japan-US Mekong Power Partnership.

Before her flight out, she stopped by a local market and perused a maze of shops, struck up conversations with shopkeepers and purchased Thai green curry paste.

On Tuesday she'll fly to Palawan province, which lies along the South China Sea, to meet fishermen, villagers, officials and the coast guard.

Once there, she'll be the highest-ranking US leader to visit the frontier island at the forefront of the long-seething territorial disputes involving

China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

The Philippine coast guard is scheduled to welcome Harris on board one of its biggest patrol ships, the BRP Teresa Magbanua, in Palawan, where she is scheduled to deliver a speech, according to coast guard spokesperson Commodore Armand Balilo.

Harris will underscore the importance of international law, unimpeded commerce and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, the US official said.

China can view the visit the way it wants, the official added in response to a question, but Washington's message is that the

US, as a member of the Indo-Pacific, is engaged and committed to the security of its allies in the region.

Philippine Ambassador to Washington Jose Manuel Romualdez said Harris's trip to Palawan shows the level of America's support to an ally and concern over China's actions in the disputed sea.

"That's as obvious as you can get, that the message they're trying to impart to the Chinese is that we support our allies like the Philippines on these disputed islands," Romualdez told The Associated Press. "This visit is a significant step in showing how serious the United States views this situation now."

Washington and Beijing have long been on a collision course in the contested waters. While the US lays no claims to the strategic waterway, where an estimated USD 5 trillion in global trade transits each year, it has said that freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea is in America's national interest.

China opposes US Navy and Air Force patrols in the busy waterway, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety.

It has warned Washington not to meddle in what it says is a purely Asian territorial conflict — which has become a delicate front-line in the US-China rivalry in the region and has long been feared as a potential flash-point.

## 61% voting recorded in Nepal, one killed in poll-related violence

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

About 61 per cent polling was recorded on Sunday in Nepal's parliament and provincial assemblies elections, marred by sporadic violence and clashes that left one person dead and disrupted voting at several polling stations, officials said.

The polling started at 7 am local time at over 22,000 polling centres and closed at 5 pm.

"The nationwide voter turnout has stood at around 61 per cent. This is likely to increase slightly as we continue receiving details from districts across the country," Chief Election Commissioner Dinesh Kumar Thapaliya told reporters.

"This is certainly less than what we had expected," he added. The voter turnout is significantly lower as compared to the past two elections - 77 per cent in 2013, and 78 per cent in 2017.

More than 17.9 million voters were eligible to cast their votes to elect a 275-member House of Representatives and provincial assemblies.

Thapaliya said the elections were held largely in a peaceful manner except for a "few minor incidents." He said that voting has been postponed in 15 polling stations in four districts as a result of such incidents.

He said the Election Commission has directed the concerned election offices in those districts to make necessary arrangements to hold the elections within two days.

The counting of votes will



start tonight itself in three districts of Kathmandu Valley, he said, adding that the counting will end within a week.

One person was killed after being shot dead at a polling station in Nateshwari Basic School of Tribeni Municipality in Bajura. The 24-year-old man was shot dead by the police following a dispute between two groups after the voting was over, officials said.

A minor explosion took place near Sharda Secondary School polling station in Dhangadhi Sub-metropolitan City in Kailali district. However, there was no casualty, they said, adding that voting continued in the polling station despite the incident with just half-an-hour interruption.

Some incidents of heated arguments between party cadres were reported from 11 areas in Dhangadhi, Gorkha and Dolakha districts. However, it did not affect the polling, they said.

Prime Minister and Nepali Congress (NC) president Sher Bahadur Deuba cast his ballot in his home district Dadeldhura. He voted at the Ashigram Secondary School polling centre at Ruwakhola in Ganyapdhura rural municipal-

ity-1 in the morning. Deuba had studied at this school.

Deuba has continuously won the election from Dadeldhura since 1991. He is running for the federal parliament member for the seventh time in this election, The Himalayan Times newspaper reported.

Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) chairman and former prime minister K P Sharma Oli cast his ballot at the polling centre situated in Suryabinayak Municipality in Bhaktapur district near Kathmandu.

Talking to reporters after casting his vote, Oli said that his CPN-UML-led alliance will secure a clear majority and form the next government by December 1.

"The UML will form a majority government, or at least a coalition government comprising parties that have forged an alliance with us in the elections," he said.

CPN-Maoist Centre chairman and former prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" cast his vote at the polling centre located at Bharatpur Municipality in Chitawan district.

"It is most likely that the next government will be formed under the leadership of the Nepali Congress and I will contest for the post of Parliamentary Party leader to forward my claim for the top executive position," NC general secretary Gagan Thapa said after casting his vote in Kathmandu constituency No. 4.



## Turkey strikes in Syria, Iraq week after Istanbul bombing

AP ■ ISTANBUL

Turkey launched airstrikes over northern regions of Syria and Iraq, the Turkish Defence Ministry said on Sunday, targeting Kurdish groups that Ankara holds responsible for last week's bomb attack in Istanbul. Warplanes attacked bases of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and the Syrian People's Protection Units, or YPG, the ministry said in a statement, which was accompanied by images of F-16 jets taking off and footage of a strike from an aerial drone.

There was no immediate comment from either group.

The ministry cited Turkey's right to self defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter in launching an operation it called Claw-Sword late on Saturday. It said it was targeting areas "used as a base by terrorists in their attacks on our country."

Turkey said it was seeking to prevent attacks, secure its southern border and "destroy terrorism at its source."

The airstrikes came after a bomb rocked a bustling avenue in the heart of Istanbul on November 13, killing six people and wounding over 80 others.

Turkish authorities blamed the attack on the PKK and its Syrian affiliate the YPG. The Kurdish militant groups have, however, denied involvement.

Ankara and Washington both consider the PKK a terror group, but disagree on the status of the YPG. Under the banner of the Syrian Democratic Forces, the YPG has been allied with the US in the fight against the Islamic State group in Syria.

The PKK has fought an armed insurgency in Turkey since 1984. The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people since then.

Following the strikes, the Defence Ministry posted a photo of an F-16 fighter plane with the phrase, "Payback time! The scoundrels are being held to account for their treacherous attacks."

The DHA news agency reported that F-16s took off from airfields in Malatya and Diyarbakir in southern Turkey while drones were launched from Batman. Defence Minister Hulusi Akar oversaw the airstrikes from an operations centre and congratulated pilots and ground staff.

# Lanka mulls repealing controversial anti-terror law

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan government is drafting a new counter-terrorism law to replace the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), Justice Minister Wijeyadasa Rajapakse said on Sunday.

The PTA was introduced as a temporary arrangement to counter the campaign of separatist violence by the Tamil minority militant groups in 1979.

Addressing reporters in the central district of Kandy, Rajapakse said: "The drafting of a new act is currently in the process after careful examination by a group of experts."

International rights groups and Tamil parties dubbed it a draconian law that held Tamils in detention over decades without charges being filed in courts.

"We are keen to bring in an anti-terrorism law so as to ensure the protection of national security," the minister stressed. The government had also

come under pressure from the European Union (EU) to repeal the PTA.

The EU parliament in mid-2021 resolved that the preferential trade facility of (Generalised System of Preferences) GSP+ must be scrapped for Sri Lankan exports unless the government took action to repeal the PTA.

Repealing the law which allows indefinite detention of individuals without being produced in courts was earlier only a demand that came from the northern Tamil minority. Still, it has been more vocalised since July this year in the Sinhala majority south.

A popular uprising, which spanned over months with street protests, saw the ouster of the then president Gotabaya Rajapaksa for his inability to tackle the ongoing economic crisis that led to a shortage of essential commodities, including food, fuel, and medicines.

Gotabaya's successor Ranil Wickremesinghe, who was



accused of crushing the protest movement when some of the protest leaders came to be arrested, had used PTA extensively to curtail the demonstrations.

At least two of the protest-

ing student leaders, including a Buddhist monk, are currently being held under the PTA.

Monthly street protests have happened since mid-August demanding their release and the

repeal of the PTA.

"We will have to ensure people's rights are protected in the new anti-terrorism law," Rajapakse added.

Sri Lankan President Ranil

Wickremesinghe on Saturday also said that he was keen to solve all issues, including land and housing pertaining to the Tamil minority community in the country's Northern Province

## 2 death row convicts in Bangladeshi-American blogger murder case flee from court premises

PTI ■ DHAKA

Two Islamist militants, who were sentenced to death for killing prominent Bangladeshi-American secular blogger Avijit Roy and his publisher, escaped dramatically from the premises of a crowded court here on Sunday with the help of unidentified bikers who sprayed some chemical on police and created a smoke screen before whisking away the convicts.

Hours after the incident, home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal told reporters that a nationwide alert has been issued to recapture them and an investigation launched to ascertain how the event took place.

"We have launched a massive manhunt to recapture them and their helpers," a police spokesman told newsmen at the scene.

He said Moinul Hasan Shamim alias Samir alias Imran and Abu Siddiqi Sohel -- both of whom were operatives of the outlawed terrorist group Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) -- were brought to the court for indictment hearing in a different case when some unidentified motorcyclist-borne men whisked them away while they were being escorted to transition prison room.

Police said the two ABT operatives were sentenced to death last year for killing 42-year-old Bangladeshi-born US secular blogger Roy and his publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan.

According to police and eyewitnesses, the convicts fled the court premises on motorbikes as their accomplices



sprayed some chemical on policemen escorting them and created a smoke screen.

The eyewitnesses said the spray temporarily blinded only two policemen, suggesting that the convicts in the high-profile murder cases were being treated just like any other ordinary prisoners.

"The prisoners were just handcuffed, their legs were not shackled, a usual protective measure for dangerous criminals or militants," a court official said.

CCTV footage aired by TV channels showed two bikers wearing helmets carrying the two militants through a narrow road in front of the Dhaka Metropolitan Judges Court complex, while a plainclothesman was chasing them.

Roy, an outspoken critic of religious fundamentalism, was hacked to death with machetes by ABT militants just after he left a book fair at the Dhaka University on February 26, 2015. His wife Rafida Ahmed was also injured in the attack. The terrorist group also hacked to death his publisher Dipan in

November the same year at his office at Dhaka's Shahbagh area.

Dhaka's Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal court sentenced five militants to death in the Roy murder case, while eight Islamists were sentenced to death for killing Dipan.

Bangladesh witnessed an alarming rise of militant activities in 2015 when four "atheist" bloggers were murdered with authorities attributing the attacks to homegrown terrorists while Islamic State at that time had claimed responsibility for three attacks.

A 2016 cafe attack was the worst of the militant assaults when 22 people, including 17 foreigners, were killed, sparking a global uproar while a court subsequently sentenced seven of the eight suspects to death.

But it prompted the South Asian country with Muslim majority population to virtually declare a total war against Islamists engaging Army, paramilitary and elite police units that saw a series of countrywide raids on militant hide-outs and deaths of dozens of extremists.

## China announces 1st Covid death in 6 months

AP ■ BEIJING

China on Sunday announced its first new death from COVID-19 in nearly half a year as strict new measures are imposed in Beijing and across the country to ward against new outbreaks.

The death of the 87-year-old Beijing man was the first reported by the National Health Commission since May 26, bringing the total death toll to 5,227.

The previous death was reported in Shanghai, which underwent a major surge in cases over the summer.

While China has an overall vaccination rate of more than 92 per cent having received at least one dose, that number is considerably lower among the elderly — particularly those over age 80 — where it falls to just 65 per cent.

The commission did not give details on the vaccination status of the latest deceased.

That vulnerability is considered one reason why China has mostly kept its borders closed and is sticking with its rigid "zero-COVID" policy that seeks to wipe out infections through lockdowns, quarantines, case tracing and mass testing, despite the impact on normal life and the economy and rising public anger at the authorities.

China says its tough approach has paid off in much lower numbers of cases and deaths than in other countries, such as the US.

With a population of 1.4 billion, China has officially reported just 286,197 cases since the virus was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late



2019. That compares to 98.3 million cases and 1 million deaths for the US, with its population of 331.9 million, since the virus first appeared there in 2020.

China's figures have come under question, however, based on the ruling

## Man dies at UK migrant centre criticised over poor conditions

AP ■ LONDON

A man being held at a much-criticised centre for migrants in Britain has died after falling sick, bringing renewed criticism to the Conservative government over its treatment of asylum-seekers.

The Home Office said a man who was staying at the Manston migrant centre in southeast England died in a hospital on Saturday after "becoming unwell".

Authorities are trying to contact next of kin of the man, who is believed to have arrived in England in a small boat on November 12.

"We take the safety of those in our care extremely seriously and are profoundly saddened by

this event," the Home Office said. "A post-mortem examination will take place so it would not be appropriate to comment further at this time."

It said there was "no evidence at this stage to suggest that this tragic death was caused by an infectious disease."

Cases of diphtheria, scabies and other communicable diseases have been reported at Manston, where people who have arrived by boat across the English Channel are sent for security and identity checks before moving to longer-term accommodation.

A surge in arrivals and a bureaucratic backlog has seen people, including children, languishing for weeks.

A facility intended to house at most 1,600 people had more than 4,000 occupants last month, after hundreds were moved there from another site that was firebombed by a far-right attacker. The number has since dropped. Independent government inspectors who visited the site said they saw families sleeping on floors in prison-like conditions that presented fire and health hazards.

Enver Solomon, chief executive of the Refugee Council, called for "a thorough and speedy investigation" of the death. "Every person in Manston must be looked after with the care and attention they need, so when a tragic death like this takes place it is always a matter

of serious concern," he said.

The UK receives fewer asylum-seekers than many European nations, including Germany, France and Italy, but thousands of migrants from around the world travel to northern France each year in hopes of crossing the channel.

Some want to reach the UK because they have friends or family there, others because they speak English or because it's perceived to be easy to find work. In recent years there's been a sharp increase in the number of people attempting the journey in dinghies and other small craft as authorities have clamped down on other routes such as stowing away on buses or trucks.

## Malaysia's nationalists seen on track to form new Government

AP ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Malaysia's next government appeared to be leaning to the religious right after a coalition of Malay nationalists won support of an influential bloc on Sunday after tightly fought general elections failed to produce a clear winner.

The nation's king still has to approve any deal. The unprecedented hung parliament after Saturday's divisive polls saw the rise of the the Malay-centric Perikatan Nasional, or National Alliance, led by former Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin.



# ‘Draft DPDP skips Right to Privacy in preamble’

Now, Govt gets unrestrained powers: CUTS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The draft Digital Personal Data Protection bill has skipped “Right to Privacy” in the preamble and provides unrestrained powers to the government, advocacy group CUTS International has claimed.

CUTS said that the draft weakens the regulatory, supervisory, and enforcement architecture by replacing the previously proposed data protection regulator with a board that will be directly in control of the government.

“Moving away from its previous version, the bill skips mention of the fundamental right to privacy in its preamble and narrows the scope of the law from data protection to digital personal data protection excluding non-personal data, which is rather desirable. In doing so, the bill takes away the categorisation of personal data, especially sensitive personal data, thereby painting all personal data with the same regulatory brush,” CUTS said in a statement.

The preamble of the draft Personal Data Protection Act 2018 mentioned of “right to



privacy” as “a fundamental right and it is necessary to protect personal data as an essential facet of informational privacy.”

“The bill provides a broad scope and unrestrained powers to the government to prescribe on critical issues at a later date. Such powers, if not carefully and judicially used, can do more harm than good,” CUTS International, Secretary General, Pradeep S Mehta said.

CUTS said that allowing the transfer of personal data outside India appears to be a step forward but the bill provides significant unreasonable discretion to the central government to notify trusted countries for such transfer, without necessary principles or procedural safeguards.

“It also empowers the central government to exempt instrumentalities of state from its provisions without adequate

checks and balances, ignoring principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality, as laid down in the Puttaswamy judgement,” CUTS said.

The government had opposed declaring the “Right to Privacy” as a fundamental right while the judgement in the Puttaswamy case has pronounced “The right of privacy is a fundamental right” which “protects the inner sphere of the individual from interference from both State, and non-State actors and allows the individuals to make autonomous life choices.”

CUTS appreciated the evolution of significant data fiduciaries from only the number of registered users as in intermediary rules to include factors such as volume and sensitivity of personal data processed, risk of harm to data principal, risk to electoral democracy and public order among others.

## Banks increase EBLRs by 190 bps in tandem with RBI’s repo rate hike

PTI ■ MUMBAI

All major banks have increased their external benchmark-based lending rates (EBLRs) by 190 basis points in tandem with the hike in the Reserve Bank’s policy repo rate since May this year, though they have been slow in raising the deposit rates.

The Reserve Bank has hiked the key short-term lending rate (repo) by 190 basis points in four tranches since May to contain inflation.

The RBI’s Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), which makes recommendations to the central bank regarding interest rates, is set to meet again early next month amid expectations of another repo rate hike.

By October-end 2022, banks have increased their EBLRs by 190 bps in tandem with the increase in the policy repo rate since May 2022, according to an RBI article.

Further, banks have also increased their 1-year median marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR) by 85 bps from May to October 2022.

From October 1, 2019, all banks have to lend only at an interest rate linked to an external benchmark, such as RBI’s repo rate or Treasury Bill yield. As a result, monetary policy transmission by banks has gained traction.

However, the banks have raised the interest rates on



term deposits by a much lower margin.

The median term deposit rates (average card rates on retail deposits) on fresh deposits increased by 48 bps from May to October 2022. Banks have increased their bulk deposit rates higher than retail deposit rates.

Across bank groups, the article said, transmission to lending and deposit rates of private sector banks (PVBs) has exceeded that of public sector banks (PSBs) in the current tightening period.

Credit growth for PVBs has been higher than for PSBs in the current interest rate tightening period beginning May this year.

In view of the increase in credit demand, private banks have increased their lending and deposit rates to maintain higher net interest margins (NIMs).

The next meeting of the MPC is scheduled during December 5-7, 2022.

## Deloitte expects India to post 6.5-7.1% growth in current fiscal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is likely to post a 6.5 per cent to 7.1 per cent economic growth during the current financial year 2022-23 amid rising inflation and impending global slowdown, Deloitte India said in a report.

The persistent inflation has challenged policymakers over the past few months. Despite the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raising interest rates by 1.9 percentage points since April 2022, inflation has remained above its tolerance range for over 9 months now.

To add to this, the runaway dollar is causing import bills to soar and further pushing inflation up. An impending global slowdown or even a recession in a few advanced nations as early as the end of 2022 or early next year is likely to make the situation worse.

“The seemingly unending saga of global economic uncertainties has begun to negatively impact India’s main drivers



of growth. So volatile is the current economic environment that if one is looking for certainties from the recent data releases, it is unlikely that a consistent outlook will emerge,” Deloitte said.

Deloitte expects “India to post a 6.5-7.1 per cent growth during FY22-23 (April 2022 to March 2023) and 5.5-6.1 per cent the following year contingent on the revival of the global economy and improving economic fundamentals.”

India’s gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 8.7 per cent in the 2021-22 fiscal year.

“We expect the upcoming festive season could give a

much-needed boost to the consumer sector, which has not yet shown a sustained revival. Credit growth in the industry and services sector has also risen remarkably, suggesting that prospects for capex investments by the private sector are brighter.

“Sustained demand growth may be the most-awaited cue for a sustained push for investment. Exports and government spending may not support growth as much owing to moderating global demand and limited resources at disposal, respectively,” said Rumki Majumdar, Economist, Deloitte India.

Downside risks of higher inflation and commodity prices, and currency depreciation are significant.

“We expect global prices to ease by mid-2023 owing to a possible moderation in crude oil and industrial raw material prices, thereby easing pressures on domestic inflation,” Deloitte said.

## ‘Export duty removal to help financial, operational performance of steel makers’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government’s decision to remove the export duty on steel products will help improve the financial and operational performance of steel players, a top official of Jindal Steel and Power Limited (JSPL) said.

Steel companies faced distress in the July-September quarter of the ongoing financial year due to various factors, including high input costs, JSPL Managing Director Bimlendra Jha told PTI in a telephonic interview.

Asked about the impact of the government’s action, Jha said “it was a much awaited move” which will improve financial and operational performance of steel makers.

In the July-September quarter, the top domestic steel makers, including JSPL, Tata Steel and JSW Steel, have either

reported losses or posted a sharp fall in their net profits citing adverse market conditions.

The government has cut the export duty on steel products and iron ore to nil with effect from November 19, 2022 — six months after imposition of the levy on May 21.

As per a notification, import duty on anthracite/PCI, coking coal and ferromanganese — used as raw materials in the steel industry — has been hiked to 2.5 per cent, while for coke and semi-coke it has been raised to 5 per cent, from ‘nil’ earlier. “I am sure as when the coking coal prices will go too high, the government will remove the duty because India is heavily dependent on imported coking coal for steel production,” he added.

Coking coal and iron ore are the two key raw materials used in steel making.

## NCLAT allows Jindal Stainless to bid for Rathi Super Steel

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Appellate tribunal NCLAT has upheld the NCLT order to allow Jindal Stainless to participate in the auction of debt-ridden Rathi Super Steel even after a bidder was selected.

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) said the NCLT “did not commit any error” as sales were not completed and the object was to obtain the maximisation of the assets, hence it “sees no reason to take a different view.”

“The Adjudicating Authority (NCLT) did not commit any error in taking note of the offer made by Respondent No 1 (JSL) who made an offer of initial Rs 190 crore and revised offer was Rs 201 crore i.e. Much higher than the one on which Appellant was declared successful bidder,”



the NCLAT said.

Jindal Stainless Ltd (JSL) submitted its Rs 190 crore bid for Rathi Super Steel after the liquidator forwarded the application before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), seeking closure of the liquidation process and approval of terms and conditions of sale to Rimjhim Ispat and Synergy Steel.

In the e-auction, Rimjhim Ispat and Synergy Steel had emerged as the highest bidder with a ₹177.50 crore offer for

Rathi Super Steel as a going concern and a letter of intent was also issued on July 1, 2021.

However, on October 3, 2021, JSL approached the NCLT and filed an application for consideration of its bid for acquiring Rathi Super Steel as a going concern. JSL had offered ₹190 crore payable within 90 days from acceptance of the bid.

On this the Delhi-based Principal Bench of the NCLT had on September 28, 2022, directed JSL to deposit EMD (Earnest Money Deposit) of Rs 50 crore within three days of the pronouncement of this order.

The NCLT further directed to proceed to hold another auction between successful bidder Rimjhim Ispat and the other two bidders namely Adya Overseas and Bansal Wire Industries within seven days of this order.

## FPIs invest ₹30,385 crore in Indian equities in Nov so far

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors have been aggressively buying Indian equities in November, investing ₹30,385 crore this month so far, on stabilisation in rupee and resilience of the domestic economy compared to global counterparts.

However, going forward, buying by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) is unlikely to turn very aggressive as high valuations in India are a headwind, said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

Further, valuations in markets like China, South Korea and Taiwan are very attractive now and so more FPI money is likely to move to these markets, he added.

According to data with the depositories, FPIs invested a net sum of ₹30,385 crore in equities during November 1-18. This came following a net outflow of just ₹8 crore last month and ₹7,624 crore in September. Prior to these outflows, FPIs were net buyers in August to the tune of ₹51,200 crore and nearly ₹5,000 crore in July. Before that, foreign investors were net sellers in Indian equities for nine months in a row which started in October last year. So far this year, the total outflow by FPIs in equities stands at ₹1.4 lakh crore. The latest spurt in net inflows can be attributed to the recent surge in equity markets, stability in Indian economy compared to its global counterparts.

## NPCI in talks with RBI on volume cap deadline

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), which runs the UPI digital pipeline, is in talks with the Reserve Bank on implementation of its proposed December 31 deadline for limiting the volume cap of players to 30 per cent.

At present, there is no volume cap. So, two players — Google Pay and PhonePe — account for a market share of about 80 per cent.

NPCI in November 2022 had proposed a 30 per cent volume cap for third-party app providers (TPAP) in a bid to avoid concentration risk.



In this regard, sources said, a meeting was convened to comprehensively look at all aspects. Besides NPCI officials, senior officials of the finance ministry and RBI also participated in this.

At the moment, NPCI is evaluating all the possibilities and no final decision has been taken to extend the December 31 deadline, the sources said.

NPCI has also received representations from industry stakeholders to extend the deadline and they are being examined, they added.

According to the sources, NPCI is likely to decide on the issue of UPI market cap implementation by this month-end.

NPCI in 2020 came up with a directive to cap the share of transactions a third-party application provider (TPAP) could process at 30 per cent of the volume of transactions handled on UPI, effective January 1, 2021, which is to be calculated on the basis of the volume of transactions processed during the preceding three months.

## No prospect of recession in India, says ex-Niti Aayog brass

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India will still grow at 6-7 per cent in the next 2023-24 fiscal even as the economy may be affected by uncertain global conditions, former Niti Aayog Vice-Chairman Rajiv Kumar has said amid growing fears of the world slipping into a recession.

Kumar further said there is a synchronized downturn in the US, Europe, Japan and also in China and that could take the global economy into a recession in the coming months.

“Thankfully, there is no

such prospect of recession in India, because although our growth may be negatively affected by the global conditions, we will still manage to grow at 6-7 per cent in 2023-24,” he told PTI in an interview.

The World Bank on October 6 projected a 6.5 per cent growth rate for the Indian economy for 2022-23, a drop of one percentage point from its June 2022 projections, citing the deteriorating international environment, while IMF projected a growth rate of 6.8 per cent in 2022 as compared to 8.7 per cent in 2021 for India.

IMF chief Kristalina

Georgieva has said the global economy is moving from a world of relative predictability to one of greater uncertainty.

Replying to a question on high inflation, Kumar said retail inflation will probably be in the range of 6-7 per cent for some more time.

“After that, my estimate is that it should begin to peak and then come down,” he said.

Kumar added that depends a lot on global oil prices as it can continue to rise because of the continued conflict in Ukraine.

“But otherwise domestic

drivers of inflation will cool down,” he noted.

Indicating easing of the price situation, retail inflation moderated to 6.7 per cent in October while the wholesale price index fell to a 19-month low mainly on account of subdued rates of food items.

The central bank is mandated to keep inflation at 4 per cent with 2 per cent of upside and downside margins.

Asked about the impact of a weakening Indian rupee on the common man, the former Niti Aayog vice chairman said the common Indian does not use a lot of imported goods or

services in their consumption basket.

According to Kumar, the rupee which is near its real value is much better for the economy than the appreciated rupee and depreciated rupee doesn’t pose many downside risks.

The rupee depreciated 6 paise to close at 81.74 against the US dollar on Friday.

On India’s widening trade deficit, Kumar said with the negative growth of exports in October, it is clear that the country needs a real policy focus on this area on how to expand its exports of both

goods and services.

“We need to now formulate state-specific export promotion policies. Because to have one single export promotion policy for the whole country does not make sense,” he said.

Elaborating further, he said that like Punjab is a double landlocked state and Tamil Nadu is a coastal state, and it has centuries of trading experience. “So, to have the same policies of both those states, for example, is not relevant,” he emphasised.

India’s exports entered negative territory after a gap of about two years, declining

sharply by 16.65 per cent to USD 29.78 billion in October, mainly due to global demand slowdown, even as the trade deficit widened to USD 26.91 billion.

Imports during the month under review rose by about 6 per cent to USD 56.69 billion on account of increase in the inbound shipments of crude oil and certain raw materials such as cotton, fertiliser and machinery.

Responding to a question on some states switching to the old pension scheme (OPS), Kumar said, “That’s a backward step. And I don’t think that

should be taken.”

He opined that it is being advocated by some opposition parties because of populist measures.

“I think the Indian economy, the Indian working class, Indian middle class is maturing and can handle their own pension funds and take advantage of the new pension scheme, which offers much more choices than the old pension scheme,” Kumar said.

Punjab cabinet on Friday approved the reimplementation of the old pension scheme, which was discontinued in 2004.





# ECUADOR WIN OPENING WORLD CUP MATCH, BEAT QATAR 2-0

AP ■ AL KHOR, QATAR

Qatar's first ever World Cup match ended in dismay for an overmatched team and with a place in unwanted soccer history.

The controversy-laced tournament opened Sunday with Qatar getting outplayed and embarrassed in a 2-0 loss to Ecuador in front of 67,372 fans at Al Bayt Stadium.

In 92 years of soccer's biggest event, a host team had never lost its opening game.

The first World Cup in the Middle East is a chance for Qatar, a tiny Arab country jutting out into the Persian Gulf, to showcase itself to the wider world. Its soccer team, playing at this level for the first time by virtue of hosting the tournament, couldn't live up to the moment as Ecuador captain Enner Valencia scored both goals in the first half.

The match took place after a colorful 30-minute opening ceremony — fronted by Oscar-winning actor Morgan

Freeman and attended by powerful dignitaries including Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman — that promoted inclusivity and mankind living “under one tent.”

For many, that would jar with this World Cup being hosted by an emirate where homosexual acts are illegal, one that has come under strong criticism for how migrant workers have been treated building stadiums and tournament infrastructure since Qatar won the scandal-shrouded vote in 2010.

The yearslong scrutiny was never going to stop just because play on the field finally entered the narrative of a tournament dogged by human rights controversies, yet a win for the host nation would have at least put a favorable light on Qatar, soccer-wise.

Instead, Qatar's players, fresh from spending seven months together in a pre-tournament training camp under Spanish coach Felix Sanchez,



froze in front of an expectant crowd and a disciplined Ecuador team that might just pose a danger to more high-profile opponents over the next

few weeks. Valencia scored in the third minute when he headed in from close range following an acrobatic

cross from Felix Torres. After a video review of about two minutes, Ecuadorian celebrations were cut short when the goal was ruled out for what

appeared to be a marginal off-side.

Ecuador did take the lead, however, in the 16th minute when Valencia was tripped by

Saad Alsheeb after rounding the goalkeeper, who was booked for the challenge. Valencia was nonchalant as he trotted up and converted the spot kick into the bottom corner.

The 33-year-old striker added his second in the 33rd by heading in a right-wing cross from Angelo Preciado.

With Qatar's passes often going astray and its defensive raggedness repeatedly exposed, Ecuador had no problem holding onto its lead as Sanchez stood helpless in his technical area and the home fans fell quiet. There were lots of empty seats for a second half that was almost a damage-limitation exercise for Qatar on one of the biggest nights in the nation's history.

Camels and Arabian horses lined the entrance to the stadium, a Bedouin tent-inspired venue located in the rather isolated surrounds of the rural town of Al Khor, north of Doha. And the atmospheric, seven-act opening ceremony

lived up to its billing, the highlight being when Freeman extended one yellow-gloved hand to a FIFA World Cup ambassador suffering from a rare spinal disorder in an image representing inclusion in a country facing international criticism over its human-rights record.

Looking on from the luxury seats were FIFA president Gianni Infantino alongside leaders from the Middle East and Africa. Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, drew a thunderous applause in a short speech delivered in Arabic from the suite, with Infantino and the monarch's father, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, on either side of him.

“I welcome you and good luck to all,” the emir said in his only words spoken in English.

After this display, Qatar will need more than just luck to avoid joining South Africa as being the only host nation to fail to get out of the group stage at the World Cup.



## France star Karim Benzema out for World Cup with leg injury

AP ■ DOHA

One month after raising the Ballon d'Or in triumph to crown his remarkable rise, Karim Benzema's dream of winning the World Cup is over before he has even played a game in Qatar.

Defending champion France's World Cup hopes took a huge blow with the news that its star striker Benzema is out of the tournament after tearing a muscle in his left thigh during training on Saturday.

“Karim Benzema is out of the World Cup,” the French soccer federation (FFF) said. “After hurting the quadriceps on his left thigh the Real Madrid striker is forced to give up on taking part in the World Cup.”

Benzema was participating in his first full training session with Les Bleus when he had to come off after feeling some pain in his left thigh, the FFF said. “He went for an MRI scan in a hospital (clinic) in Doha, which unfortunately confirmed a tear,” the FFF said, adding that he will need three weeks to recover. Benzema addressed his fans after the news emerged.

“I've never given up in my life but tonight I have to think of the team, as I have always done,” Benzema posted on his Instagram account.

“So reason tells me to give

my place to someone who can help our squad have a great World Cup. Thanks for all your messages of support.”

France coach Didier Deschamps said: “I'm very sad for Karim who had made this World Cup a major objective.”

Benzema had hardly played at all in recent weeks — since winning the Ballon d'Or, he has played fewer than 30 minutes for Madrid — and this was his first full training session with France.

France faces Australia on Tuesday in Group D, then Denmark four days later and Tunisia on Nov. 30.

It is a crushing blow for Benzema, only the fifth Frenchman to win the Ballon d'Or award and the first since Zinedine Zidane, his idol, in 1998. The hugely talented Benzema, who is of Algerian descent, came through Lyon's renowned youth academy and scored the first of his Champions League goals as an audaciously gifted 17-year-old. He's now fourth all-time with 86 goals.

Benzema was France's top scorer at the 2014 World Cup but did not play in France's victorious 2018 World Cup campaign because he was still exiled from the team for his alleged role in a sex-tape scandal with then-France teammate Mathieu Valbuena.

AP ■ DOHA

A World Cup jammed into the middle of the European season isn't ideal, especially for the United States.

Injuries and idleness run throughout the roster ahead of Monday's match against Wales.

Weston McKennie, Sergio Dest and Luca de la Torre missed time, and Christian Pulisic and Matt Turner are among those struggling for playing time with their clubs. Defenders Walker Zimmerman and Aaron Long enter the Americans' first World Cup match in eight years on layoffs of more than a month after the ends of their Major League Soccer seasons.

A friendly was held Thursday against Al-Gharafa, the Qatari club hosting the

American training base at Thani bin Jassim Stadium, but the level of intensity figures to be exponentially higher against Wales.

“This is going to be a dog-fight,” McKennie said Saturday. “When everyone's on all cylinders and fighting for each other and you see little fights on the field and everybody's just fired up and ready to go, those are the times that I think we've played at our best.”

Absent from soccer's biggest stage since the extra-time loss to Belgium in the round of 16 in Brazil, the Americans take a new-look roster into the game — only right back DeAndre Yedlin remains from 2014. FIFA said the Americans' average age of 25.2 years is the second lowest among the 32 teams, higher



than only Ghana's 24.7.

With youth comes inconsistency.

“Every athlete in every single sport has an off day,” McKennie said. “And the thing about soccer, it's such a team

sport that even if one player has an off day, it can throw off everything, and all of us have had an off day at some point. Obviously, we know when we come to the national team, everyone wants us to be 100%,

## Dutch aim for World Cup statements against Mané-less Senegal

AP ■ DOHA

The Netherlands is looking to make two statements in its opening World Cup game on Monday against a Senegal team that has to quickly get over the loss of star forward Sadio Mané.

The first is strictly about soccer and establishing the team as a contender for the title in Qatar alongside the likes of top-ranked Brazil, defending champion France and Argentina. The Dutch have gained less attention in the buildup to the tournament after failing to qualify for the World Cup in Russia four years ago, but arrive as one of the top form teams in Europe.

“We have a great chance of also becoming a world champion,” said Dutch coach Louis van Gaal, who is back for a third spell in charge. “There are few coach-



es who dare to speak out like that, but I say this.”

The second statement the Dutch want to make at Al Thumama Stadium in Doha centers around the long-running criticism of the World Cup host country's laws and human rights record.

The Netherlands soccer fed-

eration is the leader of the “One Love” anti-discrimination movement and Dutch captain Virgil van Dijk is expected to wear an armband with a multi-colored heart-shaped logo in defiance of a FIFA order to keep politics out of the World Cup.

The “One Love” armbands are a criticism of Qatar's laws

criminalizing homosexuality. The England and Wales captains have said that they will also ignore FIFA's directive and wear them when they open their World Cup play on Monday.

Among international coaches, Van Gaal has been one of the most outspoken critics of letting the small but wealthy emirate host the World Cup, a decision which he has called “ridiculous.”

He toned down his criticism this week in his first press conference in Qatar but still made it clear he would have preferred the tournament go to a different country with more soccer “experience.”

The World Cup will likely be the last major coaching assignment for the 71-year-old van Gaal, who announced this year he has prostate cancer and has been receiving radiation treatment.

## Day before FIFA World Cup, Qatar faces overcrowding troubles

AP ■ DOHA

Authorities turned away thousands of fans from a concert celebrating the World Cup beginning the next day in Qatar, revealing the challenges ahead for Doha as it tries to manage crowds in FIFA's most-compact tournament ever.

Disappointed fans took being turned away largely in stride. Outside the venue, Qatari police, security guards and others guiding the thousands away with giant foam fingers, bullhorns and blinking traffic control wands.

But the overflowing concert comes before the rest of the 1.2 million fans expected at the tournament arrive in this tiny nation on the Arabian Peninsula.

And with Qatar deciding only Friday to ban beer sales from tournament stadiums, fan zones like the one on the corniche hosting the concert will be the only FIFA-associated area serving pints — meaning more fans could wind up there.

“We know that what the police say here goes,” said a 30-year-old trucker from Mumbai, who declined to give his name for fear of reprisals. He and his friends had got a rare day off from Hamad Port to walk 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) to the fan zone before being turned away. “We're sad to leave because it's too early,” he added. “There's nothing we can do.”

Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, which oversees the World Cup, said in a statement to The Associated Press it was “absolutely delighted” with the opening of the Fan Zone.



## Germany goalkeeper Neuer to defy FIFA on Captains' armbands

AP ■ MADINAT ASH SHAMAL

Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer is set to defy FIFA's campaign for captains to wear only official armbands with selected slogans at World Cup games.

“Yes,” the veteran goalkeeper said when asked at the Germany training camp about overriding a new FIFA project backed by United Nations agencies.

Denmark is also not backing down, playmaker Christian Eriksen said Saturday.

The launch a day before the opening World Cup match seemed designed to supplant a pledge by European teams to wear their own armbands as part of a Netherlands-led anti-discrimination campaign drawing attention to host nation Qatar's laws and record on human rights issues.

World Cup rules require that equipment such as captains' armbands must be authorized and provided by FIFA, but Neuer said he will wear the “One Love” design even if it comes with a fine.

“It's good that we have the power with other nations in western Europe,” Neuer said.

Although Germany does not play until Wednesday, against Japan, three teams which joined the “One Love” campaign in September will play on Monday: England, the

Netherlands and Wales.

FIFA had not directly addressed the Europeans' request several weeks ago for permission to wear the heart-shaped, multi-colored logo, then unveiled its proposal on Saturday.

The FIFA choice of slogans for group games include “Save The Planet,” “ProtectChildren” and “ShareTheMeal.”

“These campaigns have taken into account feedback received from our member associations who, like FIFA, are committed to using the power of football to effect positive change around the world,” the soccer body said.

The slogan “NoDiscrimination” — the only one that aligns with the European teams' wish — is scheduled to appear at the quarterfinal stage.

“Obviously the short notice is surprising,” Germany team director Oliver Bierhoff said within two hours of the announcement. “It looks as if FIFA doesn't have a clear stance.”

Denmark starts on Tuesday against Tunisia and captain Simon Kjær should be wearing the “One Love” armband.

“What the consequences will be, I don't know,” Eriksen said at a news conference where he wore a plain black T-shirt for practice.

## FIFA revenue hits \$7.5B for current World Cup period

AP ■ DOHA

FIFA earned record revenues of USD 7.5 billion in the four years of commercial deals tied to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, the governing body of soccer said Sunday.

FIFA revealed its earnings to officials from more than 200 of its members. It is \$1 billion more than income from the previous commercial cycle linked to the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

The extra income was buoyed by commercial deals with the World Cup host country. Qatar Energy joined as a top-tier sponsor, and new third-tier sponsors include Qatari bank QNB and telecoms firm Ooredoo. FIFA also added second-tier sponsor deals this year from financial platform crypto.Com and a blockchain provider — its first new American sponsor in more than



a decade.

Key broadcast deals for this year's World Cup were signed during Sepp Blatter's presidency in two-tournament deals that included the Russia and Qatar tournaments. They included deals with Fox in the United States and Qatari broadcaster BeIN Sports from 2011.

FIFA's revenues will rise to about \$2.5 billion despite the COVID-19 pandemic. FIFA was prepared to use that cash to help members through uncertainty in 2020 when national team soccer and World Cup qualifying games were almost entirely shut down.

Revenues are likely to

approach \$10 billion for the next four years thanks to a new financial strategy for women's soccer and the expanded 2026 World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Separate sponsor deals for women's soccer are being signed for the 2023 World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.



# SUPREME SURYA GIVES INDIA 1-0 SERIES LEAD

PTI ■ MOUNT MAUNGANUI

Suryakumar Yadav displayed his unmatched superiority in the shortest format with a breathtaking hundred as India outplayed New Zealand by 65 runs in the second T20 here on Sunday. Surya struck a sensational 111 not out off 51 balls for his second T20 century and fired India to 191 for six.

Promoted to number three, the 32-year-old toyed with the bowlers to lift India to a challenging total after New Zealand put the visitors in to bat.

He smashed boundaries and sixes at will, his last 64 runs coming off just 18 balls. His entertaining innings had 11 fours and seven sixes and his strike rate was an incredible 217.64.

New Zealand bowlers appeared clueless as Surya kept strung together some extraordinary shots.

The hosts kept losing wickets in the run chase and never looked in hunt. In the end, New Zealand were all out for 126 in 18.5 overs.

With first game being washed out, India now lead the three match series 1-0 with the final game to be played on Tuesday.

New Zealand were dealt a setback at the start of the chase



when the dangerous Finn Allen went for an expansive drive off a Bhuvneshwar Kumar outswinger only to be caught at third man.

Opener Devon Conway (25 off 22) and skipper Kane Williamson (61 off 52) stitched a 56-run stand but could not find the big hits that were needed to keep up with the asking rate.

Conway was caught at deep backward square leg while going for the sweep against Washington Sundar. The big hitting Glenn Phillips had to do something special to bring New Zealand back in the game.

He made his intentions clear with a crisp slog sweep off Yuzvendra Chahal that went all the way but two ball later, the same shot led to his downfall.

With New Zealand struggling to 89 for five in the 14th over, the game was as good as over.

It was a good comeback game Yuzvendra Chahal (2/26) who surprisingly did not get a single game in the recent World Cup. Part time off-spinner Deepak Hooda struck thrice in the 19th over and ended up with a four wicket haul. Skipper

Hardik Pandya did not bowl.

Earlier, India's experiment to open with Rishabh Pant did not work as he fell after a sluggish six off 13 balls.

While Surya was once again in a league of his own, other batters who showed intent but could not go on were opener Ishan Kishan (36 off 31) and number four Shreyas Iyer (13 of 9).

## I want more batters to chip in with ball: Hardik



PTI ■ MOUNT MAUNGANUI

India's stand-in captain Hardik Pandya understands that batters will not be successful every time they are given the ball to do the job but he wants to see more batting all-rounders in his side for better bowling options.

After Suryakumar Yadav slammed an unbeaten 51-ball 111, Deepak Hooda used his off-breaks to dismiss four batters, contributing in team's comprehensive 65-run win over New Zealand in the second T20I.

Hooda is an effective batter in the lower middle order too.

Can't get any better than this. Everyone chipped it but it was surely a special innings by Surya. We would have taken a score of 170-175," Pandya said during the post-match presen-

tation.

Bowlers did well and it was about being aggressive in the mindset. It doesn't mean taking a wicket every ball, but being aggressive with the ball is important.

The conditions were very wet, so credit to the bowlers. I have bowled a lot, going forward I want to see more bowling options. Not always that this will work but I want more batters to chip in with the ball," he added.

Former players such as Anil Kumble and Michael Vaughan have pointed out India's lack of bowling options after their exit from the T20 World Cup, pitching for more batting all-rounders.

Pandya, who is captaining the team in absence of Rohit Sharma, said his job as a leader is to provide the team the right environment in the dressing room.

I expect them to be professional, which they are. Give them the opportunity to enjoy themselves. It's about creating an environment where they are all in a happy space," said the 29-year-old.

"I see many times in this team that all the players are happy for each other's success. And that's important."



## Hales not thinking about playing ODI World Cup in India next year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

It has been a second coming in international cricket for Alex Hales and in this phase his focus will be on playing T20Is for England and franchise cricket across the world.

Hales was one of England's heroes in the recently-held T20 World Cup and played a blazing knock against India in the semi-finals.

Asked if he will now see himself also playing 50 over cricket considering there is a World Cup in India next year, he emphasized that his focus is the shortest format.

"I don't know but I think going forward I would concentrate on playing T20Is for England and franchise cricket. I haven't put much thought into ODIs," Hales told PTI during a zoom interaction arranged by Team Abu Dhabi which will take part in the T10 league in the Emirates.

Hales believes that playing in Asia, especially in the UAE, had given him a chance to improve his overall game against spin.

"On the subcontinent, pitches more often not tend to have a bias towards spin and you have to make sure you adapt your methods. And I think that's one of the key things as a franchise cricketer.

"As you're playing tournaments in different countries and conditions all year round, so you have to keep topping up

on certain areas of your game all the time, otherwise you soon get found out," he explained the reason behind picking the T10 league.

Team Abu Dhabi will open their campaign in Abu Dhabi T10 against the Deccan Gladiators in the second game on November 23.

Among the most destructive batters in world cricket currently, Hales' life in the fast lane has been a storied one. But, whenever, Hales has picked up his bat and walked out, he has provided ample evidence of his explosive abilities, which he hopes to replicate in the Abu Dhabi T10.

Hales is now primarily a one format player and has last played first class cricket in 2018. He believes that quitting red ball cricket has helped him improve his T20 game as it's no longer feasible to play all formats.

"I think it's exceptionally difficult to play all three formats at the top level. I think there's only a handful of cricketers who are probably good enough to excel at all three," he said.

Hales believe in future all three formats will have specialists.

"Since I gave up the red ball format in 2018, my T20 game has improved a lot and quickly as well. And the way things are going, I think it will see more and more specialists in each format," he signed off.

## Tests far above white ball cricket, says Starc



PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian pacer Mitchell Starc reckons the game's hectic schedule will eventually force him to retire from limited overs formats to extend his red-ball career as Test cricket is "always first".

The 32-year-old is one of six all-format players in the Australian side.

"Tests (are) always first... far

above white-ball," said Starc , whose 4/47 steered Australia to an unassailable 2-0 lead in the ODI series against England on Saturday.

Starc is expected to be a vital cog in the team's 2023 World Cup plans. He has also indicated a desire to play in the 2024 T20 World Cup, to be held in the West Indies and the USA.

"I'll decide on the rest as I go and where my body's at and how I feel about it.

"I'd love to, selection and form pending, continue playing Test cricket as long as I can," he added.

The left-armer feels the packed schedule these days makes it "impossible" for players to play all three formats.

"It's certainly impossible at the moment to play every game as a three-format player. Not the way it's scheduled these days."

To maintain his workload, Starc has skipped the lucrative Indian Premier League (IPL) since 2015.

## Youth World Boxing C'ships: Vishwanath, Vanshaj among eight boxers in QF

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reigning Asian youth champions Vishwanath Suresh and Vanshaj were among eight Indian boxers who advanced to the quarterfinals on the fifth day of the Youth Men and Women's World Boxing Championships in La Nucia, Spain.

Vishwanath (48kg) was up against Attrativo Salvatore of Italy and the Chennai boxer produced a clinical performance and showed his smart footwork and speed to convincingly win the pre-quarterfinal bout 5-0.

Vanshaj (63.5kg), who hails from Sonipat, displayed his power and technical superiority to blank Spain's Kakulov Enrique 5-0 and make it to the quarterfinals.

Jadumani Singh (51kg), Ashish (54kg) and Deepak (75kg) were the other three men boxers to win their bouts unanimously and move to the last eight stage.

Jadumani and Ashish got



the better of Spain's Jimenez Asier and Pamisa Ejayay of Philippines respectively while Deepak defeated Argentina's Leiva Antonio.

In the women's section, Bhawna Sharma (48kg) and Asian youth champion Tamanna (50kg) won their respective bouts against Poland's Oliwia Zuzanna and Finland's Pia Jarvinen by RSC verdict and advanced to the quarterfinal.

In the 54kg pre-quarterfinal bout, Griviya Devi overcame Romania's Ana Maria Roman-tov's challenge to secure a 5-0 verdict in her favour.

Aman Rathore (67kg) was the lone Indian pugilist to end up on the losing side as he lost 2-3 to Iraq's Youseif Hussein in a close bout.

Five Indians, including two men, will be in action in the last 16 stage on the sixth day of the



tournament.

Devika Ghorpade (52kg), Preeti Dahiya (57kg) and Mahak Sharma (66kg) will fight in the women's section.

Sahil Chauhan (71kg) and Bharat Joon (92kg) will take the ring in the men's section.

## Djokovic to face Ruud in final as he bids to match record

AP ■ TURIN

Novak Djokovic kept his bid for a record-equaling sixth ATP Finals title alive by beating Taylor Fritz of the United States to reach the final of the prestigious season-ending tournament.

The Serb will face the third-seeded Casper Ruud in Sunday's final as he attempts to win his first title at the event since 2015 and match Roger Federer's record.

Djokovic, who went unbeaten through the group stage, beat Fritz 7-6 (5), 7-6 (6) in just under two hours in Turin, securing the win on his second match point.

He has now won all six of his encounters against the 25-year-old Fritz.

Djokovic had to recover quickly from a grueling three-hour win over Daniil Medvedev in his final group match, which had ended less than 24 hours

previously.

"I had to fight to survive," Djokovic said.

"I didn't feel very reactive today or very comfortable. I knew coming into today's match from yesterday's grueling battle against Medvedev I knew it would take me some time to adjust and find the dynamic movement I need against Fritz, who is one of the best servers on the tour.

"I am very pleased to have overcome this one as I don't think it was one of my best days with my tennis, but I managed to hang in there."

A spirited showing from Fritz saw him recover from a break down in the first set. The American also broke in the opening game of the second and he appeared to be on the verge of leveling the match when he surged into a 5-3 lead.

Djokovic held but Fritz was left serving for the set at 5-4.



However, it was 30-30 in that game when a fan shouted out as he was going for the ball and he hit it into the net.

"I can't expect anyone to be like replay the point' because in that situation I can't say that I would do that either," Fritz said.

"I kinda got screwed and there's nothing that can really be done

about it.

"Someone just like flat out screaming to purposely throw you off, it's not something you're ever used to, so when it happens it's an absolute shock. It's disgusting man."

Djokovic broke back and again found a way to pull through the tiebreaker.



## AIFF condoles death of former India Captain Babu Mani

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The All India Football Federation on Sunday con-doled the demise of former India captain Babu Mani and said his exploits will continue to inspire young footballers in the country.

Babu Mani breathed his last here on Saturday. He was 59. Known as one of the most skilful forwards of his time, Babu Mani made his international debut at the 1984 Nehru Cup in Kolkata, against Argentina.

He went on to represent India in 55 international matches, and was a part of the first Indian squad that qualified for the AFC Asian Cup 1984. He later went on to play the tournament proper as well, in Singapore.

While the 1984 Asian Cup was the highlight of his international career, Babu Mani is also a two-time SAF Games gold medallist (1985 and 1987).

AIFF President Kalyan Chaubey condoled the death of Babu Mani.

"I am extremely sad to hear that Babu Mani, who was one of India's best footballers of his time, is no more. We will always remember him through his contribution to Indian Football. My thoughts go out to his family in this difficult hour," Chaubey said.

## Jeev, Jyoti qualify for final stage of PGA Tour of Champions in US

PTI ■ MESQUITE

Jeev Milkha Singh and Jyoti Randhawa, two of India's golfing stars, moved into the final stage of the 2022 PGA Tour Champions Qualifying School, which will determine who gets a full status on the Champions Tour for 2023.

The PGA Tour of Champions is a Seniors Tour for players over 50 years of age. India's one and only player to win on the PGA Tour, Arjun Atwal, will also be eligible to play the Seniors Tour in 2023.

Playing the first stage of the Champions Tour at Casablanca, Jeev finished sole third after overcoming a double bogey in the fourth and final round.

After a modest 73 on the first day, his two rounds of 67-69 put him in a strong position



inside Top-3. An even par round on the final day saw him finish third and move to the final stage.

Randhawa, an eight-time winner on the Asian Tour and a one-time winner in Japan, led after the first round at Buckhorn Springs, Florida with a round of 65 and then followed that up with rounds of 75-76-71 to total 1-under 286 for four rounds and finish in a tie for 12th place.

Richard Green of Australia topped the Stage 1 in Nevada at 21-under with rounds of 69-65-69-64 and Richard Gilkey was second at 9-under and Jeev at 7-under.

Jeev, a six-time winner in Asia and four-time winner on European and Japan Tours, has been India's most successful international golfing star.

Ever since joining the Senior

Ranks, he has been playing on the Legends Tour (Europe) and the Japan Seniors. Earlier, this year, Jeev became the first Indian to tee up at the Senior Open Gleneagles earlier this year.

Sixteen players of the 73 who competed for 16 spots qualified from the event at Buckhorn Springs.

Kris Blanks, a former winner on the Korn Ferry Tour, earned medallist honours at 12-under, carding a final-round 67 to surge up the board from sixth place. A third Indian, Amandeep Johl, who plays sparingly back home in India, and spends a lot of time coaching youngsters, also had a shot at the Champions Tour. He missed the 54-hole cut by one shot as he carded 75-76-75 at Mesquite, Nevada, from where Jeev progressed to the final stage.

## US driver Logan Sargeant set to race in F1 in 2023

AP ■ ABU DHABI

Logan Sargeant earned the Super License he needed to race for Williams in Formula One and will become the first American on the grid since 2015 when he makes his debut next season.

Sargeant needed to finish at least sixth in the season standings in Formula Two to qualify for an F1 Super License. Williams earlier said the Florida-born driver would get the seat for 2023 if he met the requirements and helped him do so by giving him practice time in F1 sessions.

Sargeant finished fourth in the F2 standings after a fifth-place result in the last race of the season Sunday.

"Thank you all for your hard work and efforts this year. We were damn quick, so thank you for everything," Sargeant told his team. Sargeant was named Rookie of the Year in F2



and was congratulated by Williams for "a great job" in a Twitter post.

Sargeant had unexpected help during the race when Jack Doohan, one of the drivers who could have overtaken him in the standings, came into the pits from the lead and lost a wheel on the pit exit. Japan's Ayumu Iwasa took the win Sunday ahead of F2 champion Felipe Drugovich, a reserve in F1 for Aston Martin.

At Williams, Sargeant takes over a race seat occupied this

year by Canada's Nicholas Latifi. His teammate will be British-born Thai driver Alex Albon.

The most recent U.S. Driver in F1 was Alexander Rossi, who started five races for the now-defunct Manor Marussia team. Since then, the popularity of F1 in the United States has soared as a new audience flocked to the sport thanks to the Netflix documentary series "Drive to Survive." The U.S. Will host three of the 24 races on next season's calendar as Las Vegas joins existing events in Miami and Austin, Texas.

Another American, IndyCar star Colton Herta, was considered for a seat in F1 for 2023 with the AlphaTauri team but was refused a license. The points system used to determine who is eligible favors FIA-sanctioned series like F2 over others like IndyCar. Rossi was among those who supported Herta, saying it was clear he had the talent to compete in F1.