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12 SPORTS

BJP to retain MP, Congress Chhattisgarh

Congress puts up tough fight against BRS in Telangana, but neck and neck with BJP in Rajasthan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/ AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI

Most exit polls on Thursday predicted an edge to the Congress in Chhattisgarh and Telangana, but they forecasted that the advantage was with the BJP in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Pollsters also indicated that in Mizoram, Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) was locked in a close race with the Mizo National Front (MNF), with the Congress and the BJP lagging behind. While the BJP holds power in the 230-member Madhya Pradesh Assembly, the Congress governs Rajasthan (200) and Chhattisgarh (90). In Telangana, the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) led by K Chandrashekhara Rao has been in power for the past 10 years, and in Mizoram, the MNF is currently in government.

Elections in these five States were held between November 7 and November 30, with the counting of votes scheduled for December 3. In Madhya Pradesh, according to the India Today Axis My India, the BJP is predicted to secure 140-162 seats, while the Congress is expected to get 102-125 seats, but Jan Ki Baat exit poll predicted 100-123 seats for the BJP and 102-125 seats for the Congress in the State. The Republic TV-Matrise forecast suggests 118-130 seats for the BJP and 97-107 for the Congress, while TV9 Bharatvarsh Polstrat projects 106-116 seats for the BJP and 111-121 for the Congress. Contrastingly, Today's Chanakya predicts a significant victory for the BJP in Madhya Pradesh, forecasting 151 seats with a margin of plus or minus 12, whereas the Congress is



anticipated to secure 74 seats with a similar margin. According to Jist-TIF-NAI, the Congress appears to have a 2018-like edge in Madhya Pradesh, with a prediction of 107-124 seats for the party as opposed to the BJP's forecasted 102-119. In Rajasthan, India Today-Axis My India anticipates a close competition, with pro-

jections of 86-106 seats for the Congress, 80-100 seats for the BJP, and 9-18 for others. Jan Ki Baat pollsters forecast 100-122 seats for the BJP and 62-85 for the Congress, while TV9 Bharatvarsh Polstrat predicts 100-110 for the BJP and 90-100 for the Congress. Times Now ETG poll predicts 108-128 seats for the BJP and 56-72 for the Congress in

Rajasthan. Jist-TIF-NAI predicts a continuation of Rajasthan's revolving door tradition, forecasting 110 seats for the BJP and 70 for the Congress. In Chhattisgarh, ABP News-C Voter predicts 36-48 seats for the BJP and 41-53 for the Congress, while India Today-Axis My India forecasts 36-46 seats for the BJP and 40-50 seats for the Congress. India TV-CNX predicts 30-40 seats for the BJP and 46-56 seats for the Congress. According to Jan Ki Baat, the BJP is expected to secure 34-45 seats, while the Congress is anticipated to get 42-53 seats. Today's Chanakya predicts that the BJP will secure 33 seats (plus-minus 8), while the Congress is expected to achieve a clear majority with 57 seats (plus-minus 8). For Telangana, India TV-CNX

forecasts 63-79 seats for the Congress, 31-47 for the BRS, 2-4 for the BJP, and 5-7 for the AIMIM. Jan Ki Baat anticipates 48-64 seats for the Congress, 40-55 for the BRS, 7-13 for the BJP, and 4-7 for AIMIM. Republic TV-Matrise predicts that in Telangana, the Congress will secure 58-68 seats, BRS 46-56, BJP 4-9, and AIMIM 5-9. Meanwhile, TV9 Bharatvarsh Polstrat states that the Congress will gain 49-59 seats, and the BRS will secure 48-58 seats. In Mizoram, India TV-CNX forecasts that the MNF will get 14-18 seats, ZPM 12-16, Congress 8-10, and BJP 0-2. ABP News-C Voter suggests MNF will secure 15-21, ZPM 12-18, and Congress 2-8 seats. According to Jan Ki Baat, MNF is predicted to get 10-14 seats, ZPM 15-25 seats, Congress 5-9, and the BJP 0-2 in 40 members Assembly.

Make in India bolsters Defence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a major boost to Indian defence industry, the Government on Thursday approved mega deals worth ₹2.23 lakh crore for acquiring more Tejas light combat aircraft, light combat helicopters, upgradation of SU-30 fighter jets, anti-ship missiles and towed gun systems. These approvals by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh here will also ensure availability of modern weapon systems for operational readiness. The DAC is the apex body for clearing procurement proposals put up by the Armed forces. The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) gives the final clearance. Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, "Excellent move towards bolstering our Armed Forces' operational prowess. The commitment to 'Make in India' in this decision marks a crucial stride in our pursuit of self-sufficiency in the Defence sector."

Giving details of the DAC decisions, the Defence Ministry officials said the apex body accorded approval in respect of Acceptance of Necessity (AoNs) for various capital acquisition proposals amounting to ₹2.23 lakh crore. Officials said out of the total amount, acquisition worth ₹2.20 lakh crore (98 per cent of total AoN amount) will be sourced from domestic industries. This will give a substantial boost to the Indian Defence Industry towards the aim of achieving the goal of "Atmanirbharta". One of the major proposals given the nod include an order for acquisition of 97 Tejas jets and 156 Prachand light combat helicopters (90 for Army and 66 for IAF). The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) will manufac-



ture these platforms for the IAF. While the Tejas deal is worth over ₹55,000 crore, the helicopter deal is about ₹45,000 crore. These two deals are under Buy (Indian-IndDM) category. 156 Prachand helicopters (90 for Army and 66 for IAF). In February 2021, the Defence Ministry sealed a ₹48,000 crore deal with the HAL for procurement of 83 Tejas MK-1A jets for the IAF. With the additional fleet, the number of indigenously-developed Tejas aircraft being procured by the IAF would go up to 180. A major upgrade of the Sukhoi Su-30 MKI was also cleared by the DAC. The IAF has over 260 Su-30 aircraft and the upgrade is expected to be an indigenous one, with India-developed radars, avionics and subsystems. Around 84 aircraft are expected to be upgraded initially. The AoNs have also been accorded by the DAC for upgradation of Su-30 MKI Aircraft indigenously from HAL. While procurement of these equipment will provide enormous strength to the IAF, acquisition from domestic Defence industries will take the indigenous capability to a new height. It will also reduce dependability on Foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) substantially, officials said. The DAC also accorded approval for procurement of two types of Anti-tank Munitions namely, Area Denial Munition (ADM) Type-2 and Type-3, which are capable of neutralising Tanks and Armoured personnel carriers and enemy personnel.

Kejriwal seeks public opinion if he should run Govt from prison

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will initiate a referendum titled "Main Bhi Kejriwal" campaign starting on Friday to gather public feedback on whether Arvind Kejriwal should resign as the Delhi Chief Minister in the event of his arrest under an alleged "conspiracy by the BJP". As part of the campaign, AAP volunteers will distribute pamphlets and collect signatures from the public at all 2,600 polling stations across the city. These pamphlets will seek people's opinions on whether Kejriwal should step down from his role as Delhi Chief Minister if he faces arrest. Additionally, from December 21 to 24, MLAs and councillors will organise public dialogues in all wards to gauge the vox populi. Addressing a press conference alongside party MP Raghav Chadha, Delhi Minister under Kejriwal's leadership is working in Delhi has made BJP top leaders and PM Modi believe that at any cost, the BJP cannot form its government in Delhi. BJP intends that if its government does not form in Delhi, then Arvind Kejriwal should be eliminated, and the rapidly advancing caravan of the AAP should be halted," said Rai. Sharing details, Rai mentioned that in the second phase, a public dialogue would be initiated across Delhi starting from December 21. From December 21 to 24, public dialogues will be organised in all wards of Delhi, encouraging the participation of residents from entire wards.



ed. During these sessions, they will seek people's opinions on whether Kejriwal should resign as the Delhi Chief Minister in the event of his arrest or run the government from jail. "Modiji placed Manish Sisodia, Satyendar Jain, and Sanjay Singh in jail through false cases. Even after that, since the BJP could not break the AAP, a conspiracy is being hatched to arrest Arvind Kejriwal. Despite ruling the MCD for 15 consecutive years, the people of Delhi, prioritising Arvind Kejriwal's work, uprooted the BJP from power. The way the AAP government under Kejriwal's leadership is working in Delhi has made BJP top leaders and PM Modi believe that at any cost, the BJP cannot form its government in Delhi. BJP intends that if its government does not form in Delhi, then Arvind Kejriwal should be eliminated, and the rapidly advancing caravan of the AAP should be halted," said Rai. Sharing details, Rai mentioned that in the second phase, a public dialogue would be initiated across Delhi starting from December 21. From December 21 to 24, public dialogues will be organised in all wards of Delhi, encouraging the participation of residents from entire wards.

TMC, BRS may skip all party meet

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

A few Opposition parties, including the Trinamool Congress, the BRS, and the AIADMK, may skip the all-party meeting convened by the Centre on Friday in view of the Winter Session of Parliament, which is scheduled to begin on Monday. The government has convened the customary meeting of floor leaders of political parties in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on Saturday. Sources say that the Opposition parties have also convened a meeting of members of the INDIA bloc coalition on Monday before the Session begins. The meeting has been called to prepare a strategy for the Winter Session against the backdrop of intense friction

over a range of issues, including targets by Central probe agencies on Opposition leaders. The Opposition meeting will be chaired by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, who is also the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi will conduct the meeting, which is expected to be attended by senior party leaders, including Union Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman, Nitin Gadkari, Rajnath Singh, and Piyush Goyal, who is also the Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha. Sources said while Telangana Chief Minister led Bharatiya Rashtra Samiti (BRS) will go unrepresented as acrimonious exchange of words have been between the BRS and the BJP in the just concluded election campaign in the State, the



AIADMK too is likely to give a miss over verbal duel between the BJP leadership of Tamil Nadu and AIADMK which till last month was the largest and longest serving alliance partner of BJP in the NDA from southern India. Another major Opposition party that is certain to avoid participating in the all-party meeting is the TMC led by

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee. The party believes that its Parliament representatives, such as Mahua Moitra and Abhishek Banerjee, are being victimised by the Centre. Abhishek, who is Mamata's nephew, is facing a probe by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), while Moitra has been implicated by the Parliament Ethics Committee over allegations of cash-for-query in the Lok Sabha question hour. While the party has defended Moitra, she now faces a probe by the CBI and the IT Ministry for sharing her Parliament login details beyond her jurisdiction. Sources said the report of the Ethics Committee on the "cash-for-query" allegations against Moitra will be tabled in Lok Sabha during the Session.

Kissinger popularity in Kerala unexplained

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Henry Kissinger, the US Secretary of State during the Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford era, passed away on Wednesday at the age of 100. Despite having no connection to Kerala as he never visited this part of India, he was surprisingly popular in the State. Kissinger, credited with a new style and art of diplomacy, reigned supreme during the peak of the Cold War and was recognised as one of the architects of US-China ties through Ping-Pong (the Chinese term for the game of table tennis). The diplomatic relations between the US and China received a boost from the Ping-Pong games between the two countries, paving the way for President Nixon's historic state visit to China in 1972. The former Secretary of State



was renowned for his ability to turn unfriendly countries into allies of the US. He believed in the principle that there were no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests, particularly focused on US commercial and strategic

interests. Kissinger deserves full credit for his foresight and visionary forecasts. It was Kissinger who cautioned the world about the impending rise of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, which would disrupt peace in

Asia and pose a threat to India. While addressing the Davos Symposium on January 31, 1980, Kissinger said, "The problem with India has the component that, for India, the existence of a strong, fundamentalist, Islamic state presents problems of its own internal cohesion and may create its own incentives for war. On the other hand, if India is concerned about our policies, it must provide assurances, beyond rhetoric, that it will not act in collusion with the Soviet Union and that it will not cooperate in an attack on Pakistan," as quoted in *Henry Kissinger: For The Record*. Kissinger is also recognised for exposing what he saw as the folly behind the Non-Aligned Movement, which he deemed a means to fortify the hegemony of the then Soviet Union. His aversion to social-

ism and communism was unmistakable. The Kerala media, quick to react to international developments, particularly in extolling the virtues of Communism and comrades in the USSR and China, portrayed Kissinger as a villain. Despite the party cadre's ignorance about Kissinger's stance toward socialist countries, they seized every opportunity to taunt and ridicule the Nobel laureate. In the early 1970s, when the Muslim League faced a split, Congress strongman K Karunakaran assigned Baby John, a leader of the RSP and a Congress ally, to negotiate with the League leadership to avert a breakup. Baby John, arriving at Parappanangadi in Malappuram district, aimed to reconcile the warring factions.

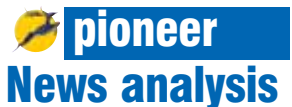
Extra judicial killing not our policy: India on Pannun plot

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the US charged an Indian national with conspiring to kill Sikh separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun on American soil, India on Thursday described the development as a "matter of concern." Stating this, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "We have said and let me reiterate that this is also contrary to Government policy." He also asserted that a high-level probe committee will investigate all aspects of the case related to the foiled plot to kill Pannun, a Sikh extremist and known to be an American and Canadian citizen. On Wednesday, US federal prosecutors charged Indian national Nikhil Gupta of working with an Indian Government employee in the foiled plot to kill Pannun. American prosecutors informed a Manhattan court on Wednesday that authorities in the Czech Republic arrested and detained Gupta, and he is currently awaiting extradition to the US. "As regards the case against an individual that has been filed in a US court allegedly linking him to an Indian official, this is a matter of concern," Bagchi said. He said the "nexus between organised crime, trafficking, gunrunning and extremists in an international level is a serious issue for the law enforcement agencies and organisations to consider and it is precisely for that reason a high-level inquiry committee has been constituted and we will obviously be guided by its results."

Rashmi Saluja faces Gender Bias as she puts Religare on fast track

Religare Enterprises (REL), a key player in the Indian financial service sector, is currently mired in a battle for control as Burman family, its largest shareholder, seeks to augment its stake in the company. Dabur Ltd has proposed to acquire an additional 5.27 per cent stake in Religare Enterprises, thereby setting in motion, an open offer to buy an extra 26 per cent stake from the public in adherence to Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) guidelines. The Burman family's open offer for Religare Enterprises, is expected to amount to ₹2,116 crore upon full acceptance. This comes close on the heels of a controversy around the issuance of ESOPs (Employment Stock Options Plans) to REL Executive Chairperson Rashmi Saluja for CARE Health Insurance, an entity in which REL owns



about 63 per cent stake. Saluja is currently the Non-Executive Chairperson for CARE. The issue of CARE ESOPs granted to her has become contentious in the ongoing battle between the Burman family and the REL board led by Saluja, who has expressed reservations about the idea of the Burman family taking over REL. REL presently operates as a promoter-free company governed by an independent board. Zero-promoter companies have zero stakes with no promoter and are owned or managed by professionals. A "zero-promoter company" implies a company structure without active promoters driving the growth of its sub-



sidary companies. The performance of a zero-promoter company, like any investment, depends on the performance of its subsidiaries and the overall market conditions. Although there are a number of successful companies in India that have zero percentage of promoter holding, Religare Enterprises cuts above the rest with the businesses in its basket showing an increasing prof-

itability curve and a consistent increase in stock price. The net worth for all of them has been consistently improving with market capitalisation expansion going up from less than 100 million USD to 1 billion USD. After the earlier promoters of REL stepped down in 2018, following gross misappropriation of funds, new management took charge to revive the company's financial stability through operational restructuring. Saluja, an accomplished professional, joined Religare Enterprises as the Executive Chairperson in 2020. She is a doctor and an entrepreneur with an impressive portfolio and more than 25 years of administrative experience. She has been instrumental in bailing the company out of challenging times. REL now has various subsidiary companies under its umbrella providing a

range of financial services. The company's growth and success under her leadership reflect in the consistent rise of REL's market cap from a critical low to an impressively high market value. In the last three years, the company has grown to become one of the best ROE brands in India with its strong presence in the market. However, Saluja is now under scrutiny after the Burman family filed a complaint with SEBI, questioning the sale of her shares. Allegations include non-compliance with insurance regulator IRDAI's guidelines. The controversy intensified as the Burman family claimed that Saluja sold a portion of her personal holdings in Religare Enterprises a day after a meeting held with the Burmans where they discussed an open offer for a controlling stake in Religare Enterprises. Allegations directed at Saluja

not only question her competence but also cast doubt on the credibility of Religare's management and board. Saluja vehemently denies these claims, labelling them as unfounded attempts to damage her reputation, and asserts that the share sales adhered to proper procedures. The Religare board stands by Saluja, insisting that the allocation of ESOPs for CARE Health Insurance was conducted transparently and in accordance with regulatory guidelines. The company also contends that the allegations challenging its management, particularly the sale of shares by her are baseless and unfounded. Despite Saluja's substantial contributions, her case reveals apparent gender bias, with accusations challenging her leadership and competence. Though her efforts in steering Religare toward financial

independence over the past three years are duly acknowledged by the company, the allegations underscore the broader challenges faced by other women entrepreneurs and corporate leaders, emphasising their ongoing struggle against discrimination and skepticism. The gender gap remains glaring in the upper echelons of the Indian corporate sector, reflecting a systemic challenge in achieving gender parity in top management. The power struggle between the Burman family and REL management also sheds light on corporate complexities, particularly highlighting gender disparities. While government initiatives focus on women's empowerment, the ongoing conflict at Religare Enterprises underscores the imperative for an inclusive corporate model to eliminate gender biases in leadership positions.

Gas survivors' leaders celebrate their victory in making Dow appear

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Leaders of five gas survivors' organizations celebrated their recent victory in making Dow Chemical appear in the Bhopal court. While talking to media persons, the gas survivors' leaders on the occasion of the 39th Anniversary of the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal condemned attempts by the Minister and officials of the Department of Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief & Rehabilitation to close down the department. The organizations congratulated the artists and makers of the series "The Railwaymen" for a powerful telling of the story of the disaster and its aftermath. "We are happy that just

before the 39th Anniversary we have succeeded in making a representative of The Dow Chemical Company, USA appear in the Bhopal district court. This is the first time that this corporation that owns Union Carbide and hence its criminal liabilities has made an appearance. It is now up to the prosecution, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to ensure that Dow receives the harshest punishment for its crimes in Bhopal," said Rashida Bee, President of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmchari Sangh. Balkrishna Namdeo President of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Nirashrit Pensionbhogee Sangharsh Morcha said, "Union Carbide has been absconding for the last 31 years and now

Dow Chemical that owns the fugitive corporation has been summoned in the criminal case on the disaster through our efforts. The CBI works directly under the Prime Minister and we are sending an appeal to him for effective and speedy prosecution of Dow Chemical." Speaking on the official plans to close down the department set up for the welfare of the Bhopal survivors, Rachna Dhingra of the Bhopal Group for Information and Action said, "We have recently come across an official document marked confidential that lays out a plan to close down the Department of Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief & Rehabilitation (BGTRR). The plan scheduled to be discussed at the next meeting of

the state cabinet, proposes handing over the 5 hospitals and 9 dispensaries run by the BGTRR to the Departments of Health & Family Welfare and Medical Education." "Through some Orwellian logic, it is being claimed that such transfer will improve health care of Bhopal survivors." Said Ms. Dhingra. Nawab Khan President of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha said, "In the last few months the High Court has reprimanded the Department of Bhopal gas Tragedy Relief & Rehabilitation for grave laxity in following the recommendations of the Supreme Court appointed Monitoring Committee for improvements of health care of Bhopal survivors. Instead of

making much awaited improvements in computerized registration of patients, treatment protocols and quality of care, the officials are trying to carry out a vanishing act to escape judicial sanctions." "We thank the makers and artists of The Railwaymen for telling the story of the disaster to a global audience. It is indeed heartening to see that the makers have highlighted corporate machinations and governmental apathy behind the disaster and its long aftermath with clarity. We hope the success of this series, encourages other film makers to tell the full story of the ongoing world's worst industrial disaster in Bhopal," said Nasreen Bee of Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha.



A delegation from the Danish embassy visited the BJP State headquarters and media center under the "Know BJP" campaign in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Delegates from Denmark Embassy visit BJP office

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

To understand in better manner BJP, the world's largest political party working democratically a delegation from the Embassy of Denmark, visited the party's state office and media center on Thursday. During this, they visited the state office of the party's foreign department along with state convener Rohit Gangwal, co-convenor Dr. Sudhanshu Gupta and member Dr. Rahul Jain and met the party officials and understood the functioning of the party. The delegation was given a warm welcome at the state office and media centre. To know the vision, mission, functioning of the organization, role of Bharatiya Janata Party workers in the implementation of public welfare schemes of the Central and

State Government and election related activities, a delegation of the Embassy of Denmark visited the BJP state office and media on Thursday. Visited the centre. During this Vizark Kofod, Schwetz and Ole, who were part of the party, met the party officials and understood the functioning of the party. At the state office, the members of the delegation met State Treasurer Akhilesh Jain, State Office Minister Dr. Raghavendra Sharma, Sironj MLA Umakant Sharma, State Convener of the Party's Election Commission and Coordination Department S.S. Uppal met Mahila Morcha State President Maya Naria, Yuva Morcha State President Vaibhav Panwar, Bhopal Municipal Corporation President Kishan Suryavanshi, State Spokesperson Neha Bagga.

At the state media centre, the members of the delegation met party's state co-media in-charge Kshama Tripathi, state spokesperson Milan Bhargava, media panelist Shivam Shukla, Gunjan Chowksey, Satyendra Jain and closely observed the functioning of the party's media centre. Dr. Sudhanshu Gupta, co-convenor of the party's foreign department, said that this event is under the 'BJP JAANO' campaign of BJP National President JP Nadda, so that more and more information can be given about BJP to the foreign people. This campaign was started by National President Nadda in April 2022 on the foundation day of the party. Through the 'BJP JAANO' campaign, the party strengthens its bilateral relations with various countries. It also tries to give information to the world about its ideology and methodology.

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Bhopal Municipal Corporation Commissioner Frank Noble A discussed work done under the Global Environmental Facility with representatives of members of United Nations Organization for Industrial Development (UNIDA) under the Global Environmental Facility. With the representatives implementation of various projects in view of environmental protection was discussed. In the review meeting, UNIDO's Dr. Manish Negi, Dr. L.X.Jeder, Dr. N.P.Singh, Dr. B.R.Mishra, besides Additional Commissioner of the Corporation Vineet Tiwari, Deputy Commissioner Yogendra Singh Patel, Superintending Engineer Subodh Jain were present. The representatives of UNIDO



shared the benefits of 250 bio-CNG garbage vehicles and effects of greenhouse gas emissions under Sustainable Cities Integrated Approaches Pilot Project funded by the Global Environmental Facility. These vehicles are used for collection work of door-to-door garbage of Bhopal Municipal Corporation. Working method of 250 bio-CNG garbage vehicles and effects of greenhouse gas

emissions. To reduce the pollution, information was given regarding the utility of these vehicles and regarding improvement in the environment of the city and financial savings to the corporation due to the operation was provided in detail. Among other details shared during the review meeting of Bhopal Municipal Corporation solid waste management and

environmental protection 400 tonne Bio-CNG per day capacity implemented through public-private partnership. Torried Charcoal Plant of 400 tonne per day capacity with the support of NTPC, 100 Ton Per Day Capacity CND Waste Plant, Plastic Waste recycling plants, State-of-the-art slaughter houses disposal plants for these wastes and the scope of these projects. The implementation will have an impact on the improvement in the environmental environment of the city and on the financial condition of the corporation. Detailed information regarding the impact of the area was also given through power point presentation. In the meeting, practical issues were discussed about the projects being implemented by the Corporation. Also regarding the difficulties being faced and their resolution and necessary improvements in the projects.

MBBS student dies in road accident

Bhopal: A girl MBBS student died while two others sustained injuries after their scooter was hit by a trolley at 11.30 pm on Wednesday; girls are students of Gandhi Medical College (GMC). The scooter riding the three was hit by a trolley at 11.30 pm on Wednesday. A student died in the accident. Two girl students are seriously injured. Both have been admitted to Hamidia hospital. People caught the trolley driver and handed him over to the police. Police have also seized the trolley. The driver told the police that he had fallen asleep when the accident happened. Dean of Gandhi Medical College, Dr. Salil Bhargava said that Gunjan, Nishita and Chhavi Singh, MBBS second year students of the college, were standing on the roadside near Rangla Punjab Dhaba in Gandhi Nagar area. The trolley passing through here hit all three. Gunjan died on the spot in the accident. Chhavi Singh alias Bittu and Nishita Katheria were seriously injured. The condition of the image is critical. Gunjan, Nishita Katheria and Chhavi Singh got admission in MBBS through NEET UG counseling in 2021. Gunjan was a resident of Betul. Her father Lokendra Sarankar is the Chief Manager of State Bank of India's LHO office at Flour Mill Road, Bhopal. Gunjan has a younger brother in the family, who is studying from Indore. After getting admission in MBBS, Gunjan was living in the hostel of Gandhi Medical College. Nishita is from Jabalpur and the image is from Bikaner, Rajasthan. According to the records of the student branch of Gandhi Medical College, Nishita Katheria is a resident of the basement of Jabalpur. Chhavi Singh alias Bittu is from Banswara, Rajasthan. Pradeep Singh, father of student Chhavi Singh, who was injured in the accident, said that his daughter had left the hostel at night saying she was going to party with friends.



Children born with congenital disabilities, believed to be caused by the exposure of their parents to gas leakage during the Union Carbide gas leak disaster, along with their relatives and supporters, take part in a candlelight vigil to pay homage to the people killed in the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy to mark the 39th anniversary of the disaster, in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

AIIMS Bhopal grabs 'Emerging University of the Year' title

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) organized the 9th edition of FICCI Higher Education Excellence Awards in a glittering ceremony held at Dr Ambedkar International Center, New Delhi on November 29, 2023. These awards are aimed at recognizing and honoring institutions and individuals who have achieved unparalleled excellence in higher education in India. The awards are given in five categories, viz. excellence in employment generation; social responsibility; globalization; research, innovation and entrepreneurship; and University of the Year. AIIMS Bhopal was adjudged as the 'Emerging University of the Year for the year 2023', by a highly acclaimed jury following an extremely competitive contest across institutions belonging to a wide spectrum of disciplines. The award is recognition of the high standards of academic programs, faculty development activities, research facilities and output, gover-

nance, infrastructure and social outreach that the institute has established in the short span of around 10 years. It was highly appreciated that along with technical education, the institute lays strong emphasis on orienting its students in medical humanities and communication skills, experiential learning, research methodology and community-centric approach. This model of holistic development of students and faculty members was recognized as an essential instrument in grooming the healthcare professionals of tomorrow. This prestigious award ceremony was a part of the two-day FICCI Higher Education Summit which is being celebrated in the national capital on November 29 and 30 2023 with the theme of 'Empowering Minds, Driving Transformation: Redefining the future of higher education'. Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal, Prof. Dr Ajai Singh expressed happiness over this achievement and thanked all the employees of the institute.

BOI increases Fixed Deposit rates

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Bank of India, one of the leading public sector banks in India, has increased rates of its fixed deposits for its customers& general public (for Rs 2 Crs& above to less than Rs 10 Crs) in maturity of "46 days to up to 1 Year" with effect from Dec 01, 2023. Bank has increased its fixed deposit rates for shorter period i.e. "46 days to 90 days" tenure to 5.25%, for "91 days to 179 days" tenure to 6.00%, for "180 days to 210 days" tenure to 6.25%, for "211 days to less than 1 Year" tenure to 6.50% and for "1 Year" tenure to 7.25% p.a. The present rate of interest offered by the Bank is competitive, offering a very attractive return for investment from HNIs, Small & Mid Corporates, NRIs & Professionally Self Employed etc. With effect from 1 st Nov, 23, bank had already increased rate of all deposits for amount of "Less than Rs.2 Crs" for 2 Year tenure. Here, Bank is offering its highest rate of interest up to 7.90% for super senior citizen, 7.75% for senior citizen and 7.25% for others for 2 Year Term. The revised interest rates are applicable for domestic, NRO and NRE Rupee Term deposits.

Bodies of young couple found in hotel Banjara near Alpana Talkies

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The bodies of a young man and a woman were found on Wednesday night in the top floor room of Hotel Banjara near Alpana Talkies in Bhopal. The woman's body was hanging from the fan. The body of the young man was lying on the bed. A pillow was found put over his mouth and a muffler was wrapped around his neck. Both are residents of Katni and are said to be boyfriend and girlfriend and were missing from home for three days. The door of the hotel room was locked from inside. The police have not found any evidence of any outsider's arrival. At present no suicide note has been found from the spot. In the initial investigation, the police have expressed suspicion that the woman might have hanged herself after murdering the young man. The young man looks physically weak. SHO Awadhesh Singh Bhadauria said that the police had reached the hotel on Wednesday evening after receiving information from Hotel Banjara. The young man and the woman had booked a room in the hotel on Tuesday night. Food was also ordered in the room at 10.30 pm the same

night. Both of them did not come out till 6 pm on Wednesday evening. There was no response even after calling the hotel staff. When the police opened the door and entered the room, the body of a 19-year-old woman was on the fan, while the body of a young man was lying on the bed. A blanket was also wrapped around the young man's body. From the documents submitted in the hotel, the young man was identified as Manish Chakraborty (23), resident of Bilhari village, Katni and the woman was identified as Kiran Kevat (21), resident of Khिताuli, Katni. The police have called the families of both of them on the basis of the mobile numbers found on the document. FSL team has investigated. ACP Rakesh Baghel told that the police has found the youth's mobile phone from the room. On the basis of the number found in it, we talked to his uncle. Uncle told that Manish had a dispute with his family. Three days ago he had left home without informing. They were not aware that he had gone to Bhopal with the woman. Manish's mobile phone was in flight mode. Whereas, Kiran's mobile was not found. Hotel staff says that both of them did not bring luggage with them.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan bids a farewell to Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains on his retirement, in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

MGM Indore reunion of 1967 batch from today

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The reunion of the doctors of the 1967 batch of MGM Medical College, Indore is going to be held in Bhopal in the 56th year. It is taking place from December 1 to 3 in which a large number of doctors are participating. All necessary preparations have been made for

this. On behalf of MGM Alumni, Dr Chhaya Budhwani said that doctors working in different cities of the country and other countries are participating in this reunion. Everyone together will refresh memories and remember their college days. Along with the musical program, there will also be many games.

Dr Pranav Pandya of MGM 1967 batch, Head Shantikunj Haridwar has also been invited to the program. These doctors have organized memorable programs on the Golden Jubilee in 2017. Many doctors who were left out of the Golden Jubilee Program are also coming to Bhopal this time for the reunion program.

Pioneer photo



Jahangirpuri) recorded AQI in the 'severe' category, at 30 stations it was "very poor". Data showed air quality index was recorded 566 in Delhi Institute of Tool Engineering, 499 in Jahangirpuri, 466 in Anand Vihar, 438 in Punjabi Bagh, 418 in Vivek Vihar, 426 in Wazirpur, 418 in Ashok Vihar, 406 in Patparganj, 409 in Rohini, 399 in Sonia Vihar and 398 in Burari Crossing. According to Air Quality Early Warning System, the air quality in Delhi and NCR are likely to remain in "Very Poor" category between December 1 and 3. Data showed PM 10 and PM 2.5 was recorded at 491 in Anand Vihar. Delhi's 24-hour average AQI was recorded in the 'poor' category with a reading of 290 on Wednesday. The 24-hour average AQI -- recorded at 4 pm every day -- was at 395 on Monday and Sunday, 389 on Saturday, 415 on Friday and 390 on Thursday (November 23).

S. N.	Loan App. No./ Branch	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrowers	Demand Notice Date & Amount	Reserve Price (RP)	Total Outstanding Loan Amount as on date	Description of the Secured Asset
1.	(Loan Code No. 14500000019/ Ashok Nagar Branch)	Abhishek Sharma (Borrower) Supriya Sharma (Co-Borrower)	13-05-2022 & ₹ 2,70,355/-	₹ 1,22,400/-	Rs. 1,04,979/- (Rupees One Lakh Four Thousand Nine Hundred Seventy Nine Only) as on 11-09-2023	All that part & parcel of property bearing, Plot No 329 Mega Dream City Colony Part of Survey No 32 3 Min Village Aavrimai, Guna, Madhya Pradesh 473331. Boundaries: East : Proposed common way 20ft wide, West : Part of Plot No. 330 of Mega Dream City of seller, North : Proposed common way 20ft wide, South : Part of Plot No. 328 of Mega Dream City of seller

The Authorised officer will hold auction for sale of the Secured Asset on 'As is where is Basis', 'As is what is basis' and 'Whatever is there is basis'. AHFL is not responsible for any liabilities whatsoever pending upon the said property. The Authorised Officer reserves the right to accept or reject the offer without assigning any reason whatsoever and sale will be subject to confirmation by Secured Creditor. On the acceptance of offer of proposed buyer, he/she is required to deposit 25% of accepted price inclusive adjustment of Earnest Money Balance immediately and the balance amount shall be paid by the purchaser within 15 (fifteen) days from date of acceptance of Offer by the Secured Creditor. The proposed buyer is to note that in case of failure of payment of balance amount by him/her within the time specified, the amount already deposited shall stand forfeited and property will be resold accordingly.

This is **15 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER SARFAESI ACT, 2002** is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s), Co-Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the above described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the **Physical Possession** of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Aadhar Housing Finance Limited (AHFL) Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" and to the amount due to Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd., in full before the date of sale, auction is liable to be stopped.

If the Borrower(s), co-borrower(s) has any buyer who is ready to purchase the mortgage property/secured asset at price above the given reserve price of then Borrower(s), Co-borrower(s) must intimate to AHFL on or before 16.12.2023 AHFL shall give preference to him. If Borrower(s), Co-borrower(s) fails to intimate on or before 16.12.2023 the AHFL will proceed sale of property at above given reserve price.

The Date of Auction is fixed for 16.12.2023.

Place : Madhya Pradesh

Date : 01.12.2023

(Authorised Officer)
For Aadhar Housing Finance Limited

Centre’s policies have taken economy to new heights: PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said his Government's policies and decisions have taken the economy to new heights, creating immense possibility for employment and self-employment generations. Speaking to newly inducted employees in different government departments at the Centre and in some states after distributing nearly 51,000 appointment letters as part of 'Rozgar Mela', he asked them to ensure that welfare initiatives reach the most deprived people wherever they are and said this will lead to the realisation of goal of making India a developed country by 2047. Modi said their biggest priority should be people's ease of living, and took a swipe at past governments saying they ignored the equality envisaged by B R Ambedkar, the key figure behind the



Constitution, among all citizens. A big section of society was denied even basic facilities till 2014 when his government came to power, he said. The prime minister said his government prioritised the marginalised and adopted their development as a mantra, asserting that it reached out to those who for decades had not got any facility from any government. "We have been trying to change their lives," he said. The same bureaucracy and system are in place but the

mindset and work culture has changed, changing the lives of people, he said. Citing a report, Modi said over 13 crore people moved out of poverty in the last five years. Many global agencies have come out of positive reports about the Indian economy, he said, adding that this also is an evidence of the immense possibility for employment and self-employment in the coming years. The prime minister told the new employees through video conferencing that they should

make a note of any hardship they might have faced due to some government employees and ensure that they never treat anyone in the same manner. His government, he said, has been spending lakhs of crores of rupees in building modern infrastructure, including expressways, airports and in rail sector, which have obviously created a lot of employment. India is witnessing an "infrastructure revolution", he said. Development projects hanging fire for years and decades were accomplished by his government, he said, citing the construction of an airport in Sikkim and Paradip refinery. Real estate sector was headed to sure shot destruction when his government came to power but it ushered in reforms through the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act to restore its good health. The sector creates a lot of employment, he noted.

Rajnath lauds Coast Guard for ensuring maritime security

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday called upon the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) to continue working with dedication and professionalism towards bolstering the coastal defences and maritime capabilities of the country. Inaugurating the 40th Coast Guard Commanders' Conference here, he also complimented the ICG for ensuring maritime security by being in the vanguard in the field of search and rescue and pollution response. "The ICG, since its inception, has rendered a yeoman service to the seafarers by ensuring their safety and security in all circumstances," said Rajnath. He stressed on the need to continue the drive against contraband and drug trafficking. During the conference, the defence minister was given an overview on the ongoing development projects, opera-



tional readiness and future expansion plans of the ICG by Director General Rakesh Pal. The three-day conference aims at addressing contemporary maritime challenges and fortifying the country's coastal surveillance mechanisms. It is being attended by senior officers of the Ministry of Defence and the ICG. The conference agenda

encompasses a wide spectrum of crucial topics, including enhancing maritime safety and security such as search and rescue operations, maritime pollution response, drive against contraband/drug trafficking, safety of fishermen/seafarers at sea, optimising coastal security measures, fostering inter-agency coordination,

and promoting Maritime Domain Awareness. The conference is held annually, where all the officers put forth the roadmap for the future and discuss various policy and strategic issues. It aims to carve out a futuristic vision for the service and to determine the modalities to overcome the challenges efficiently.

PM interacts with beneficiaries of Viksit Bharat Sankalp, launches Mahila Kisan Drone Kendra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Launching programme to increase the number of 'Jan Aushadhi Kendras' in the country from 10,000 to 25,000, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday affirmed that his work in the last 10 years has led to people having immense confidence in his government as he said the "vote bank" considerations of past dispensations guided their development initiatives. Interacting with beneficiaries of the 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra' via video conferencing, the Prime Minister also launched 'Pradhan Mantri Mahila Kisan Drone Kendra'. During the program, the Prime Minister dedicated the landmark 10,000th 'Jan Aushadhi Kendra' at AIIMS, Deoghar, Jharkhand. He also launched the programme to increase the number of Jan Aushadhi Kendras in the country from 10,000 to 25,000. According to Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the Prime Minister interacted with beneficiaries from Deoghar in Jharkhand, Raigarha in Odisha, Prakasam in Andhra Pradesh, Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh, and Arnia in Jammu and Kashmir. In his address to beneficiaries of different schemes as part of the government's Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra for saturation coverage of welfare schemes, he said four biggest "castes" for him are the poor, youth, women, farmers, and their rise will make India developed. The yatra, under which government 'raths' (chariots) are travelling to all corners, has generated huge enthusiasm among people with some describing the vehicles as



"Modi ki guarantee wali gaadi" (vehicles carrying Modi's guarantees), the prime minister said, asserting that the masses know that he will fulfil all his promises. For this he needs their blessings, he said, underscoring that the programme will identify everyone left out of welfare schemes aimed for them and that he will ensure their saturation coverage in the coming years. A voice is emerging from people across the country that Modi's guarantee begins from where people's expectations from others end, he said. In his remarks after interacting with the beneficiaries, Modi said Bharat is neither going to stop nor tire as the people have resolved to make the country developed. "In various corners of the country there is such enthusi-

asm for the yatra and there is a reason for it, as people have seen Modi, his work, in the last 10 years and therefore, they have immense confidence in the government and its efforts." "People have also seen that period when past governments used to consider themselves 'mai-baap' of the people. Therefore, even after decades of independence, a big portion of the population was deprived of basic facilities," Modi said. Mai-baap is a Hindi term which loosely translates here as a government having a feudal mindset. More than half the population had lost faith in government as they had to depend on middlemen and running around offices to seek any benefit while his dispensation is reaching out to the masses to enrol them for various welfare measures, he said. Earlier govern-

ments were driven by political calculations and vote bank considerations, he said. "Therefore, the people never used to trust the announcements of such 'mai-baap' governments. We have changed this and the government in place now considers people as form of God and we work with 'seva bhav' not 'satta bhav'," Modi said. He said that in just 15 days of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, people are walking along and joining it. Until now, the vehicle of 'Modi ki guarantee' has reached over 12,000 panchayats and more than 30 lakh people have benefited from it, the prime minister said. "Mothers and sisters are reaching out to this vehicle of 'Modi ki guarantee'. The initiative has taken the shape of a people's movement and people are tak-

ing it forward," he said. Many panchayats have received saturation coverage without any discrimination, he said, asserting that the youth are taking the lead in popularising the exercise and spearheading the goal to make India developed. Underscoring his commitment, he said he went to a remote tribal region in Khunti to launch the yatra instead of doing it at a place like Vigyan Bhawan, a venue associated with official programmes. The Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra is being undertaken across the country with an aim to attain saturation of flagship schemes of the government by ensuring that the benefits of these schemes reach all targeted beneficiaries in a time bound manner, according to the PMO. He also launched the 'Drone Didi Yojana'. The scheme aims to provide drones to 15,000 select women Self Help Groups during the period 2024-25 to 2025-2026 for providing rental services to farmers for agriculture purpose. He said he wanted these women to receive 'naman' (respect) in their villages and that some people have suggested the name of 'Namo Drone Didi' for the initiative. Women trained as drone pilots will be financially empowered and receive people's respect, he said. "My dream is to make 2 crore women living in villages and working with self-help groups lakhpati," he said. Noting that the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojna, which provide free grains to over 80 crore people, has been extended for another five years, he asserted that "Modi's guarantee means the guarantee of fulfilling all guarantees".

India has walked the talk when it comes to climate action: Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that India has 'walked the talk' when it comes to climate action, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday called for supporting developing countries with adequate climate financing and technology transfer to enable them to deal with climate change. As he heads to Dubai to attend the World Climate Action Summit, a high-level segment of the COP28, Modi said, "During our G20 presidency, climate was high on our priority. The New Delhi Leaders' Declaration includes numerous concrete steps on climate action and sustainable development. I look forward to the COP28 taking forward the consensus on these issues." The United Nations 'Conference of the Parties' on climate, known as COP28, is being held to discuss ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and effectively combat climate change. In his departure statement, the Prime Minister said the COP28 will provide an opportunity to review progress made under the Paris Agreement, and chart a path for future course on climate action. "At the Voice of Global South Summit convened by India, the Global South spoke for the need for climate action based on the principles of equity, climate justice, and common but differentiated responsibilities, as well as a greater focus on adaptation," Modi said. The two-week-long meet comes at a time when the world for the first time witnessed a 2 degrees rise in temperature from the pre-industrial level (1850-1900)



and nearly 200 cities – more than half of them are in India which are set to become regions where extreme temperatures will persist for nearly half of the year. "It is important that efforts of the developing world be supported with adequate climate financing and technology transfer. They must have access to equitable carbon and development space to achieve sustainable development," said Modi. "Our achievements in different sectors like renewable energy, energy efficiency, afforestation, energy conservation, Mission LIFE are testament to the commitment of our people towards mother earth," he said. The prime minister said he was looking forward to joining special events including on climate finance and green credit initiative. "In keeping with our civilizational ethos, India has always laid emphasis on climate action even as we pursue social and economic development," Modi said. The prime minister is scheduled to participate in three other high-level side events as well. Earlier, Foreign Secretary

Vinay Kwatra at a press meeting said that India expects a "clear roadmap" on climate finance at the ongoing COP28 in Dubai. "Our clear perspective and priority has been that climate finance and also climate technology are a very crucial segment of all the global efforts in addressing this challenge of environmental degradation," Kwatra said at a media briefing. "We expect a clear roadmap to be agreed at COP28 on climate finance which would be important for delivering on the new, collective, quantified goals," he said. "India has taken a leadership role in shaping the global agenda on climate and environment including through focusing on this issue in two Voice of Global South Summits organised by India," he said. "Our approach to climate action is reflected in our principled positions in international negotiations and our global efforts to help the rest of Global South in combating this serious challenge of climate change as also its impact on the development framework of the developing countries," said the official.

Panel for reduced punishment for assault on public servants

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Parliament standing committee has recommended that the two-year imprisonment given to anyone who assaults or uses criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty should be reduced to one year after taking into account submissions of some MPs that the law is widely "misused". The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs headed by BJP member Brij Lal made the recommendation after examining the three proposed criminal laws. In its report, the panel noted that some members of the committee submitted that section 353 under Indian Penal Code (IPC), which corresponds to clause 130 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) is "widely misused by public servants in the name of deterrence". "As the political demonstrations are the soul of democracy and there are instances in the past when political leaders were harassed and falsely con-



victed for offences under this section of IPC while demonstrating, therefore, it was suggested that the punishment under this clause may be reduced. "The committee agrees with the submission made before it and recommends that the punishment provided under clause 130 may be reduced from two years to one year," it said. The clause 130 of BNS says: Whoever assaults or uses criminal force to any person being a public servant in the execution of his duty as such public servant, or with intent to prevent or deter that person from discharging his duty as such public servant, or in consequence of anything done or

attempted to be done by such person in the lawful discharge of his duty as such public servant, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS-2023) bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on August 11 along with Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNS-2023) and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA-2023) bills. The three proposed laws seek to replace the Code of Criminal Procedure Act, 1898, the Indian Penal Code, 1860, and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, respectively.

Toxic air in metros taking toll on lungs, says WHO

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Toxic air quality pervading in the air almost in all metros is taking a toll on the lungs of the people with health experts noticing a rise in lung cancer among non-smokers too besides tobacco smokers. As per the World Health Organization (WHO), outdoor air pollution is a Group 1 carcinogen. "There are environmental and occupational determinants of lung cancer," said Dr. Abhishek Shankar Assistant Professor, Department of Radiation Oncology, AIIMS, Delhi, mentioning the rise in incidence of lung cancer among non-smokers. Lung cancer screening implementation can be part of a larger effort to educate the population about preventive healthcare and the benefits of early screening, he suggested at the ASSOCHAM 2nd Conference on 'Lung Cancer- Enabling Innovations in Treatment Pathways' held recently here to mark the ongoing lung cancer awareness month.



Dr Sudhir Kalhan Chairperson ASSOCHAM National Digital Healthcare Task Force focused on strong condemnation of deteriorating environment causing air pollution. "There is a definite link of rising incidence of lung cancer in non-smokers due to air pollution," he said, underscoring the need for effective implementation of the policies to curb air pollution. The Five major air pollutants are Ground-level ozone (O3), Particle Pollution (also known as particulate matter, including PM2.5 and PM10), Carbon Monoxide (CO), Sulphur Dioxide (SO2), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2). "By integrating advanced diag-

nostics, accessible treatments, education, research, and support services, we aim to empower both healthcare professionals and patients in their journey toward better lung health," he said. Dr. Yutaro Setoya, Team Lead, Non-Communicable Diseases, WHO, India, in his special address highlighted how 8.1% of cancer-related deaths are attributed to lung cancer. Annually, 1 lakh people are diagnosed with lung cancer and the disease significantly impacts the working-age population, said Dr Setoya while Dr. Dipjyoti Das, Head Medical Planning and operations, Assam Cancer care Foundation talked about delivering equitable and affordable healthcare in backward regions. Prof Dr D S Rana Chairperson ASSOCHAM National Healthcare Council and Board of Trustees, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital dwelled in detail how smoking is directly linked to lung cancer and how it acts as a barrier affecting lung health. "Smoking is by far the leading risk factor for lung cancer.

Indira, Haksar proved more than a match for Nixon, Kissinger in 1971: Ramesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As former US secretary of State Henry Kissinger passed away, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Thursday recalled that in 1971 then US President Richard Nixon and Kissinger created huge headaches for India but then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her close aide P N Haksar proved "more than a match for them". Kissinger, who dominated foreign policy as the United States extricated itself from Vietnam, died Wednesday. He was 100. In a social media post, Ramesh said, "Henry Kissinger has passed away. He was as immensely consequential as he was hugely controversial." In his long and eventful life he has been both celebrated and condemned, Ramesh noted. "But there can be no doubt about his sheer intellectual brilliance and awesome charis-

ma," he said. For the last three decades, he positioned himself as a great friend and supporter of India and indeed he was, Ramesh said. "But this was not always so and in 1971 especially, President Nixon and he created huge headaches for India and thought they had us cornered. However, Indira Gandhi and P N Haksar proved more than a match for them," the former Union minister said. "I have described the Kissinger-Haksar and Nixon-Indira Gandhi encounters with archival detail in my book 'Intertwined Lives: PN Haksar & Indira Gandhi,'" Ramesh said. He also pointed out that Gary Bass in his book 'The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide' indicts Kissinger severely for his role in the events of 1971 leading up to the creation of Bangladesh.

City air quality plunges to ‘severe’ category

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's air quality deteriorated to the severe category on Thursday morning even as generally overcast weather and light rain were expected. An average Air Quality Index (AQI) of 420 was recorded at 8am compared to 366 (very poor) a day, which settled at 398 at 4 pm, earlier. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data showed PM.25 was highest on Thursday. The air quality is likely to remain 'very poor' over the next six days. Meanwhile, the minimum temperature in the national capital settled at 12.6 degrees Celsius on Thursday, two notches above the season's average. A maximum temperature of 24°C was expected on Thursday. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), shallow fog may be expected over the next four days. While 11 out of 37 monitoring stations (Punjabi Bagh, Bawana, Mundka, Nehru Nagar and Jahangirpuri) recorded AQI in the "severe" category, at 30 stations it was "very poor". Data showed air quality index was recorded 566 in Delhi Institute of Tool Engineering, 499 in Jahangirpuri, 466 in Anand Vihar, 438 in Punjabi Bagh, 418 in Vivek Vihar, 426 in Wazirpur, 418 in Ashok Vihar, 406 in Patparganj, 409 in Rohini, 399 in Sonia Vihar and 398 in Burari Crossing. According to Air Quality Early



Warning System, the air quality in Delhi and NCR are likely to remain in "Very Poor" category between December 1 and 3. Data showed PM 10 and PM 2.5 was recorded at 491 in Anand Vihar. Delhi's 24-hour average AQI was recorded in the 'poor' category with a reading of 290 on Wednesday. The 24-hour average AQI -- recorded at 4 pm every day -- was at 395 on Monday and Sunday, 389 on Saturday, 415 on Friday and 390 on Thursday (November 23). Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai said that the fluctuations in pollution levels can be witnessed today as the wind-speed has reduced. He added that though the Centre's anti-pollution measure GRAP-3 has been removed, all departments must follow preemptive measures under GRAP 1 and 2. November 2023 was the most polluted month as compared to the past nine years i.e, 2015, when the concept of Air Quality Index was introduced.

There have been 18 days so far in this month as opposed to 12 days in 2021 and 11 in 2016 when the AQI was recorded in the 'Severe' or 'Near Severe' category. Delhi's AQI between November 1 and 30 was 372, making this the third most polluted November since 2015, the earliest year for which the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has published daily AQI bulletins. The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has recently lifted restrictions under the third stage of Graded Response Action Plan following an improvement in the air quality due to unseasonal rains in the Delhi and NCR. According to a bulletin from the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the skyline of the national capital will be covered with clouds and thundershowers are expected during the day following which the pollution level might decline further.

Farmers should follow specific guidelines while using Pusa biodecomposer, advise scientists

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Farmers should adhere to specific guidelines and a standard operating protocol when using the Pusa biodecomposer, say scientists behind the innovation that was developed as an answer to stubble burning, a practice linked to the surge in air pollution in the Delhi-NCR region. The researchers, based at the ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) in New Delhi, also noted that proper implementation of the decomposer will not only aid in effective stubble disposal but also contribute to retaining soil fertility. The PUSA bio-decomposer is a microbial solution that the scientists say can turn about 70-80 per cent of stubble residues into compost in about 20 days. The solution is a consortium of seven fungal cultures that can degrade diverse horticultural and agricultural residues like paddy straw, soybean trash, millet, and maize residues, in addition to vegetable, citrus fruit and flower waste, according to the agricultural research institute.



repeatedly breach the 'Severe' and 'Severe Plus' limits of 400 and 450, respectively. The Pusa biodecomposer is a microbial solution that the scientists say can turn about 70-80 per cent of stubble residues into compost in about 20 days. The solution is a consortium of seven fungal cultures that can degrade diverse horticultural and agricultural residues like paddy straw, soybean trash, millet, and maize residues, in addition to vegetable, citrus fruit and flower waste, according to the agricultural research institute.

"Actually, it is the microbes. All we are doing is increasing the number of microbes that will be camping in the decomposition pit, along with all the stubble," explained Livleen Shukla, Principal Scientist, Division of Microbiology, ICAR-IARI, New Delhi. The decomposer is available as a pre-mix powder that the farmers can instantly use after mixing with water. They could also instead choose to use the solution form of the decomposer, a litre of which is sufficient for preparing compost from 200 kilograms of farm waste like garbage and

DJB scam bigger than Delhi liquor scam: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After exposing a scam of Rs 500 crore in the sewage treatment plants, BJP BJP leaders and workers on Thursday staged a protest outside the Delhi Jal Board office accusing the AAP government-run agency of corruption and demanded a CBI probe in the matter. The party members accused the DJB of running a "scam" awarding bogus tenders for the upgradation of its sewerage treatment plants. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva alleged that the DJB "scam" was bigger than the "liquor scam" -- an alleged scam which has seen the jailing of several AAP leaders, including deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia. Sachdeva said that the tender of Rs 1200 crore was floated for Rs 1546 crore and then it was raised to Rs 1938 crore. "In this way the Kejriwal government did the work of looting the Jal Board. The sewer lines are being laid for 9 years and payment has been made thrice but still nothing has been done in the name of work. All these things show



that Kejriwal's politics is a politics of lies, deception, fraud and loot which the people of Delhi will one day uproot," he said. He alleged that at DJB there were many instances where tenders were issued, and payments were made, but no work was done. Sachdeva said BJP workers will reach every home in Delhi to expose DJB's corruption. Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri demanded a CBI probe into the alleged corruption. He charged that a meeting of the DJB that approved the tenders was participated in by Manish Sisodia and Minister Saurabh

Bhardwaj with several AAP MLAs as members of the panel. Bidhuri said that there was a time when DJB was in profit of Rs 700 crore but today it is in loss of Rs 70,000 crore. Despite CAG repeatedly writing letters to Chief Minister Kejriwal for the last eight years, the Kejriwal government did not even get the accounts of the Jal Board audited. Former Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta said Kejriwal, who started the Corruption Free India movement in Delhi, has today become the biggest king of the same corruption.

Asia's largest waste water plant in Okhla delayed

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government is getting Asia's largest wastewater treatment plant built in Okhla, where 564 MLD of sewage can be treated daily. The project is in its final phase. Delhi Water Minister Atishi inspected this plant on Thursday and found that the project was behind schedule. The minister pulled up officials for delay and gave them a deadline to start the STP by the end of this year. Emphasising on the significance of the project in clearing the Yamuna, Atishi said any delay in the construction of the treatment plant "will not be tolerated." "Expedite the remaining project work by making timelines, and submitting progress reports every Monday. Any delay in their construction would not be tolerated," Atishi said. The Delhi government is getting Asia's largest wastewater treatment plant built in Okhla, where 564 minimal liquid discharge (MLD) sewage can be treated daily and the project is in its final phase, according to the officials. The Water minister further said cleaning the Yamuna is the priority of the Kejriwal gov-



ernment and that officials are working round the clock to ensure the same. "Once operational, the Okhla STP will be Asia's largest wastewater plant - capable of single-handedly treating nearly 20 per cent of Delhi's sewage!" Atishi wrote on social media platform 'X'. She said the Delhi Jal Board has been instructed to submit project status reports to her every week to ensure that no deadlines are missed to commission the project. The STP at Okhla will treat wastewater from most parts of Central and South Delhi and after purifying, the treated water will be discharged into the Yamuna. The officials said sewage from most parts of Central Delhi

(mainly in the NDMC area) and South Delhi will be directed to the Okhla plant, a move that is expected to benefit 40 lakh people in the city. This plant is the largest wastewater treatment plant in Asia, which alone will treat 15 to 20 per cent of Delhi's sewage. After treatment, the water's Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) will reach a level where it can be used for various purposes, including gardening. Using the biogas derived from sewage sludge, the plant can generate 4.8 megawatts of electricity. Additionally, the waste-to-energy plant can be operated using the sludge, and it can also be utilized for gardening and other purposes.

Approval sought for Metro extension from Noida Sec 142 to Botanical Garden

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The detailed project report for extension of the metro line between Sector 142 to Botanical Garden stations has been submitted to local authorities for approval, officials said Thursday. Once the Noida Authority and the Greater Noida Authority give their in-principle approval, the DPR would be presented in the next board meeting of the Noida Metro Rail Corporation (NMRC), a senior officer said. Thereafter the DPR will be processed for approval of the Uttar Pradesh government and the Centre," NMRC Managing Director Lokesh M said. The DPR has been prepared by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) for NMRC, which operates the Aqua Line between Noida and Greater Noida. According to the DPR, the new line will run between Sector 142 station on Aqua Line of Noida Metro and Delhi Metro's Botanical Garden station. Botanical Garden station is an interchange station for the Blue Line and the Magenta Line of the Delhi Metro. The total length of the pro-



posed line would be 11.56 km and it would cost Rs 2254.35 crore, according to the NMRC statement. The statement said there will be eight new elevated stations on this line -- Botanical Garden, Noida Sector 44, Noida Office, Sector 97, Sector 105, Sector 108, Sector 93, Panchsheel Balak Inter College and Sector 142 (already existing). "This project will provide ease of connectivity to the residents within both cities of Noida and Greater Noida and further connect them to the Delhi Metro network. Botanical Garden will serve as an interchanging station between NMRC's Aqua Line and DMRC's Magenta & Blue Line," Lokesh M said. "This project will be beneficial to all the commuters travelling for Noida-Greater Noida towards Delhi and vice-versa," the senior IAS officer added.

JNU logo to now include 'Tamso ma Jyotirgamaya' motto

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) logo will now include its "Tamso ma Jyotirgamaya" motto and be registered for patenting. A decision to modify the university's old, unregistered logo to include the "Tamso ma Jyotirgamaya" motto was unanimously passed in a meeting of the Executive Council, Vice-Chancellor Santishree Pandit said. "We are not making any changes. The old logo was not registered. We are registering the same logo with our motto, (it was) passed unanimously by the Executive Council," she said. The meeting was held on November 24. Meanwhile, the administration has undertaken roofwater proofing of several hostels that were facing leakage issues. "Repair and renovation work is underway at several hostels, the academic building and staff quarters and tenders have been



floated for the same," Jawaharlal Nehru University Registrar Ravikesh said. "Roofwater proofing is being done in several hostels," Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers' Association President DK Lobiyal said. The University Grants Commission last year allocated Rs 28 crore to Jawaharlal Nehru University for various projects, including work on structural repair and renovation of academic buildings, hostels and staff quarters. The repair and renovation work was assigned to the Central Public Works Department.

70 shops in Capital fined for selling tobacco near educational institutions

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police's Crime Branch and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has raided and imposed penalties on 70 shop owners under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) for selling tobacco products near educational institutes in the Capital. According to police, 31 teams were formed and raids were conducted on the tobacco vendors. "A total of 70 vendors were found violating the rules under COTPA Act. Hence, 70 challans were issued against them," police said. These 31 areas were identified where vendors were found selling tobacco products near educational institutes in violation of norms. "According to data provided by the Department of Education, a local inquiry was conducted. Later, we identified a total 31 areas all over Delhi, where pan khokha, bidi, gutka vendors were found indulging in sale of tobacco products in the 100 metres parameter of educational institutes," Special Commissioner of Police (Crime) Ravindra Singh Yadav said.



According to police, the raids were conducted on Wednesday under "Operation Kavach 4.0" based on Union home affairs and the lieutenant governor's directives. He added they focused on identifying and apprehending individuals involved in the trafficking and distribution of tobacco products near educational institutes. "Anti-Narcotics Taskforce took action against these shops in the 100-metre vicinity of the schools as per the education department's data. Joint action was planned simultaneously all over Delhi along with teams from the NCB to ensure action with an element of surprise. The purpose was to check not

only the contraband substance being sold by the shops to school-going children but also taking stringent action against the violators for closure of such shops," Delhi police said in a press release. Police said 31 areas were identified across Delhi, where 70 vendors were found selling tobacco products within the 100-meter radius of the schools. "This was a unique operation conducted all over Delhi in a single day to give a strong message to such illegal vendors active near educational institutes." Yadav said undercover officers, surveillance, canine support, and intelligence gathering were involved in the joint operation.

Deepfake scamster targets elderly

STAFF REPORTER ■ GHAZIABAD

A 76-year-old man faced extortion and was pushed to the verge of suicide by alleged online scammers, who used a deepfake image of a retired IPS to threaten and harass him. The police have registered a case regarding the matter and began the investigation. The harassment began over a month ago when 76-year-old Arvind Sharma bought an Android phone and made a Facebook profile. Sharma received a video call on the app on October 20 which he answered, police said, adding that on the other side of the call was a naked woman. Sharma ended the call but his trouble began from there, police said. "Sharma was shown some morphed picture of him with the naked woman. He later received a video call from a man, who identified himself as a senior police officer from Dwarka and alleged that he is being made an accused in a suicide case of the woman," said Kavi Nagar Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Abhishek Srivastav on Saturday. Sharma got scared and deposit-



ed Rs 24,000 in the account given by the accused. He later borrowed Rs 50,000 and sent it too. The extortionist, however, demanded more money from him. Scared of his name being sullied and unable to arrange any more money, the elderly was pushed to the brink of suicide. Finally, he confided in his family, who approached the police. "We came to know that a deepfake video of a retired IPS officer from UP, Prem Prakash, was shown to the elderly as the senior officer from Dwarka. A case regarding the incident has been registered and investigations are underway," said the ACP.

Deepfakes refer to digitally altered media (audio or video) of a person to make him or her appear to be someone else. "It appears that the accused morphed an old video of the officer (retired IPS) by changing the audio and background voice. On close examination, the voice and lip movement do not sync. It can be said to be a morphed or deepfake video," the ACP said. Based on the complaint, the police lodged an FIR on November 21 and initiated the probe. The Ghaziabad Police has also written to Meta for assistance in the case and sent the deepfake video for forensic examination.

FIRST COLUMN

A METAPHOR FOR INDO-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS

Australian, Arnold Dix, personifies healthy Indo-Australian relationship



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

A miracle occurred this week, when a joint effort of nearly 1000 people working like a single organism and the prayers of millions, managed to move a mountain to rescue 41 trapped workers in eighteen days. While much would be written and hours of content would be created, chronicling the death-defying, Human vs/with Nature feat, there was one of the heroes who stood out like a lone lighthouse, signalling the way to large ships in the tricky geo-political waters. Arnold Dix, an international tunnel expert from Australia had been roped in earlier in the 17-day operation to assist the evacuation process. This expert besides, providing the necessary professional help, was perhaps the most visible face of the rescue mission, offering prayers at the temple of the local deity, beaming with confidence in his interviews with the media about the success of the mission and bringing hope to millions who prayed for the trapped miners. A week earlier, most Indians or at least cricket fans would not have batted an eyelid to lambast the Australians, as they defeated India in its dream run towards a cherished world cup. A week later Arnold Dix is a celebrated figure in India due to his ingenuity in handling the crisis. Taking a cue, leaders at the top from both nations were also busy finalising their geo-political strategy in 2+2 dialogue for greater cooperation bilaterally and at multilateral platforms. The joint statement released after the dialogue mentioned that the Comprehensive strategic dialogue between the two nations was to ensure “both countries sharing major Indian Ocean coastlines, and sharing a positive agenda of cooperation with countries across Asia and the Pacific Ocean region, their cooperation served to reinforce an open, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific.



As the India-Australia CSP continues to deepen bilateral cooperation with a shared commitment to democracy and pluralism, rule of law, and a multifaceted bilateral agenda, the Ministers reaffirmed that gender equality is of fundamental importance and investment in the empowerment of all women and girls is critical to full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Ministers reaffirmed their support for sovereignty and territorial integrity in the Indo-Pacific, democratic values, the rule of law, freedom of navigation and flight and the peaceful resolution of disputes. The Ministers underlined the importance of being able to exercise rights and freedoms in all seas and oceans consistent with international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), including freedom of navigation and overflight, in addressing challenges to the maritime rules-based order, including those in the East and South China Seas. They underscored the importance of disputes being resolved peacefully by international law without threat or use of force or any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo, and that countries should exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that could complicate or escalate disputes affecting peace and stability. They expressed serious concern about the militarisation of disputed features, the dangerous use of coast guard and maritime militia vessels and efforts to disrupt other countries’ offshore exploitation activities. All was happening in the backdrop of India’s close ally Sri Lanka allowing nearly \$4.5 billion Chinese investment in the strategic Hambantota port town. Hambantota is literally in India’s backyard and offers strategic access to China on Indian critical infrastructure. Chinese shipping company already owns the port of Hambantota. The mention of a strong commitment by India and Australia in the joint statement was a show of recommitment to jointly address regional issues, with Chinese sharks lurking in their oceans. Perhaps Arnold was a greater symbol of what is yet to come out of the Indo-Australian relationship.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Employability of skilled trainees is a must

Aligning Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana PMKVY with the industry to match local economic needs is crucial to making skilled trainees employable



DINESH SOOD

The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), launched in 2015, has trained 13.7 million candidates over seven years. However, only 18% or 2.4 million of these candidates have been successful in securing a job. This low placement rate is one of several concerning issues highlighted by a Lok Sabha standing committee. The committee also identified underutilized funds, infrastructure deficiencies, dropouts, a disconnect with industry, and insufficient state engagement as significant problems. To increase the effectiveness of the program, PMKVY must be aligned with the local economy’s needs. Currently, only 2.4% of India’s 530-million-strong workforce has received formal vocational education or training. This means that a vast majority of the workforce remains unskilled, making them less productive. Additionally, a quarter of India’s workforce has less than primary education, further emphasizing the importance of skill development programs in reducing unemployment rates. Despite this, the latest data from the quarterly Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) reports an unemployment rate of 6.8%, with a youth unemployment rate (for ages 15 to 29) of 17.3%. The PMKVY has undergone three versions, with PMKVY 2.0 having the highest number of trained and placed candidates, with a placement rate of 19.5%. However, this rate has since fallen to 5.8% for PMKVY 3.0, the lowest yet. Overall, approximately 11 million trained candidates have completed certification. The government must take immediate action to address these concerns, align PMKVY with the local economy, and improve the program’s effectiveness.

It is imperative to note that Uttar Pradesh is the state with the highest number of candidates trained, with a staggering 1.59 million individuals, however, the placement rate in the state is only a meagre 20%. On the other hand, Telangana takes the lead with the highest placement rate of 35.1%, followed closely by Puducherry at 34.6%. Haryana and Punjab are not far behind with placement rates of 31.7% and 29.6% respectively. Maharashtra and Kerala, however, need to work on their placement rates, as they stand at a disappointing 9.3% and 10.4% respectively. It should be noted that NSDC primarily partnered with private vocational training providers due to the lack of private Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) at the time. However, the shorter training duration of NSDC courses (3-4 months) compared to the 1-2 year programmes offered by ITIs is a major challenge that needs to be addressed. Poor utilisation of funds: According to government data, the programme’s fund utilization was poor in 2016-17, with only 56% of the allocated funds being used. Although the number improved to 98% in 2020-21, it fell back to 72% in 2021-22. The Lok Sabha standing committee reported that the suspension of training and placement operations due to COVID-19 restrictions led to a significant drop in enrollment and certification, resulting in low disbursement and utilization of funds. However, it is expected that the ongoing training under PMKVY 4.0 since January 2023 will lead to an increase in expenditure upon its completion. Connect to industry is missing: NSDC, established in 2008, collaborates with partner trainers to conduct skill development



MOREOVER, THE ONLINE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR THE STATE-MANAGED COMPONENT WAS OPERATIONAL IN ONLY 15 STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES, AND THIS HAS AFFECTED COORDINATION WITH THE UNION GOVERNMENT

programmes. However, the lack of industry participation and a disconnect between NSDC and the industry is a significant challenge that needs to be addressed. The current skill development programmes do not align with the actual regional demand for skills, creating a mismatch between training and local economic needs. This leads to a gap between the skills imparted and the market requirements, which is unacceptable. The quality of training and the choice of the particular skill being imparted must meet the market standards. Unfortunately, the skill centres are not adequately equipped for practical training, resulting in theoretical training with little practical exposure. This is unacceptable, and immediate action needs to be taken to bridge this gap. The Lok Sabha’s standing committee has also highlighted this disconnect and suggested surveying industry representatives to better understand their needs. It is time to take the necessary steps to ensure that the skill development programmes align with the industry needs and bridge the gap between the skills imparted and the market requirements. Candidate dropout, infra deficiencies: A study conducted by the Indian Institute of Public Administration between 2016 and 2021 revealed that 20% of candidates who enrolled under PMKVY dropped out. The reasons for this were medical issues, family obligations, social challenges, lengthy commutes to training centres, marital status changes, increased livelihood demands, limited job opportunities, and perceived skill stagnation. Female candidates also dropped out due to pregnancy, marriage, and course duration.

The standing committee noted that the Ministry needs to take immediate action to address the factors that lead to candidate dropouts, such as distance to training centres and accessibility to jobs. For the female dropouts, the committee suggested that the Ministry should collaborate with ASHA and anganwadi centres to create awareness about the benefits of skilling and encourage them to resume training as soon as possible after delivery. It is unacceptable that out of 818 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKKs) or training centres allocated in all districts of India, only 722 have been established so far. Of the remaining, 58 PMKKs were surrendered to the government by private vendors due to operational difficulties. This is a significant issue and requires immediate attention from the government. The lack of eligible trainers is another issue that is preventing many centres from becoming operational. As a solution, the government must create a pool of National Assessors and Trainers under PMKVY 4.0. The government must take necessary actions to ensure that the PMKVY program is successful in creating a skilled workforce and reducing unemployment in India. Limited state participation: State disparities driven by varying economic and employment histories result in limited state participation. This is a significant challenge that needs to be addressed with a sense of urgency. For instance, while some states have a significant agricultural workforce that relies on programmes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, others like Maharashtra or Tamil Nadu have more employment opportunities. Therefore, it is imper-

ative to adopt localised, demand-driven approaches that extend employment schemes from metropolitan areas to tier-2 and tier-3 cities, thus addressing specific regional challenges. In 2016-20, PMKVY 2.0 introduced state participation to enhance support and monitoring and enable targeted training that aligns with local needs and aspirations. However, the state-managed model encountered several issues, including delays in the release of funds from the state treasury to respective departments, a shortage of trainers with the necessary eligibility criteria, a lack of available placement partners, and delayed payments to training partners. These issues need to be addressed immediately to ensure that the programme is efficient in achieving its objectives. Moreover, the online management system for the state-managed component was operational in only 15 states and union territories, and this has affected coordination with the Union government. It is imperative to expand this system to all states and union territories to ensure that the programme runs smoothly. In conclusion, enhancing the programme’s effectiveness and aligning PMKVY with the industry to match local economic needs is crucial to making skill training programmes employable. It is time to take bold steps to address the challenges facing the programme and ensure that it achieves its objectives.

(The writer is a Co-Founder and MD of Orane International, a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and a Network Member of India International Skill Centres; Views expressed are strictly personal)

Leveraging the power of advanced AI in the Edtech space

As AI continues to grow, its ethical considerations must be evaluated to ensure that it provides an equitable, inclusive, and successful learning environment

As the world of education continues to evolve, technology is playing an increasingly important role in the transformation of traditional teaching methods. A particularly significant development in this field is the incorporation of Artificial Intelligence in Educational Technology. This integration can fundamentally alter how we learn, instruct and interact with educational material. AI has made a huge impact on a lot of different industries, and it’s no different in the education industry. AI is becoming more and more popular and it can be used in a variety of ways to get better and more diverse results. It can be used in schools, for professional learning and assessment, for lifelong learning or enterprise work-



DINESH KUMAR POOBALAN

force learning and assessment. Let’s discuss the various ways in which advanced AI is reshaping the EdTech space and its implications for the future of education; Personalised Learning: AI can tailor educational content to meet individual student needs, adapting to different learning styles, speeds and preferences. The increasing acceptance of personalized learning by students is revolutionizing the way learning and assessment are conducted, as it is based on the student’s capacity and career objectives, which enable them to achieve their professional and personal goals. AI-driven software can analyse student performance and the content available to them and suggest tailored study plans that are based on their

strengths and weaknesses, as well as integrate data on market skill demand to provide clearer options and advice for students when they finish their studies. Predictive Analytics for Early Intervention: By analysing large volumes of information, AI can detect trends and anticipate potential difficulties that students may encounter. Through predictive analytics, educators can be alerted early on and provide additional support to those students who are at risk of lagging. By taking a proactive approach, educators can provide more personalised and targeted intervention, resulting in improved student performance and a decrease in dropout rates. Automated Grading: Another important aspect to discuss

here is Automated Grading. Educators may find the process of grading and assessing to be laborious and time-consuming. Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithms facilitate the automation of these activities, enabling rapid and precise assessment of assignments, tests and assessments. Not only does this save educators time, but it also provides students with prompt feedback, encouraging a continuous learning process. Adaptive Learning Platforms: One of the most significant applications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the field of Education Technology (EdTech) is the creation of adaptive Learning Platforms (ALPs). AI-powered adaptive learning platforms leverage the power of machine learning

to analyse student performance data and create educational content that is tailored to the individual needs and preferences of the learner. Adaptive learning platforms are distinct from traditional adaptive learning approaches in that they offer an individualised learning experience, allowing each student to progress at their speed. Refined Workflows: As the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the sector increases, tools will facilitate the automation of day-to-day operations and the reduction of mistakes. Schools will benefit from the elimination of redundant study materials and the assignment of appropriate learning models. Barriers and challenges associated: The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into

Educational Technology (EdTech) offers a range of advantages; however, it is important to consider ethical considerations and difficulties. Privacy, algorithmic biases and digital divide are some of the issues that need to be addressed. It is essential to strike a balance between the utilization of advanced AI to improve educational outcomes and providing equitable access to all students to develop EdTech solutions responsibly. Another key aspect is Enhanced Engagement, which explains that Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) applications that are powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI), can provide students with an immersive learning experience. For example, medical students

may be able to perform virtual surgeries; history students may have the opportunity to explore ancient civilizations. AI can also assist in developing and updating educational content based on current trends and student performance data. Advanced technological features like ‘Chatbot’ generate a complete lesson plan and curriculum for teachers by just asking for it. AI is revolutionizing the way students learn, providing them with personalized experiences, immersive simulations and predictive analytics. The potential of AI in EdTech is boundless, and its potential to transform education is undeniable.

(The writer is the CEO & CTO, of Greatify; views are personal)

Kissinger, secy of state under Presidents Nixon and Ford, dies at 100

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, the diplomat with the thick glasses and gravelly voice who dominated foreign policy as the United States extricated itself from Vietnam and broke down barriers with China, died Wednesday, his consulting firm said. He was 100. With his gruff yet commanding presence and behind-the-scenes manipulation of power, Kissinger exerted uncommon influence on global affairs under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, earning both vilification and the Nobel Peace Prize. Decades later, his name still provoked impassioned debate over foreign policy landmarks long past.

Kissinger's power grew during the turmoil of Watergate, when the politically attuned diplomat assumed a role akin to co-president to the weakened Nixon.

"No doubt my vanity was piqued," Kissinger later wrote of



his expanding influence. "But the dominant emotion was a premonition of catastrophe."

A Jew who fled Nazi Germany with his family in his teens, Kissinger in his later years cultivated the reputation of respected statesman, giving speeches, offering advice to Republicans and Democrats alike and managing a global consulting business. He turned up in President Donald Trump's White House on multiple occasions. But

For eight restless years — first as national security adviser, later as secretary of state, and for a time in the middle holding both titles — Kissinger ranged across the breadth of major foreign policy issues. He conducted the first "shuttle diplomacy" in the quest for Middle East peace. He used secret channels to pursue ties between the United States and China, ending decades of isolation and mutual hostility.

He initiated the Paris negotiations that ultimately provided a face-saving means — a "decent interval," he called it — to get the United States out of a costly war in Vietnam. Two years later, Saigon fell to the communists.

And he pursued a policy of detente with the Soviet Union that led to arms control agreements and raised the possibility that the tensions of the Cold War and its nuclear threat did not have to last forever.

At age 99, he was still out on tour for his book on leadership. Asked in July 2022 interview with

ABC whether he wished he could take back any of his decisions, Kissinger demurred, saying: "I've been thinking about these problems all my life. It's my hobby as well as my occupation. And so the recommendations I made were the best of which I was then capable."

Even then, he had mixed thoughts on Nixon's record, saying "his foreign policy has held up and he was quite effective in domestic policy" while allowing that the disgraced president had "permitted himself to be involved in a number of steps that were inappropriate for a president."

As Kissinger turned 100 in May 2023, his son David wrote in The Washington Post that his father's centenary "might have an air of inevitability for anyone familiar with his force of character and love of historical symbolism. Not only has he outlived most of his peers, eminent detractors and students, but he has also remained indefatigably active throughout his 90s."

China grieves death of 'dear old friend'

Beijing (PTT): China, a major beneficiary of former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger's ping-pong diplomacy that broke the ice between the two countries in 1971, on Thursday called him a "dear old friend" of Chinese people and mourned his death, saying he was "pioneer and builder" of ties between Beijing and Washington.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, who held close consultations with Kissinger to find ways to halt the steep slide of US-China ties, sent a message of condolences to his US counterpart Joe Biden over the death of Kissinger.

Kissinger, who enjoyed a red-carpet welcome, has visited China more than 100 times, the most recent one being in late July this year to pave the way for a summit between Xi and Biden in Seattle earlier this month.

Considered the architect of the US-China relationship since the early 70s, Kissinger died at his home in Connecticut on Wednesday at the age of 100. On behalf of the Chinese government and people, and in his own name, Xi extended profound condolences and expressed sincere sympathy to Kissinger's family, official media here reported.

In his message, Xi said Kissinger was a world-renowned strategist and an old friend and good friend of the Chinese people. Half a century ago, with an outstanding strategic vision, Kissinger made historic contributions to the normalisation of China-US relations, which has not only benefited the two countries but also changed the world, Xi said. Kissinger had made it his lifelong pursuit to promote the development of China-US relations and enhance the friendship between the two peoples, and his name will always be associated with China-US relations, Xi said. Noting that Kissinger will always be remembered and missed by the Chinese people, Xi said that China is ready to work with the United States to carry forward the cause of friendship between the two peoples and promote the sound and steady development of China-US relations, so as to benefit the two peoples and make due contribution to world peace and development. Speaking at a daily press briefing on Thursday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin called Kissinger a "dear old friend" of the Chinese people and a pioneer and builder of China-US relations, who has made historic contributions to the normalization of ties between the two countries.

Truce in Gaza extended by another day

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel and Hamas agreed at the last minute Thursday to extend their cease-fire in Gaza by another day. But any further renewal of the deal that has seen dozens of hostages and prisoners released could prove more daunting since Hamas is expected to set a higher price for many of the remaining captives. International pressure has mounted for the truce to continue as long as possible after nearly eight weeks of Israeli bombardment and a ground campaign in Gaza that have killed thousands of Palestinians, uprooted more than three-quarters of the population of 2.3 million and led to a humanitarian crisis.

Israel has vowed to resume its offensive once the cease-fire expires.

And the talks appear to be growing tougher, with Hamas having already freed most of the women and children kidnapped during the deadly Oct. 7 attack on Israel that triggered the war. The militants are expected to make greater demands in return for freeing scores of civilian men and soldiers.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other top officials on his third visit to the region since the start of the war, said he hoped the cease-fire could be extended and more hostages could be released.

"This process is producing results. It's important, and we hope that it can continue," he said.

Qatar, which along with Egypt has played a key role in mediating, announced the latest extension of the truce, under which Hamas has released at least 10 Israeli hostages per day in exchange for Israel's release of at least 30 Palestinian prisoners. The two Arab countries are now seeking to prolong the deal by another two days, according to Diaa Rashwan, the head of Egypt's State Information Service.

As word of Thursday's extension came, gunmen opened fire on people waiting for buses along a main highway entering Jerusalem, killing at least three people and wounding several others, according to police.

The two attackers, brothers from a Palestinian neighborhood in annexed east Jerusalem, were killed. Hamas' armed wing claimed the attack, casting it as retaliation for the killing of women and children in Gaza and other Israeli "crimes." The attack did not appear to threaten the truce in Gaza.

Netanyahu is under intense pressure from families of the hostages to bring them home. But his far-right governing partners are also pushing him to continue the war until Hamas is destroyed, and could bolt his coalition if he is seen as making too many concessions.

Israel says it will maintain the truce until Hamas stops releasing captives, at which point it will resume military operations aimed at eliminating the group, even as the Biden administration has urged it to operate with far greater precision if it resumes its offensive.

"As soon as Hamas stops releasing mothers, we're coming for the fathers. As soon as

it stops releasing daughters, we're coming for the sons," Israeli government spokesman Eylon Levy said. "We are going to continue putting unrelenting military pressure on Hamas to release everyone."

The initial truce — which began Friday and has now been extended twice — called for the release of women and children. Israeli officials say Gaza militants still hold around 30 women and children, who would all be released within a few days if the swaps continue at the current rate.

It's not clear how many of the women might be soldiers. For soldiers and the civilian men still in captivity, Hamas is expected to demand the release of high-profile Palestinians convicted of deadly attacks, something Israel has strongly resisted in the past.

Israel says around 125 men are still held hostage, including several dozen soldiers.

An Israeli official involved in hostage negotiations said talks on a further extension for the release of civilian men and soldiers were still preliminary, and that a deal would not be considered until all the women

and children are out. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because talks were ongoing.

So far, most Palestinians released have been teenagers accused of throwing stones and firebombs during confrontations with Israeli forces. Several were women convicted by Israeli military courts of attempting to attack soldiers.

With Wednesday's releases, a total of 73 Israelis, including dual nationals, have been freed during the six-day truce, most of whom appear physically well but shaken. Another 24 hostages — 23 Thais and one Filipino — have also been released, including several men.

Before the cease-fire, Hamas released four hostages, and the Israeli army rescued one. Two others were found dead in Gaza. On Thursday, the military confirmed the death of Ofir Tzarfat, who was believed to be among the hostages, without providing any further details. The 27-year-old attended a music festival where at least 360 people were killed and several others were kidnapped on Oct. 7. Hamas and other Palestinian militants killed over

1,200 people — mostly civilians — in their wide-ranging attack across southern Israel that day and captured around 240. Authorities have only ever provided approximate figures.

Israel's bombardment and ground invasion in Gaza have killed more than 13,300 Palestinians, roughly two-thirds of them women and minors, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants.

The toll is likely much higher, as officials have only sporadically updated the count since Nov. 11. The ministry says thousands more people are feared dead under the rubble.

Israel says 77 of its soldiers have been killed in the ground offensive. It claims to have killed thousands of militants, without providing evidence.

During the pause in fighting, Palestinians in Gaza have been consumed by the search for aid and horror at the extent of destruction.

Residents described entire residential blocks as leveled in Gaza City and surrounding areas in the north.

Top Ramaswamy aide leaves to join Trump campaign: Report

Washington (PTI): A top aide to Republican presidential aspirant Vivek Ramaswamy has resigned and joined former president Donald Trump's campaign, according to a media report which called the departure the latest indicator of Indian-American's stagnating election campaign.

Brian Swensen formally resigned from his role as national political director for the Ramaswamy campaign over the weekend, CNN reported. Swensen has joined the Trump campaign, the news network quoted a source familiar with his departure, as saying. Swensen is expected to be working on the campaign's political operation in the early-voting states, specifically in Nevada, two Trump campaign sources told CNN. Swensen's departure is the latest indicator of 38-year-old Ramaswamy's stagnating campaign, which has struggled to gain momentum even as the candidate closely aligns himself with Trump, the front-runner for the 2024 Republican nomination, the report said. Ramaswamy has repeatedly praised Trump, the Republican front-runner, whom he trails by double digits, often calling him the "best president of the 21st century."

Earlier this month, Brandon Goodyear, the Ramaswamy team's videographer, stepped away from the campaign, a source familiar with the departure told CNN. Tricia McLaughlin, a spokesperson for the Ramaswamy campaign, thanked Swensen for his work with the campaign and wished him well in the future. "We absolutely love Brian and completely wish him the best," McLaughlin said. Swensen's responsibilities handling Ramaswamy's political operations in New Hampshire will be overseen by senior adviser Mike Biundo, McLaughlin said.

Kim's sister rejects US offer of dialogue with North Korea

3 killed in Jerusalem shooting

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

At least three Israelis were killed and six others injured when Palestinian gunmen opened fire at a bus stop here, breaking an uneasy peace in the city since the outbreak of the current round of violence in the region.

"At around 7:40 am (local time) two Palestinian gunmen got out of a vehicle on Weizman Street at the main entrance to the capital and opened fire at people at a bus stop", the police here said.

Three persons were killed and six wounded, two of them seriously, in a terror shooting attack at the entrance to the city, police and medics said.

Two off-duty soldiers and an armed civilian in the area are said to have returned fire, killing the two terrorists.

Videos circulating on social media platforms show a handful of people waiting at the bus stop starting to run away in different directions as the two gunmen start firing indiscriminately.

Israel's internal security agency, Shin Bet, named the two attackers as brothers Murad Namr, 38, and Ibrahim Namr, 30, from East Jerusalem.

"The pair were Hamas members and previously jailed for terror activity", the agency said.

Murad was jailed between 2010 and 2020 for planning terror attacks under directions of terror elements in the Gaza Strip and Ibrahim was jailed in



2014 for undisclosed terror activity, it said.

Footage showed that the two were armed with an M-16 assault rifle and a handgun.

A police search of the vehicle found large amounts of ammunition. Police were searching the area to rule out any additional attackers.

Medics with Magen David Adom ambulance service that reached the site of the attack declared a 24-year-old woman dead at the scene, while an elderly man and a woman among the eight others injured were declared dead at the hospital.

Two of the wounded were listed in serious condition.

The bus stop was the scene of a deadly bomb attack almost exactly a year ago.

Thursday's attack came shortly after Israel and Hamas agreed to extend the ceasefire for a seventh day.

"The War Cabinet unanimously decided last night that

if a list, as was agreed upon in the outline, were not delivered by 07:00 this morning (Thursday, 30 November 2023), fighting would resume at once," an announcement from the Israeli PMO said in the morning as people anxiously waited to hear on the fate of the fragile ceasefire for exchange of Israeli hostages against Palestinian prisoners.

"A list of women and children — in accordance with the terms of the outline — was delivered to Israel a short time ago; therefore, the pause will continue", it added.

In a press release, the PMO said, "Pursuant to receiving the list of hostages slated to be released today (November 30), the families have been notified".

Jerusalem has been relatively quiet since the outbreak of the recent round of violence and no major skirmishes have been reported despite several calls by Hamas to Palestinians in Jerusalem to support them.

degree (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) target cap set in Paris.

"It's practically sure that during the coming four years we will hit this 1.5, at least on temporary basis," Petteri Taalas said in an interview. "And in the next decade we are more or less going to be there on a permanent basis."

WMO issued the findings for Thursday's start of the U.N.'s annual climate conference, this year being held in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates city of Dubai.

The U.N. agency said the benchmark of key Paris accord goal will be whether the 1.5-degree increase is sustained over a 30-year span — not just a single year — but others say the world needs more clarity on that.

"Clarity on breaching the Paris agreement guard rails will be crucial," said Richard Betts of Britain's Met



President Joe Biden takes a photo with people on the tarmac before he boards Air Force One at Denver International Airport in Denver, Wednesday, to travel to Pueblo Memorial Airport in Pueblo, Colo.

Kim's sister rejects US offer of dialogue with North Korea

Seoul (AP): The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Thursday dismissed US calls for a return to diplomacy and lambasted condemnations of the North's recent spy satellite launch, vowing more launches in violation of UN bans.

During a UN Security Council meeting earlier this week, the US ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, called the North's satellite launch a "reckless, unlawful" action that threatens its neighbours. But she reiterated the US offer for dialogue without any preconditions, saying North Korea "can choose the timing and topic."

Kim's sister and senior official, Kim Yo Jong, rejected the US overture and threatened more satellite and other weapons launches.

"The sovereignty of an independent state can never be an agenda item for negotiations, and therefore, (North Korea) will never sit face to face with the US for that purpose," Kim Yo Jong said in a statement carried by state media.

"(North Korea) will continue to make efforts to develop everything belonging to its sovereign rights and continue to exercise the sovereign rights, enjoyed by all the member states of the UN, in a dignified manner without being restricted in the future, too," she said.

Multiple UN Security Council resolutions ban North Korea from performing any launches using ballistic technology, such as satellite liftoffs and missile tests.

But the North has argued it has sovereign rights to launch spy satellites and test-flight ballistic missiles to cope with what it calls US-led military threats. It views major US-South Korean military drills as invasion rehearsal and often reacts with its own weapons tests.

S Korean farmers protest against proposed anti-dog meat legislation

AP ■ SEOUL

Dozens of South Korean dog farmers scuffled with police during a rally near the presidential office on Thursday to protest a push by authorities to outlaw dog meat consumption. Earlier this month, government and ruling party officials agreed to introduce legislation by the year's end that would ban the centuries-old practice. Individual lawmakers have submitted similar anti-dog meat bills in the past, but this would be the first time for the government to back such legislation.

About 200 farmers, restaurant owners and others involved in the dog meat industry gathered in Thursday's rally. They chanted slogans, sang, raised their fists and took turns making speeches criticizing the government's move. One

protester said he would kill himself if the government and governing party move ahead with the legislation.

"We'll fight. We'll fight," the protesters shouted.

Some farmers brought dogs in cages on their trucks but were prevented from taking them to the protest site. A shoving match between some protesters and police occurred, with some farmers rushing to a street when a truck, apparently carrying dogs, approached.

Police detained three protesters, farmers said. Police said they couldn't immediately confirm the detentions.

Dog meat consumption is neither explicitly banned nor legalized in South Korea. But there have been calls to prohibit it over worries about South Korea's international image and a growing public awareness of animal rights. World

celebrities including American actress Kim Basinger and French actress Brigitte Bardot have called for a ban.

The bill pushed by the government and governing party would phase out the dog meat industry by 2027. It would provide financial support to farmers for dismantling their facilities and opening new businesses and offer vocational training and other benefits.

"To have a government-backed bill with the political will behind it to see it passed swiftly is a highly significant milestone, a point we have never reached before in this campaign to phase out this abusive industry," the anti-animal cruelty group Humane Society International's Korea office said in written responses to questions from The Associated Press.

'2023 hottest year on record'

AP ■ DUBAI

The UN weather agency said Thursday that 2023 is all but certain to be the hottest year on record, and a warning of worrying trends that suggest increasing floods, forest fires, glacier melt, and heat waves in the future.

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) also warned that the average temperature for the year is up some 1.4 degrees Celsius (2.5 degrees Fahrenheit) from pre-industrial times — a mere one-tenth of a degree under a target limit for the end of the century as laid out by the Paris climate accord in 2015.

The WMO secretary-general said the onset earlier this year of El Nino, the weather phenomenon marked by heating in the Pacific Ocean, could tip the average temperature next year over the 1.5-

degree (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) target cap set in Paris.

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The U.N. agency said the benchmark of key Paris accord goal will be whether the 1.5-degree increase is sustained over a 30-year span — not just a single year — but others say the world needs more clarity on that.

"Clarity on breaching the Paris agreement guard rails will be crucial," said Richard Betts of Britain's Met

Office, the lead author of a new paper on the issue with University of Exeter published in the journal Nature.

"Without an agreement on what actually will count as exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius, we risk distraction and confusion at precisely the time when action to avoid the worst effects of climate change becomes even more urgent," he added.

WMO's Taalas said that whatever the case, the world appears on course to blow well past that figure anyway.

"We are heading towards 2.5 to 3 degrees warming and that would mean that we would see massively more negative impacts of climate change," Taalas said, pointing to glacier loss and sea level rise over "the coming thousands of years." The nine years 2015 to 2023 were the warmest on record, WMO said. Its findings for this year

run through October, but it says the last two months are not likely to be enough to keep 2023 from being a record-hot year.

Still, there are "some signs of hope" — including a turn toward renewable energies and more electric cars, which help reduce the amount of carbon that is spewed into the atmosphere, trapping heat inside," Taalas said.

His message for attendee at the UN climate conference, known as COP28? "We have to reduce our consumption of coal, oil and natural gas dramatically to be able to limit the warming to the Paris limits," he said. "Luckily, things are happening. But still, we in the Western countries, in the rich countries, we are still consuming oil, a little bit less coal than in the past, and still natural gas." "Reduction of fossil fuel consumption — that's the key to success."

Pak EC urged to defer general elections

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Two separate petitions seeking the postponement of general elections in Pakistan on February 8 landed before the election commission, citing growing terror threats and inclement weather. The petitions, filed by individuals hailing from the restive Balochistan province, cited security issues and snowfall in several districts as reasons to seek the postponement of elections, the Dawn newspaper reported.

One of the petitions filed by Meena Majeed, a general councillor from Mand teshil of Kech district through Advocate Fatima Nazar, stated Balochistan was grappling with heightened security concerns.

"Specifically, the Mek-ran division has witnessed a surge in terrorist activities, ranging from target killings of innocent daily wage earners to alarming incidents such as IED blasts and women suicide bombing," it stated. The impact was most pronounced in districts such as Kech and Gwadar, where 61 acts of terrorism during the last three months alone claimed 32 lives, it read.

According to the plea, the challenging geographical terrain of Balochistan, characterised by scattered populations residing in far-flung villages

amidst mountains adds to the complexity. "This topography coupled with inadequate road infrastructure and poor connectivity presents a formidable obstacle to implementing effective security measures and ensuring the feasibility of free and fair elections", it added.

The petitioner urged the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to accept the instant petition, postpone polling in Kech and announce a fresh suitable and appropriate schedule for election within district Kech, enabling the people to exercise their constitutional right to cast a vote, in the interest of justice.

The other petition, filed by Toor Gul Khan Jogezei from district Kila Saifullah Khan through Advocate Azizullah Kakakhel, pointed out that many districts and divisions in the country face heavy snowfall in winter which affects the daily routine of residents.

As a result, elections could not be held in such areas, since the inhabitants of these areas were either displaced or limited, until the month of May or the restoration of normal life.

It stated if elections were held in such areas, it was feared that the provincial or national assembly candidates would either lose their vote bank or voters would lose their votes in

favour of their candidates as the case may be.

Hence, it is need of time that the election be postponed to any other suitable time through which the citizens of such an area could participate in a free and fair election and elect representatives according to their choice of constituency, the petition read.

Interestingly, the ECP has already rejected the reports of delay in general elections, and non-preparation of electoral rolls and decided to take legal action against those spreading "misleading" news.

ECP spokesperson Haroon Shinwari said the news of delay in elections in media circles was "absolutely baseless and misleading", and that the news of non-preparation of electoral rolls was false. "The Election Commission has decided to approach Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) against those spreading such false news so that legal action can be taken against those spreading such misleading news," he maintained.

According to an ECP spokesman, the printing of updated electoral rolls for the upcoming general polls is already underway at Nadra offices, while the transportation of the lists to different districts has been started.

Pak Cabinet nod to Imran jail trial in cipher case

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Cabinet on Thursday approved the jail trial of former prime minister Imran Khan in the cipher case after the special court's decision to conduct in-prison proceedings due to security reasons.

Following the court order, the report for the jail trial was moved by the Ministry of Law and Justice and it was approved by the Cabinet, Geo News quoted officials as saying.

Khan, 71, has been incarcerated in the Adiala jail Rawalpindi since September 26, where his in-prison trial had been going until last week when the Islamabad High Court ruled against the jail trial on procedural grounds while declaring the proceedings held so far as vitiated.

After the Islamabad High Court ruling, Special Court judge Abul Hasnat Zulqernain heard the cipher case on Tuesday at the Federal Judicial Complex in Islamabad. Khan was not presented by authorities due to security reasons

despite the fact that the judge last week had asked to present Khan and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who is also accused in the cipher case.

"It has been informed that the PTI chairman faces security risks of a serious scale," according to a report presented in the court by authorities.

After hearing the case, the special court announced its order, approving the jail trial in an open court format at the next hearing. Later the hearing was adjourned till December 1 (Friday). The cipher case was launched on August 15 and Khan and Qureshi were indicted on October 23.

Khan was arrested after a case was filed against him for allegedly violating the Official Secrets Act by disclosing a secret diplomatic cable – called the cipher – sent by the country's embassy in Washington in March last year. Earlier, the Cabinet on Tuesday also approved conducting the jail trial of Khan in the Al-Qadir Trust corruption cases.

Former PM writes to Pak CJ on harassment of party workers

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's jailed ex-premier Imran Khan on Thursday urged Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa to take cognizance of the alleged political victimisation of his party workers, including their abductions and disappearances and sought the formation of a commission to probe all issues faced his party ahead of elections.

In a seven-page letter to Chief Justice Isa, Khan, chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party pleaded with him to assert Article 184 (3) of the Pakistani Constitution that safeguards the 'right to liberty, to associate, assemble, and speak' on account of their political affiliation. The 71-year-old cricketer-turned-politician also asked for the formation of a commission to probe the disappearances of journalists and political workers as the country goes to polls on February 8.

These disappearances or abductions, quite apart from

the arbitrary arrests, have spread fear through society and are a grotesque affront to the claim that Pakistan is a country ruled by a constitution and a set of laws. It is requested to take cognizance of such issues against PTI, the letter reads.

He said that the government's "power to prosecute and arrest is being used in a blatant attempt to engineer and skew the political landscape of the country". Khan also stated in his letter that all political parties, along with the PTI, should be allowed "coverage without any restriction or discrimination".

The country's electronic media watchdog, the Pakistan Media Regulatory Authority, has banned Khan's speeches and live broadcasts.

The incarcerated former Prime Minister also highlighted that a large number of women members of his party arrested after the May 9 violence have been imprisoned even after being granted bail

in the case against them. He noted that the treatment meted out to women was a "tragic indictment of law enforcement" as he highlighted the administration in Punjab, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad for mistreating the women held in jails.

Talking about the crackdown on the party, he said that the PTI workers were "being targeted through the registration of multiple and successive criminal cases to ensure continued imprisonment".

Khan urged Chief Justice Isa to ensure a fair trial of every arrested worker and stop further arrests, which he said was important to hold the upcoming election in a fair and free manner. "Without the intervention of the apex court in halting the widespread arrests and abductions that are presently underway, there is no possibility of a fair general election being conducted on February 8, 2024," Khan said.

Nawaz Sharif's statement in Toshakhana case recorded

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan accountability court was informed on Thursday that former prime minister and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif has recorded his statement in the Toshakhana corruption case.

The case filed in 2019 against Sharif, former president Asif Ali Zardari and former prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani centers on allegations that they received luxury vehicles from the Toshakhana (gifts repository) at discounted prices.

The prosecutor informed Judge Muhammad Bashir, who was hearing the case, that Pakistan Muslim League-

Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Sharif has recorded his statement in the case.

The defence counsel informed the court that there was no record of the vehicle mentioned to have been given to Sharif or any documentation showing Sharif's request seeking any vehicle. The prosecutor responded that a thorough examination of the statement was required before any subsequent steps in the proceeding.

The court adjourned the hearing of the Toshakhana case, scheduling the next session for December 20.

According to the case filed by NAB, then-prime minister Gilani, in order to extend illegal benefits to Sharif and

Zardari, allegedly allowed the retention of vehicles gifted to them by different foreign states and dignitaries by relaxing the Toshakhana rules.

The accused, "through dishonest and illegal means for their personal benefit and interest", retained the vehicles in question "against a nominal payment of 15 percent of the total value", the reference stated.

In June 2020, the court issued a non-bailable arrest warrant of Sharif who was living in London in self-exile. But the same were withdrawn after he volunteered to surrender before the court last month after ending about four years of exile.

AP ■ TOKYO

Japan plans to suspend its own Osprey flights after a US Air Force Osprey based in Japan crashed into waters off the southern coast during a training mission, officials said Thursday. Tokyo has also asked the US military to stop all Ospreys operating in Japan except for those searching for victims of crash.

A senior Defence Ministry official, Taro Yamato, told a parliamentary hearing that Japan plans to suspend flights of Ospreys for the time being, but there were few other immediate details. A US Air Force Osprey based in Japan crashed during a training mission Wednesday off of the country's southern coast, killing at least one of the eight crew members.

The cause of the crash and the status of the seven others on board were not immediately known, Japanese coast guard spokesperson Kazuo Ogawa said. The coast guard planned to continue searching through the night. The Osprey is a hybrid aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter, but during flight it can rotate its



Japanese coast guard helicopter and patrol vessel conduct search and rescue operation in the waters where a US military Osprey aircraft crashed into off the coast of Yakushima Island, Kagoshima prefecture, southern Japan, on Thursday

AP/PTI

propellers forward and cruise much faster like an airplane.

Ospreys have had a number of crashes, including in Japan, where they are used at US and Japanese military bases. In Okinawa, where about half of the 50,000 American troops are based, Gov. Denny Tamaki told reporters Wednesday that he would ask the US military to suspend all Osprey flights in Japan. Ogawa said the coast

guard received an emergency call Wednesday afternoon from a fishing boat near the crash site off Yakushima, an island south of Kagoshima on the southern main island of Kyushu. Coast guard aircraft and patrol boats found one male crew member, who was later pronounced dead by a doctor, Ogawa said. They also found debris believed to be from the aircraft and an empty

inflatable life raft about 1 kilometre (0.6 miles) off the eastern coast of Yakushima, he said.

The coast guard said it planned to continue searching through the night.

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said the Osprey disappeared from radar a few minutes before the coast guard received the emergency call. The aircraft requested an emergency land-

ing at the Yakushima airport about five minutes before it was lost from radar, NHK public television and other news outlets reported.

NHK quoted a Yakushima resident as saying he saw the aircraft turned upside down, with fire coming from one of its engines, and then an explosion before it fell to the sea.

US Air Force Special Operations Command said in a statement that the CV-22B Osprey was from Yokota Air Base and assigned to the 353rd Special Operations Wing. Ogawa said the aircraft had departed from the US Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Yamaguchi prefecture and crashed on its way to Kadena Air Base on Okinawa.

Japanese Vice Defence Minister Hiroyuki Miyazawa said it had attempted an emergency sea landing and quoted the US military as saying its pilot "did everything possible until the last minute".

Yokota Air Base is home to US Forces Japan and the Fifth Air Force. Six CV-22 Ospreys have been deployed at Yokota, including the one that crashed.

Missiles tear through buildings in eastern Ukraine; 1 dead

AP ■ KYIV

Russian missiles tore through apartment buildings in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region, local officials said Thursday, killing at least one person and burying families under rubble as the Kremlin's forces continued to pound the fiercely contested area with long-range weapons.

Russian military units simultaneously launched six S-300 missiles during the night, according to Ukrainian Internal Affairs Minister Ihor Klymenko. The missiles struck three Donetsk cities — Pokrovsk, Novohrodivka and Myrnohrad, he said. The cities lie 25-40 kilometres (15-25 miles) from the front line.

Emergency workers pulled the body of a 62-year-old man from the wreckage of a destroyed multi-story building in Novohrodivka. Four more people may be under the rubble, including a child, authorities said.

In Pokrovsk, the strikes destroyed a multi-story building, nine houses, a police office and cars. Emergency crews helped rescue a man with a 6-month-old baby, covered in blood, in his hands, officials said. The head of the city administration, Serhii Dobriak, said it was fourth time Pokrovsk came under attack in the past month.

"They are striking the city center, the houses," he said. "They are just destroying the civilian population."

He urged people to evacuate because "the intensity of strikes is increasing."

All three of the targeted cities are close to Avdiivka, a city where a fierce battle has taken place in recent months.

Avdiivka is a gateway to parts of the Donetsk region still under Ukrainian control.

Pak province aims to deport 10,000 Afghans a day

AP ■ QUETTA

A Pakistani province is setting targets for police to arrest and deport hundreds of thousands of Afghans who are in the country illegally, officials said Thursday. The measure is part of a nationwide crackdown following a sharp decline in the expulsion of Afghans living in Pakistan without legal permission. Near the Chaman border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan, local residents were protesting against new travel visa requirements aimed at cutting down on illegal immigration that have disrupted traffic in the area.

Some of those targeted for deportation had apparently gone to remote areas in Pakistan to avoid arrest, authorities said.

"Instructions have gone to police to arrest Afghans living in Pakistan illegally," said Jan Achakzai, spokesperson for the government in southwestern Pakistan's Baluchistan province. He said authorities have been asked to deport 10,000 Afghans a day. Achakzai made his comment days after authorities at the two key northwestern Torkham and southwestern Chaman border crossings acknowledged that there has been a sudden decrease in the number of Afghans who were sent back to Afghanistan after being arrested on the charges of living in Pakistan illegally.

An estimated 1.7 million Afghans were living in Pakistan in October when authorities announced the crackdown, saying that anyone without proper documents had to go back to their countries by October 31 or be arrested.

Since then, more than 4,00,000 Afghans returned to their home country, Pakistani officials say they are deporting

only those foreigners, including Afghans, who are in the country illegally, and an estimated 1.4 million Afghans who are registered as refugees should not worry as they are not the target of the anti-migrant drive. Police in Pakistan have been going door to door to check migrants' documentation.

Pakistan has been hosting Afghans since the 1980s, when millions of Afghans fled south and east to the neighbouring Islamic nation during the Soviet occupation of their country. The numbers spiked after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021.

As part of its crackdown, Pakistan stopped recognizing special permits under which hundreds of thousands of residents in the Baluchistan province border town of Chaman could cross between the two countries. The new visa requirement angered residents who have been rallying near the border, disrupting normal traffic toward the border crossing.

The protesters want Pakistan to allow them to continue using the special permits for business purposes and to meet with relatives who live in the Afghan border city of Spin Boldak. In Afghanistan, the Taliban-led administration says it is providing shelter and food to returnees. According to Tolo News, a private Afghan outlet, Afghan refugees have complained of mistreatment by Pakistani soldiers after returning home.

The alleged mistreatment of migrants by Pakistani authorities drew widespread condemnation from human organizations. On Tuesday, the New York-based Human Rights Watch said Pakistani authorities have committed widespread abuses against Afghans living in the country to compel their return home.

'US arms sales to Taiwan turning island into powder keg'

Beijing (AP): China's defence ministry said Thursday that the US should stop interfering in both Taiwan and the South China Sea, saying US arms sales to Taiwan are making the situation more dangerous.

Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party is "turning Taiwan into a weapons depot and a powder keg," said Senior Col. Wu Qian, the defense ministry's top spokesperson.

He spoke less than two months ahead of a presidential election in which Taiwan voters will choose between the ruling party, which favors a stronger defense and close ties to the US, and opposition parties that advocate improving ties with China as the best way to reduce tensions. "Taiwan's security depends on the peaceful development of cross-strait relations instead of a few pieces of U.S.-made weapons," Wu said at a monthly news conference. The 160-kilometer (100-mile)-wide Taiwan Strait runs between Taiwan and China's east coast.

China claims the self-governing island as its territory and says it must come under its control. The US government does not support formal independence for Taiwan but is bound by its own laws to provide the island with the means to defend itself. "We request that the US side acts in accordance with its words and takes concrete steps to honor its commitment not to support Taiwan independence, stops arming Taiwan and stops undermining China's core interest," Wu said. Some American lawmakers are calling for stepped-up support in response to threatening military drills by China.

China factory activity contracts in November

Hong Kong (AP): An official survey of Chinese manufacturers shows that factory activity contracted for a second straight month in November, an indicator of weak demand despite various stimulus measures aimed at supporting the economy. The official manufacturing purchas-

ing managers' index fell to 49.4 in November, down slightly from October's 49.5, according to data released Thursday by the National Bureau of Statistics.

A figure below 50 indicates a contraction in manufacturing activity while a number above 50 reflects an expansion, on a scale

up to 100. The index has fallen in seven of the past eight months, with an increase only in September. Despite prolonged weakness after the pandemic, the economy is expected to grow at about a 5% annual pace this year.

The new orders sub-index contracted for a second consec-

utive month, while two other sub-indices for raw material inventory and employment also were lower. China's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has faltered after an initial burst of growth earlier in the year faded more quickly than expected.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all that I, Akshay Kumar Garg S/o Sh. Krishan Chand R/o SD-437, Tower Apartment, Pitampura, Delhi-110034, am the owner of DDA SFS Flat No.417 on Ground Floor, Pocket/Block-S(Daxini)situated at Pitampura, Delhi-110034. Vide file no F37 (74) 81/SFS/Pl.I lost/misplaced Original Possession Letter/NOC for Water & Electricity and Mutati on Letter pertaining to the said flat. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in Police Station, vide LR No:1183451/2023 dated 30/11/2023. Any person claiming any right, interest having any objection may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 9911952727 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice and can personally inform or write to Dy. Director (SFS) H or Asstt. Director (SFS) H, D-Block, Third Floor, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that my client RANVEER SINGH is in process to avail the LAP against his Plot No. 02, area measuring 393.12 Sq. Mtrs., situated at Block/SectorSU-145, in the New Okhla Industrial Development Area, District Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. (availing loan from Primal Capital & Housing Finance Ltd.) having acquired by way of Mutation Letter dated 08.01.2018, issued by NODIA after the death of his father Mr. Liley Ram (who was the owner by way of Lease Deed dated 16.05.2017, doc. No. 2079).

All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, family arrangement, maintenance, bequest, partnership, possession, lease, sublease, tenancy, license, lien, charge, pledge, easement or otherwise howsoever, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 7 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned.

Kamal Kant Gupta (Advocate)
Unit No. FF-2, First floor, Mahalaxmi Metro Tower
Sec-4, Vashiak, G.B., J.P., Mob. 9810063391

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR NOTICE

Applications forms for allotment of Photostat Shop at Regional Campus, Jalandhar for session 2023-24 upto 30-06-2024 are invited till 10-12-2023. The details, terms & conditions and forms can be downloaded from the university website link:- <https://online.gndu.ac.in/tenders-notice.aspx>

Dean Students' Welfare
Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar
NA/12/20501/2023/30195
Dated CHD :- 11/30/2023

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all that I, KISHORE KUMAR & BISHAM KUMAR both S/O LATE ASHOK KUMAR HARIANI both R/O-FLAT NO.406, EL APPTT., PLOT NO.13, PKT-6, PH-1, NEAR NASIR PUR, SEC-1A, PALAM VILLAGE, DWARKA, DELHI-451 am the mutatee/legal owner of PLOT NO.207, PKT-2, BLK-A, AREA-325QM, SEC-30, ROHINI, DELHI, FILE NO.F-47 (617)2005/LAB/RO which is allotted by the DDA, have lost the Original Allotment Cum-Demand Letter, Possession Letter & Site Possession Slip of the above Plot. FIR/NCR to this effect has lodged in P.S.Crime Branch, Delhi vide LR No.1192908/2023, Dated-30-11-2023. Any person(s)claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 9810921408 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. Any person claiming any right, interest or having any objections with respect to this property can also personally inform/contact me.

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR

Short Term e-Tender Notice for Providing Un-Skilled, Semi-Skilled, Skilled and Highly-Skilled Manpower through Outsourcing

E-tender No.GNDU/REG/2023/03 Date: 30-11-2023

Online bids are invited for providing Un-Skilled, Semi-Skilled, Skilled and Highly-Skilled workers at Guru Nanak Dev University Main Campus, its Regional Campuses and Associated/Constituent Colleges on monthly wages on contract basis for a period of two years. Tender Documents can be purchased through online mode only from website www.eproc.punjab.gov.in. Last date for closing the online tender is 11.12.2023 upto 5:00 P.M. For more details visit the above mentioned portal.

Amritsar
30-11-2023

NA/12/20502/2023/30196 Dated CHD :- 11/30/2023

Registrar

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THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD.
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Notice Inviting Tender

e /Sealed tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items:-

Sr. No.	Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
1.	For Verka Gurdaspur Dairy a) Hiring of Car(Swift Dzire or its equivalent) b) Allotment of Milk Bars at Civil Hospital.	01 year, extendable for another one year/ 01No. 02 years, extendable for another one year / 01No.
2.	For Verka Sangrur Dairy a) Rice Husk b) Milkbar at:- • Gurdwara Shri Mastuana Sahib, Sangrur - Barnala Main Road (reserved). • Sant Longowal Institute of Engineering & Technology (SLIET), longowal (Unreserved).	Jan 2024- 700 MT Feb 2024- 700 MT Mar 2024- 600 MT For 03 year on Rent / 01No. For 03 year on Rent / 01No.
3.	For Verka Ludhiana Dairy a) Supply of Liquid Nitrogen Gas. b) Sealed Tenders for Outsourcing of:- • Activity for Housekeeping (Sanitation & Cleaning) and Horticulture work. • Cycle, Scooter, Motor Cycle Stand Activities.	Annual
4.	For Verka Amritsar Dairy a) Purchase of Conduction lid film. b) Hiring of :- • Insulated single portion road milk tankers fitted with single phase milk pump for the loading of milk from BMC to tanker and Transportation of milk from BMC/MCC to Amritsar Dairy. • Powder plant for conversion of skimmed milk to SMP. c) Empanelment of road milk tankers for transportation of milk from milk union Amritsar to other unions/powder plants.	Annual Annual /05 No's Half yearly 05 No's (15 MT, 20 MT)
5.	For Verka Hoshiarpur Dairy Hiring of One vehicle for supply of LN2 Gas, Semen and other allied works related to procurement etc.	01 No.

NOTE:
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in.
2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.

Incharge (Purchase)

Key infra industries growth rises by 12.1% in October

5 sectors log double digit expansion

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The output of eight key infrastructure sectors jumped by 12.1 per cent in October 2023 against 0.7 per cent expansion in the year-ago period on account of a sharp uptick in production of coal, steel, cement and electricity, according to the official data released on Thursday.

These numbers assume significance as the eight core sectors — coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity — contribute 40.27 per cent to the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

Growth was primarily driven by a low base effect and double-digit growth in five sectors — coal, steel, cement and electricity.

Infrastructure sectors grew by 9.2 per cent in September.

The output growth of eight sectors was at 8.6 per cent in



April-October 2023-24 against 8.4 per cent in the year-ago period.

Coal output rose by 18.4 per cent while steel production jumped 11 per cent during the month under review as against 3.8 per cent and 5.8 per cent in October 2022 respectively.

Cement production grew by 17.1 per cent against a 4.2 per cent contraction in the year-ago period.

Electricity generation rose by 20.3 per cent in October 2023 against 1.2 per cent in the

same month last year.

Output of crude oil and natural gas increased by 1.3 per cent and 9.9 per cent in October this year respectively as against a negative growth of 2.2 per cent and 4.2 per cent in October 2022 respectively.

Refinery products production stood at 4.2 per cent in October this year as against (-) 3.1 per cent in October 2022. Fertiliser production growth stood at 5.3 per cent in October this year as against 5.4 per cent in October 2022.

Stock markets edge up in volatile trade on derivatives expiry, rise for 3rd day

Market valuation of BSE-listed firms remain above \$4 trillion mark

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty eked out gains on Thursday to extend the winning run for a third straight day in a highly volatile trade amid the scheduled monthly derivatives expiry and muted trend in the US markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex closed 86.53 points or 0.13 per cent higher at 66,988.44, registering its third day of gains.

Stock markets witnessed heavy volatility due to the monthly expiry of derivatives contracts and oscillated between gains and losses during the day. Sensex hit a high of 67,069.89 and a low of 66,610.35 in day trade.

Despite heavy volatility, the combined market valuation of all listed companies on the leading stock exchange BSE continued to remain above the USD 4-trillion mark for the second day in a row. The market valuation of all listed



companies on the BSE reached the USD 4-trillion milestone for the first time ever on Wednesday.

The broader Nifty50 of the National Stock Exchange edged up 36.55 points or 0.18 per cent to close at 20,133.15.

Analysts said that investors were awaiting GDP and other macro numbers scheduled for release after market hours.

"Asian stocks mostly rose on Thursday to clock their strongest performance in 10 months, as investor sentiment warmed on a relatively benign global interest rates outlook and signs of economic recovery. European

stocks rose mildly," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.96 per cent and midcap index jumped 0.83 per cent.

Among the indices, healthcare rallied 1.66 per cent, consumer durables rallied 1.61 per cent, realty jumped 1.52 per cent, industrials (1.48 per cent), capital goods (1.39 per cent) and consumer discretionary (0.77 per cent). Utilities and bank were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled with gains.

Indian economy grows 7.6% in Sept quarter: Govt data



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's economy grew 7.6 per cent in the September quarter as against 6.2 per cent in the year-ago period, according to official data released on Thursday.

India remains the fastest-growing major economy, as China's GDP growth in the July-September quarter this year was 4.9 per cent.

As per the National Statistical Office (NSO) data, the GVA (Gross Value Added) of the agriculture sector recorded a 1.2 per cent growth, down

from 2.5 per cent in the July-September quarter of 2022-23.

The GVA growth of the manufacturing sector accelerated to 13.9 per cent in the second quarter of the current fiscal against a decline of 3.8 per cent a year ago.

The growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during the April-September period in 2023-24 stood at 7.7 per cent compared to 9.5 per cent in the first half of the last financial year. The GDP growth in the first quarter of the current fiscal remained unchanged at 7.8 per cent.

India should not take new commitments at COP28 climate talks in Dubai: GTRI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India should not take new commitments at the ongoing United Nations COP28 climate talks in Dubai and continue its green transition without additional assurances, think tank GTRI suggested on Thursday.

The climate conference is being held at the Dubai Expo City from November 30 to December 12.

The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that India has already made significant commitments at COP27 (Conference of Parties) and the Paris Agreement, aligning with its Long-term Low Emissions and Development Strategy.

India's commitment to generating half of its electricity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 is noteworthy.



"At COP28 India need not take new commitments at COP28. Instead, it may continue its green transition without additional commitments," GTRI Co-Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

However, he added that the country's high methane emissions, especially from the agriculture sector, pose a chal-

lenge.

"Any improvement will require changing crop pattern which may take decades of efforts. Balancing emission reduction with the livelihood impact on the agriculture sector is crucial," Srivastava said.

The think-tank also suggested that as 70 per cent of

electricity is generated from coal power here and many large industries rely on captive and not grid power, India needs to improve on these.

"However, India should not agree to an immediate shutdown of coal-fired power plants to ensure energy security. India must highlight that developed countries are responsible for 89 per cent of historical emissions. They subsidized the fossil fuel industry with USD 1.8 trillion in 2020," it said.

It added that India should advocate for broadening the scope of climate discussions to address these interconnected challenges, fostering a more effective approach to climate action.

Further it said that despite fifty years of international efforts, annual GHG (greenhouse gas emissions) emissions have increased by 270 per cent, reaching 53.8 billion

metric tons of CO2 equivalent in 2022.. "The rising GHG emissions underscore the insufficiency of current efforts to meet the agreement's goals. Highlighting this will be the focus of COP28," it said adding India's role at COP28 is crucial, given its status as a developing nation and the third largest emitters of carbon dioxide gases after China and the US.

But India must emphasise the fact that its per capita CO2 emissions at 1.9 tons are "very" low, far lower than the USA (14.5) and China (8.9) those of all developed countries and China, it said.

"Large population converts even low per capita emissions into big total, India cannot be punished for being a large population. COP28 obligations must be tied up with per capita emissions and not a country's total emissions," Srivastava said.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The country's largest multiplex operator PVR Inox will open 150 screens in the next fiscal with an investment of about Rs 500 crore, a top company official has said.

The company, which opened a six-screen luxury cinema at Maison Inox here on Thursday, already runs 118 screens across 23 properties in the megapolis.

Overall, including its property in Colombo, it operates 1,711 screens at 359 properties across 114 cities.

We are planning to add 150 more screens at an investment of around Rs 500 crore next fiscal, Sanjeev Kumar Bijli, an Executive Director at PVR Inox, told PTI here.

On the Maison Inox, he said normally a screen required an investment of Rs 5 crore but given that it's a luxury collection and comes with the first



attached bar (Gastby Bar), the per screen cost is about Rs 7 crore.

On the company's overseas expansion plans, he said they will have more screens in Sri Lanka only and not anywhere else.

Despite the civil war and the deep financial difficulties, "Sri

Lanka has been an extremely good market for us so far", Bijli said.

"Given the response to our first screen in the capital of the island nation, we are planning to have more properties there. But we have no other overseas market in mind for expansion," Bijli said.

Petrol, diesel price revision only when oil price stabilises below USD 80

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned fuel marketing companies are likely to revert to daily revision in prices of petrol and diesel only when international oil prices stabilise below USD 80 per barrel on a sustained basis, industry officials said.

Three state-owned fuel retailers — Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) — which control roughly 90 per cent of the market, have kept petrol and diesel prices on freeze for a record 20th month in a row.

This is despite the raw material (crude oil) cost surging last year, leading to heavy losses in the first half of 2022-23 fiscal year before easing rates propelled them to profitability.

"There is considerable volatility in the international oil market and prices fluctuate wildly," an official said. "Oil companies can cut prices by Re 1 per litre and everyone will applaud. But when international oil prices go up, will they be allowed to raise rates remains in doubt."

India is the world's third largest oil consuming and importing nation. It imports more than 85 per cent of its oil needs and hence domestic pricing is linked to international rates.

The basket of crude oil that India buys has averaged USD 83.42 per barrel in November, down from USD 90.08 of October and USD 93.54 of September.

While at current prices, oil companies are making some money on petrol, diesel — the most consumed fuel accounting for almost 40 per cent of all petroleum products consumed in the country -- but it has been in a "touch-and-go" scenario in recent weeks,



another official said. "On some days there is profit on diesel but on other days there is loss. There is no consistent trend."

Three retailers had been recouping losses they incurred for holding rates when crude oil prices shot through the roof last year. In May, international oil prices and retail pump rates had come at par, but the subsequent surge widened the gulf between cost and price realised.

"For oil companies to revert to daily market based price revision, oil prices will have to come below USD 80 on a sustained basis," an official said.

Petrol and diesel prices have been on a freeze since April 6 last year. Petrol costs Rs 96.72 a litre in the national capital and diesel comes for Rs 89.62 per litre. The three firms made bumper profits in April-September -- first half of the current fiscal -- but considering the low earnings of last year, they are yet to recoup all losses, officials said.

Consider this, IOCL posted a net profit of Rs 26,717.76 crore this year as compared with a full year profit of Rs 8,241.82 crore in 2022-23 (April 2022 to March 2023).

In 2021-22 (considered a normal year), the company had posted a profit of Rs 21,762 crore for the full year.

Considering that to be a normalised earnings, for two years (2022-23 and 2023-24), it should make about Rs 42,000 crore.

In one-and-half years (April 2022 to March 2023 full fiscal and April 2023 to September 2023), the company earned about Rs 35,000 crore.

Similar is the situation with BPCL and HPCL.

"Not all of the losses have been recouped," an official explained. "When prices were high in the immediate aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there were huge losses. These losses were trimmed in the second half of 2022-23. In the current year, the losses are being recouped by making profits when oil prices are low."

International oil prices have firmed up since August, leading to margins of three retailers turning negative again.

The OMCs' marketing margins -- the difference between their net realised prices and international prices -- have already weakened significantly from the high levels seen in the quarter ended June 30, 2023 (Q1 fiscal 2024). Marketing margins on diesel turned negative since August while margins on petrol have narrowed considerably over the same period as international prices increased.

India, Africa to be major contributors to 112 million barrel/day of peak global crude oil demand in 2030: S&P

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The global demand for crude oil is expected to see its peak in 2030 at 112 million barrels a day mark with India and Africa to be major contributors, according to S&P Global Commodity Insights.

The current global demand of crude oil is at 103 million barrels per day, Pulkit Agarwal, head of India Content at S&P Global Commodity Insights, said on Thursday.

The global demand for crude oil will peak to stay in the range of 112 million barrels a day in 2030 from the present level of 103 million barrels a day, he told PTI at S&P Global Commodity Insights: Media Roundtable Outlook 2024.

India and Africa will be the major contributors to the 8.73 per cent increase in demand by 2030 as industrial activities will pick up in the region,



Agarwal said.

There will be increased use of clean cooking, automobiles and setting up of refineries by various economies, he said.

However, the demand for crude oil in India will see its peak in 2040 to reach 7.2 million barrels a day from 5.2 million barrels a day at present, he said.

On the price outlook he said, "In our base case, oil prices will likely hover above USD 80/bar-

rel and can inch closer to USD 90/barrel by Q3 2024."

Gauri Jauhar, Executive Director, Energy Transitions & CleanTech Consulting, S&P Global Commodity Insights, said as India grows, it will also transition at a sustainable pace based on an underlying economic transition of mobility, urbanization and a desire for reliability.

An energy transition will inevitably be a technology tran-

Hiring of apprentices jump in IT, ITES segment: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The headcount of apprentices in the IT and ITES segment witnessed a steep rise this year and more such people are expected to be hired by companies in the coming months as well, according to a report released on Thursday.

Business solutions provider Qess Corp's Apprentice Skill Trends Report' said there has been an over 250 per cent annual increase in apprentice headcount in the IT/ITES space in 2023 compared to last year as companies look at lowering the cost of their workforce. About 79 per cent of employers in IT/ITES industries expect a rise in apprentice intake in the com-

ing months as well, it said.

As per the report, the spike in hiring in the IT/ITES industry has been steadily growing month-on-month as the industry prioritises apprenticeship engagement for the potential to lower the cost of its workforce.

"The IT space in India has seen a drop in headcount and fresher intake due to global tensions. However, apprentice hiring has picked up substantially in the past year across the IT segment, with newer roles emerging that did not perhaps exist a year ago.

"This is a trend observed across both metro and tier II cities, which is encouraging to see," Qess Corp Vice President Girija S said. She

also said that apprentice hiring in Banking, Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI) segment is also flourishing with the expansion of Non Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs). "However, the scope for apprentice skilling and job creation in IT/BFSI sectors is unprecedented, and we expect the creation of approximately 5 million jobs by 2025," she added. The report is based on Qess Corp's operations data, which maps demand and supply in the talent ecosystem for apprentice hiring.

It noted that BFSI and IT/ITES were the top industries employing apprentices in the past year, considering the high return on investment amid ongoing uncertainties and global turmoil.

INBRIEF

ECOZEN GIVES FARMERS COMPLETE CONTROL OVER PUMPS

Haryana: A key player in cleantech, Ecozenspecialises in developing climate-smart technology solutions that help farmers improve in farm yield, reduce waste and increase farm earnings. As a leading brand in the solar pump sets in India, Ecozen has positively impacted over 1,60,000 Indian farmers through their advanced Ecotron smart solar pump controllers. Farmers in Haryana now get India's first 4G-enabled smart solar-powered pump controller, known as the Ecotron, available through Ecozen Solutions under PM KUSUM Yojana with a 75% subsidy. To ensure that the pumps are installed quickly under the PM Kusum Yojana, Ecozen has partnered with Mahindra Solarize. This partnership helps the farmers of Haryana get Ecozen's advanced technology backed by the wide and efficient installation network of the Mahindra team.

LIC LAUNCHES JEEVAN UTSAV PLAN

New Delhi: In tune with our market talk, Corporation of India launched LIC's Jeevan Utsav is Individual, Savings, Whole Life Insurance plan. It is a Limited Premium plan with Guaranteed Additions throughout Premium Paying Term Identification Number (UIN) for LIC'

NATIONAL BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Panghal, Thapa sail into semifinals

PTI ■ SHILLONG

World Championships runner-up Amit Panghal (51kg) and 2021 Asian Champion Sanjeet (92kg) continued their impressive run as 12 SSCB boxers secured semifinal spots at the Men's National Boxing Championships here on Thursday.

Six-time Asian Championships medallist Shiva Thapa, representing Assam, also progressed to the last-four stage.

Panghal dominated the proceedings throughout and ultimately won the bout comfortably in a unanimous decision against Mohammad Aarif of Jammu and Kashmir.



He will next face Ankit of RSPB in the semifinals.

Up against 2018 Commonwealth Games bronze medallist Naman Tanwar of RSPB, Sanjeet was at the top of his game as he controlled the bout and played from a distance, landing hard punches throughout to register a win with a unanimous decision in the 92kg quarter-final.

Sanjeet will take on All India Police's (AIP) Vicky in the semifinals.

The other 10 SSCB boxers who qualified for the semifinals include Barun Singh (48kg), Pawan (54kg), Sachin (57kg), Akash (60kg), Vanshaj (63.5kg), Rajat (67kg), Akash (71kg), Deepak (75kg),

Lakshya (80kg), Jugnoo (86kg).

In other significant bouts, Thapa showcased his skill set and power packed punches to secure a commanding 5-0 victory over Shashank Pradhan of Delhi to set up a clash against Harivansh Tawari of Maharashtra.

Commonwealth Games silver medallist Sagar (92+kg), who represents RSPB, was up against Navjot Singh of Chandigarh. He started the bout with an aggressive approach and landed a flurry of hard hitting punches in the first round itself that led to the referee stopping the contest.

He will fight it out against Vishal Kumar of Delhi.



SYED MODI INTERNATIONAL

Priyanshu lone Indian in men singles quarters

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Priyanshu Rajawat was the lone Indian shuttler to qualify for the quarterfinals in men's singles, while Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand made the cut in women's doubles at the Syed Modi International badminton tournament here on Thursday.

Priyanshu, who won the Orleans Masters this year, emerged victorious after compatriot Sathish Kumar Karunakaran retired while lagging 18-21 6-11 in the second round match.

The world no. 31 Indian will now clash against Indonesian qualifier Alwi Farhan.

Commonwealth Games bronze medallists Treesa and Gayatri, seeded fourth, defeated compatriots Dhanya Nandakumar and Ridhi Kaur Toor 21-9 21-5 and are set to face another Indian pair next.

As many as 10 Indians had participated in the men's singles draw which has world no. 12 Japanese Kenta Nishimoto and world no. 14 Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei as the top two world-ranked players.

While HS Prannoy and Lakshya Sen had withdrawn at the last-minute, the rest of the shuttlers, apart from Priyanshu, cut a sorry figure after failing to cross

the second round of the Super 300 tournament.

World no. 40 Kiran George, who won the Denmark Masters this year, fought hard before losing 16-21 21-18 20-22 to world no. 36 Chia Hao Lee of Taiwan.

Things were more gloomy in women's singles as none of the Indian players could cross the second round, though as many as 11 of them participated in the tournament. The draw has Japan's world no. 17 Aya Oshiro as the top ranked player.

While the left-handed Ashmita Chaliha, who had won Maldives International this season, was outclassed by third seed Oshiro 21-7 21-13, 16-year-old Unnati Hooda, the 2022 Odisha Open and 2023 Abu Dhabi Masters winner, was humbled 9-21 13-21 by former world champion Nozomi Okuhara of Japan and qualifier Janani Ananthakumar lost 15-21 12-21 to Malaysia's Wong Ling Ching.

Anupama Upadhyaya, the former junior world no. 1 and current senior national champion, lost 16-21 17-21 to Taiwan's Sung Shuo Yun, seeded eighth, while Ruthvika Shivani Gadde, who was part of the 2018 gold-medal winning Commonwealth Games mixed team, was no match for Thailand's Lalrinat Chaiwan, losing 8-21 12-21.

India need more people to take up sport for bigger Olympic success: Bindra

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Abhinav Bindra reckons that investing in just elite athletes will not make India a sporting superpower and if the country aspires to take its medals tally to double digits in the Olympics, more people need to enter the playing arenas and sport should not be looked at from the narrow prism of high performance.

India's top athletes have been receiving tremendous financial support from the government and corporate houses, of late, and the results have only got better as elite athletes get to train abroad and they now work with best support staff.

Bindra said the investment in just top level athletes will not suffice.

"If you want to get to 50 (Olympic medals), it is not just going to be pumping money into the elite (athletes). It is only going to be a very small percentage of your population that is going to get involved in sports, so you need more people to play," Bindra said during the RCB Innovation Lab Leaders Meet here.

Bindra, the 2008 Beijing Olympics gold medallist in 10m air rifle, added that India was at a juncture where sport must become a mass movement now.

"The by-product of that hopefully will be that more people will be involved in sport. So I believe that the shift in perspective needs to happen and it needs to happen now."

The former world champion also said that for India to become a sporting nation, a "sustainable" and "thriving ecosystem" should be created where sport is not judged from the narrow lens of high performance.

"What I would really like to see India as a country is to start looking at sport more holistically and not singularly from the prism of high performance.

"It is a very narrow view and if you only look at it from a



high-performance perspective, it will be very challenging to make that next leap from seven Olympic medals in Tokyo," he said.

India had its best-ever tally at the 2022 Tokyo Olympics, where it returned home with seven medals, including a gold in javelin throw from Neeraj Chopra.

Bindra, 41, added that more than just celebrating India's success in major events, if the country could celebrate sports, it could bring about the "real change" in the ecosystem.

"Giving more opportunities to young people to simply enjoy sport is that to me an important element that has to be developed for the whole Olympic project. The number two point is developing an economy for the future. The whole country needs to be involved in not just celebrating Indian success but also celebrating sports.

"If you have that larger goal in mind and you have this more holistic thought process in mind, I think you come up with an interesting project that will not just be limited to the two weeks of sports, but to how the Olympic Games can truly be the driver for real change," he said referring to India's endeavour towards hosting 2036 Olympic Games.

On RCB Innovation Lab creating a platform for a dialogue on sports, Bindra said, "Event like these bring experts from all over the world to ideate, which in turn make one aware of the "newest global trends, and opportunities that exist".

India start with 12-0 thrashing of Canada in FIH Women's Junior World Cup

PTI ■ SANTIAGO (CHILE)

The Indian team made a resounding start to its FIH Women's Junior Hockey World Cup campaign by securing a commanding 12-0 victory over Canada here.

Annu (4th, 6th, 39th minute), Dipi Monika Toppo (21st), Mumtaz Khan (26th, 41st, 54th, 60th), Deepika Soreng (34th, 50th, 54th), and Neelam (45th) were the goal scorers for India on Wednesday.

India began the match with an attacking approach, and swiftly secured an early advantage as Annu scored two early goals through penalty corners.

Despite taking a two-goal lead, India persisted with their aggressive style, maintaining pressure on Canada. However, they were unable to find more goals in the opening quarter as it ended 2-0 in their favour.



The momentum from the first quarter was carried into the second by India, who continued their dominance. They maintained possession, consistently penetrating the circle,

resulting in Dipi Monika Toppo and Mumtaz Khan netting a field goal each, further extending India's lead.

In the meantime, Canada won a penalty corner but they were

unable to make the most of it.

As the second quarter concluded, the Indian team enjoyed a commanding 4-0 lead.

Despite having a healthy lead, the Indian team showed no signs of slowing down in the third quarter and continued to dominate the proceedings with Deepika Soreng converting a penalty corner, following which Annu completed her hat-trick, while Mumtaz Khan scored her second goal of the match.

Also, Neelam smashed home her shot from a penalty corner to make it 8-0 for India by the end of the penultimate quarter.

The Indian team's hunger for goals continued in the fourth quarter, resulting in strikes from Deepika Soreng and Mumtaz Khan as they completed their hat-tricks.

India will next lock horns with Germany on Friday.

French soccer league struggling with violence

AP ■ PARIS

There's been discriminatory chanting in the stands, a team bus pelted with stones, a game called off because of crowd trouble, and precious few goals on the field.

The French soccer league is making headlines for all the wrong reasons this season. And now even the French government is calling for something to be done about it.

After 13 rounds of games this season, the number of incidents is worrying officials who have been dealing with an upsurge of violence in stadiums over the past two campaigns.

According to Interior minister Gerald Darmanin, more than 100 police officers were injured in soccer-related incidents last season, and 870 people were detained. And there is no sign of abatement.

"There's no other sport with this level of violence," Darmanin said recently.

In October in Montpellier, a match was stopped in added

time after fans threw a firework from the stands that landed next to Clermont goalkeeper Mory Diaw. The Senegal player had to be taken off on a stretcher, but was not seriously injured.

A new nadir was reached a few weeks later in Marseille when the bus carrying Lyon players was stoned by fans outside the Velodrome stadium. The windows were smashed and Lyon coach Fabio Grosso was left with his face bloodied, an injury that required stitching.

Supporters were also targeted, five police officers were injured, and nine people placed in custody, according to Darmanin.

Another episode of violence broke out in Montpellier last weekend when a bus transporting Brest fans back home was attacked as they left the southern city following a 3-1 win for the away team. Their bus was hit by stones reportedly thrown from a motorway bridge.

"What happened was very serious. When you look at the impacts on the vehicle, you



quickly understand the violence," said Pascal Robert, the club's managing director. "If the paving stone that was thrown at the front of the bus had fallen two meters lower, the driver would have been hit... I can't imagine the tragedy that would have ensued with our sixty supporters on board."

Meanwhile, the league isn't offering up a whole lot in terms of entertainment or suspense.

Paris Saint-Germain once again

tops the standings ahead of Sunday's match at Le Havre, having won nine of the last 11 league titles. With its star-studded team lead by Kylian Mbappe - the league's top scorer with 14 goals - PSG has no rival on the domestic stage.

Nice, however, has mounted a credible challenge this campaign and lags just one point behind the leader ahead of Saturday's match at Nantes.

But the other 16 teams are not giving their fans much to cheer

about. According to the league's statistics, the average number of goals per game after 12 rounds was lower than in the last three seasons - at under 2.5 - with the number of scoreless draws on the rise.

Some supporter groups are finding other ways to stay entertained.

Before the match between Marseille and Lyon was ultimately called off, fans from both teams remained in the stadium and exchanged insults as they waited for play to resume.

Taunting their Marseille rivals, some Lyon fans were filmed making Nazi gestures and mimicking monkeys.

Vicent Labrune, the French league president, believes the violence reached a new high after stadiums welcomed supporters back again following the COVID-19 pandemic during which games were played with no fans.

With the reopening of venues, violent individuals who had served stadium bans during the interruption were allowed back,

he said. "The guys had served their time. We ended up with a completely above-average number of crazy people," Labrune said during a hearing with French lawmakers this month.

Labrune estimated that about 50 violent fans at each French league club are causing trouble.

"If we manage to get them out of stadiums, the situation should improve," he said.

Labrune added that the "zero tolerance" policy implemented by the league - with point deductions and the closure of stadium sections - is needed to improve the situation. But he seemed under no illusion that the violence can be eradicated without a bigger change in mentalities.

"Football is a reflection of society, we're not going to stop it all on our own," Labrune said.

Faced with an increasing number of homophobic chants in stadiums, Labrune also called for matches to be systematically stopped as soon as the first offensive chant can be heard.

Dortmund gaining confidence

AP ■ BERLIN

Borussia Dortmund's success in the Champions League is giving it confidence it can recover its faltering Bundesliga campaign.

Dortmund defeated AC Milan 3-1 away on Tuesday to reach the knockout stage of Europe's premier competition despite a poor start to what many regarded as the toughest group with big-spending Paris Saint Germain and Newcastle.

The German team lost 2-0 at PSG in its first game, followed up with a scoreless draw with Milan at home, but recovered with back-to-back wins over Newcastle before Tuesday's win in Italy.

"It's a real statement to qualify from the group already in the fifth match-day," Dortmund sporting director Sebastian Kehl said.

"Not many believed we could do it."

Part of the reason for that is Dortmund's patchy form in the Bundesliga so far this season. The team ended a run of three games without a win in the league last weekend with a 4-2 victory over Borussia Mönchengladbach, but had looked set for more disappointment after finding itself 2-



0 down after 28 minutes.

Instead, hopes are high again after two consecutive wins including Tuesday's success in Milan.

But Dortmund next faces a trip to unbeaten Bundesliga leader Bayer Leverkusen on Sunday - a team that has averaged more than three goals a game so far and is already 10 points clear of Dortmund after just 12 rounds.

Leverkusen leads 11-time defending champion Bayern Munich by two points. Bayern can move provisionally top on Saturday with a win at home over struggling Union Berlin - a team that hasn't won any of its last 15 games across all competitions.

Leverkusen faced Swedish team Håcken away in the Europa

League on Thursday.

Before that game, Leverkusen had won every match across all competitions this season with one exception - a 2-2 draw at Bayern in the fourth round of the league.

Since Xabi Alonso took charge of the team in October last year, Leverkusen has only failed to score in its own stadium once - against Dortmund last season in a 2-0 loss in January. That defeat ended Leverkusen's five-game winning run.

But Alonso's team seems to have more resilience this season - Leverkusen has the second-best defense in the league with 10 goals conceded compared to Bayern's nine. Both teams are the only unbeaten sides after 12 rounds.

Golfer Lee tied for lead in Australian Open women's field

AP ■ SYDNEY

Teenage amateur Rachel Lee was almost late to the first tee but finished the first round of the Australian Open in a tie for the lead with American Jenny Shin.

The 16-year-old Lee had to hurry to start her round Thursday after getting the times confused, and she carried momentum to a 6-under 67 at The Lakes Golf Club in a tournament that has men's and women's fields and a two-venue format.

"I was putting and my coach says, Rachel, you're on the tee," Lee, who attends a Sydney high school, explained. "So I just ran out there. I've learned my lesson."

Jenny Shin was also 6 under after a 66 at The Australian Golf Club. The pair had a one shot lead over two-time major winner Jiyai Shin of South Korea.

Ashleigh Buhai of South Africa and local Stephanie Kyriacou were in fourth place at 4 under. Cameron Davis led the men's field by a stroke at 9 under after

an opening 63 at The Lakes.

The 2017 champion had an eagle at the par-5 14th and seven birdies to finish one ahead of American Patrick Rodgers.

Scotland's Connor Syme was equal third at 7 under after an opening 64 at The Australian. All but two of the leading 10 players in the men's field had their first rounds at The Lakes, including Min Woo Lee, who was 5-under just four days after winning the Australian PGA Championship title in Brisbane last Sunday.

His older sister, two-time major winner Minjee Lee, was in a three-way tie for sixth in the women's field at 3 under.

Cameron Smith, who missed the cut in his attempted title defense at the Australian PGA last week, was in a group of 20 players at 1 under after opening with a 71 at The Lakes.

"There's definitely something to build on there," he said.

Adam Scott had two birdies and two bogeys in an opening, even-par 71 at The Australian and was among a big group of players nine shots off the pace.

Bellingham keeps scoring

AP ■ BARCELONA (SPAIN)

Real Madrid wasn't supposed to still be this good after losing its top scorer this summer and being decimated by injuries.

But, in came Jude Bellingham and the England midfielder has kept Madrid on course to compete for titles this season.

Madrid is leading La Liga and is the only team other than Manchester City to have won all five of its games in the Champions League.

The key to the ongoing success of the 14-time European Cup winners can be boiled down to the depth and overall talent of its squad, and the incredible impact that Bellingham has made since arriving from Borussia Dortmund.

Bellingham led Madrid to another commanding victory on Wednesday when he scored his team-high 15th goal of the season to help beat Napoli 4-2 and remain perfect in the Champions League group stage.

Madrid is also leading the title fight in Spain, where it is in first place, level on points with Girona before hosting the relegation-threatened Granada on Saturday.

"He's been a wonderful sign-



ing," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said about Bellingham on Wednesday, before he dug deep to find a supposed flaw in his new star.

"He needs to improve his Spanish because, like I have said, nobody's perfect."

Madrid lost the pillars of its attack and defence when Karim Benzema, its top scorer for the five previous seasons, was lured with other European players to Saudi Arabia in June and goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois tore a knee ligament just before the season kicked off in August.

Then came more season-threatening injuries. Eder Militão, the team's best central defender, ruptured his ACL in the season opener, and Eduardo Camavinga, Madrid's

most versatile midfielder, tore a knee ligament while training with France this month.

Vinicius Júnior also went down during the most recent international break when he tore a leg muscle with Brazil, an injury that will keep him out of action for the remainder of the year.

Toss in minor injuries to Kepa Arrizabalaga, who came in to replace Courtois, veteran leader Luka Modric, and starting holding midfielder Aurelien Tchouaméni, and it seems Madrid should have struggled against Serie A champion Napoli. Instead, it rolled over the Italian club just like most of its rivals this campaign. Its only loss this season came at Atletico Madrid in the domestic league in September.

INDIA NEED YOUNG BOWLERS TO DELIVER

PTI ■ RAIPUR

India's young bowling unit, which has been under the pump, will look to better its death overs performance while utilising Glenn Maxwell's absence to its advantage in the fourth T20 International against Australia here on Friday.

India's second-string attack did not paint a good picture of itself by not defending 40-plus runs in the final two overs in the third match which the Australians won while chasing a daunting 223-run target.

"There is a possibility of a minor tweak in the Indian line-up after Prasidh Krishna gave away 68 runs in four overs, including 21 in the final over.

"Deepak Chahar is back in the T20 mix and his ability to move the new ball should be considered for his inclusion in the playing XI along with death overs specialist Mukesh Kumar, who is back after one-match break.

"Both Prasidh and Avesh Khan lack variety and innovation as they keep pitching the ball at the same length. Both bowl in late 130s or early 140s but consistently pitch it back of the length and the nature of Indian tracks make it a cannon fodder for batters.

"Also not being able to use variations like conventional or wide yorkers has been the undoing of these bowlers who also didn't execute slower deliveries properly.



In the batting line up, Shreyas Iyer's comeback means only Tilak Varma looks a candidate who could be benched as five others -- Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Ishan Kishan, skipper Suryakumar Yadav and finisher Rinku Singh select

themselves.

India will also look to exploit the absence of a marauding Maxwell who pulled off a heist of sorts to singlehandedly bring Australia back into the five-match series with a win in a last-ball finish in Guwahati.

"But the hosts will fancy their chances with Maxwell, and other influential players such as Steve Smith and Adam Zampa not figuring in the playing XI here, having left for home after a long stay in the country where they won their sixth

World Cup title recently.

"Cricket Australia (CA) released many of its top players including Maxwell midway into the series keeping in mind their workload and fitness ahead of the T20 World Cup.

"The Suryakumar Yadav-led second-string India are smarting from a classic Maxwell innings, and the home team bowlers will be relieved that he will not walk out to bat at the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Stadium.

"Instead, they will probably be bowling to players such as Tim David, Josh Philippe and big-hitter Ben McDermott, a far better proposition at the moment than challenging Maxwell, who has enhanced his reputation as one of Australia's greatest white-ball batters in the past five-six weeks.

"The runs, and the manner and situation in which he has accumulated them, has catapulted Maxwell into a level not meant for others.

"India's bowlers, though, will still have to contend with Travis Head, on a high after his scintillating match-winning hundred in the World Cup final against India, and the seasoned Matthew Wade, who is leading the side in the ongoing series.

"Like in Guwahati, dew could again have a say on a December evening in this part of the world, and the captain winning the toss would opt to bat second without an iota of doubt, leaving the team batting first to deal with the wet ball in the second innings.

"The reinforcements have already joined the Australian squad and are available for the penultimate match of the series that started barely three days after their triumphant World

Cup campaign, the tight scheduling leaving many former players surprised.

"India's batting has been served well by the likes of young Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ishan Kishan, Rinku Singh, Tilak Varma and the skipper himself when required.

"These players are expected to fire again but one man whose confidence will be sky high is Ruturaj Gaikwad, who is coming off a blazing 123 off 57 balls.

"The likes of Jason Behrendorff, Kane Richardson and Tanveer Sangha could find the going tough one more time.

"So far, the unfriendly conditions meant the series has been a nightmare for the bowlers with five 200-plus totals in six innings, and the trend is expected to continue in the remainder of the rubber.

"Teams (from):

"India: Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Ruturaj Gaikwad (vice-captain), Ishan Kishan, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Tilak Varma, Rinku Singh, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Shivam Dubey, Ravi Bishnoi, Arshdeep Singh, Prasidh Krishna, Avesh Khan, Deepak Chahar.

"Australia: Matthew Wade (capt), Jason Behrendorff, Tim David, Ben Dwarshuis, Nathan Ellis, Chris Green, Aaron Hardie, Travis Head, Ben McDermott, Josh Philippe, Tanveer Sangha, Matt Short, Kane Richardson.



Rohit will handle it with grace: Ashwin

'If Mumbai Indians make Hardik captain'

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Spin stalwart Ravichandran Ashwin feels that if all-round Hardik Pandya is made the Mumbai Indians skipper, Rohit Sharma will "handle it with grace" as the Team India captain "does not have much ego".

"Pandya returned to Mumbai Indians recently after an all-cash deal trade-off with Gujarat Titans, the IPL side he led for two years.

"Pandya, who had started his IPL journey with Mumbai Indians in 2015 and won four titles, moved to Gujarat Titans in 2022 and led the side to title triumph the same season, besides helping it finish runners-up in IPL 2023.

"The trade-off to bring Pandya back to the MI fold raised several eyebrows, especially in terms of the franchise's captaincy, which is currently with Rohit.

"Rohit Sharma does not have much ego. He is a great human being and a sound leader. He will handle it with grace (if Pandya is made MI leader)," Ashwin said during his YouTube interaction with former cricketer S. Badrinath.

"In the history of IPL, apart from the top four to five teams, all have released players. Mumbai and CSK have never done it. I know Hardik to an

extent. I see this move as a milestone achievement," he added.

"The day I lose this motivation, I know it's over"

"Asked about his retirement plan, Ashwin, 37, said the day he loses motivation, he would call it quits.

"I am not being diplomatic, but for four to five years (since 2019), I found myself in a very dark space in life, and took help for mental health as well. In the dark space, I realised I have to be ready for any eventuality," he said.

"I have been preparing for life after cricket for five years. But I continue to work hard on my cricket; to contribute with the bat, I went to the USA and practised baseball.

"The day I lose this motivation, I feel irritated about waking up in the morning to bowl or bat, I know it is over. I will then quit immediately, say thanks to all and go on to the next chapter in life."

"Ashwin, however, clarified that he has not yet decided on his post-retirement career.

"I am searching for something to do beyond cricket. I am interested in marketing and a lot of other things. But even if nothing else, I can't stop watching cricket. I am a cricket-tragic. I will do something in cricket and something other than that," he concluded.

Shanto's century helps Bangladesh

AP ■ SYLHET (BANGLADESH)

Najmul Hossain Shanto became the first Bangladeshi cricket to hit a century on his debut as captain as the hosts tightened its grip on the first Test against New Zealand here on Thursday.

"Shanto's 104 helped Bangladesh extend its lead to 205 runs by reaching 212-3 at stumps on Day 3. Mushfiquur Rahim was batting on 43, after adding 96 runs with Shanto for the fourth wicket.

"The captain helped his team regain the upper hand on a spin-friendly track after Bangladesh lost two openers in quick succession to leave them on 26-2.

"Left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel got the better of Zakir Hasan (17) for the second time in the match, with a delivery that spun sharply to rap him in front of leg-stump.

"Mahmudul Hasan, who top-scored for Bangladesh with 86 in the first innings, was run out in unluckiest manner as a drive from Shanto touched bowler Tim Southee's palm on the followthrough to hit his stump.



"The two wickets in two overs brought the Black Caps back into the game but Shanto and Mominul Haque added 90 runs for the third wicket to give Bangladesh the edge.

"Mominul survived a leg-

before shout as New Zealand reviewed in vain but appeared to be confident against his favorite opponent, against which he has averaged a whopping 55.61. He was run out on 40 after hitting four

boundaries from 68 balls.

"Unlike his aggressive first-innings 37, Shanto stayed clam throughout the day to frustrate the New Zealand bowlers. He raised his fifth test hundred off 192 balls and his third in the

last four innings, pushing a fuller delivery of Patel past extra cover from a single.

"He then hit a boundary in the last ball of that over, his 10th in 193 balls as bad light forced stumps for the third consecutive day.

"New Zealand had resumed the day on 268-8 and was bowled out for 317, in reply Bangladesh's 310 in the first innings.

"Captain Tim Southee Southee played the key role, scoring 35 off 62 with three fours while Kyle Jamieson added 23 off 70.

"With the main bowlers failing to make any breakthrough, Shanto introduced occasional bowler Mominul who wrapped up New Zealand's innings, dealing a double blow.

"He trapped Jamieson leg-before to end a 52-run ninth-wicket partnership and, four balls later, also got the better of Southee to finish on his career-best 3-4.

"Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam took four wickets on Wednesday, including top scorer Kane Williamson for 104, but didn't add to his haul on Day 3 and returned figures of 4-109 from 39 overs.



Uganda qualify for T20 World Cup, join Namibia

PTI ■ WINDHOEK (NAMIBIA)

Uganda qualified for next year's T20 World Cup, set to be held in the West Indies and the USA, with a nine-wicket win over Rwanda here on Thursday.

"It will be joining Namibia as the second side to enter the main tournament from the ongoing Africa Qualifier.

"In the regional final of the Africa Qualifier, Uganda ensured a top-two finish with the victory over Rwanda, their fifth in six matches.

"Batting first, Rwanda were all out for 65 in 18.5 overs. In reply, Uganda completed the formality in 8.1 overs while losing just one wicket.

"Uganda will become the fifth African nation to play in the T20 World Cup.

"On the other hand, Africa Qualifier favourite Zimbabwe failed to secure a berth. Zimbabwe are currently placed third in the regional final with six points, having won three of their five games.

"After the results of the Africa Qualifier, the slots for the 20 participating teams have been filled.

"The main tournament is set to take place between June 4-30 next year.

"The top two sides from each group make it to the Super 8 stage, followed by the semi-finals and the final.

"The qualified teams for the 2024 T20 World Cup: 'USA, West Indies, Australia, England, India, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ireland, Scotland, Papua New Guinea, Canada, Nepal, Oman, Namibia and Uganda.

Delhi didn't keep promise to retain me: ABD recalls 2010 snub

PTI ■ DURBAN

One of the greatest batters of modern era, AB de Villiers has revealed that he was snubbed by erstwhile Delhi Daredevils after spending three seasons at the IPL franchise.

"Before making it big at the Royal Challengers Bangalore, the South African batting legend had three lukewarm season with the Delhi franchise, now known as Delhi Capitals.

"But in a team meeting, also attended by explosive Australian opener David Warner, de Villiers was told that he was going to be "retained" but it happened otherwise as the franchise released him before the 2011 auction.

"Recalling the incident in his YouTube channel, 'AB de Villiers 360', the former South African skipper said: "When I played in the 2010 season, I got called into the office and was told 'you are going to get retained, young AB de Villiers'."

"I sat alongside David Warner in that meeting. It came as a huge surprise to me a week or two later when I realised I had been released.

"So the communication wasn't great back in the day, that must be different these days but it's not a nice feeling," De Villiers added.

"The 39-year-old said it was a huge blow and he was very nervous before the auction.

"You're unsure of your career,



at that time in 2010 I think I only played five games in that IPL season so a lot of doubts crept up in my mind.

"But I did have a very good international season. I kept

playing good cricket and luckily for me the auction happened and I got picked up by RCB, and it changed my life forever, so great memories with regards to that.

"I was so nervous. Then I got the news from Twitter that I was picked by RCB and the next moment Virat (Kohli) called."

"De Villiers went on to mesmerise the Indian fans with his stroke-making and formed a dream combination with star batter Kohli at the top of the order for 11 seasons.

"De Villiers said the released players should not feel disappointed as it's not the "end of the road".

"For all the released players, it's not the end of the road, keep a close eye on the auction. But if you're not picked up, it gives an opportunity to go back to the drawing board and work even harder," he added.

'Rohit, Virat were crying in dressing room after heartbreaking loss'

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Skipper Rohit Sharma and star batter Virat Kohli were in tears in the dressing room following India's heartbreaking loss to Australia in the recent ODI World Cup final in Ahmedabad, veteran off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said.

"Australia beat India by six wickets on November 19 in the final to win a record sixth ODI World Cup title.

"After the loss, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the Indian dressing room and tried to cheer up Rohit and Kohli.

"But Ashwin said the dressing room witnessed some heart-breaking scenes.

"Yes, we were feeling the pain. Rohit and Virat were in tears, (and) seeing it felt bad. Anyway, (it was) not meant to be. This team was an experienced side, (and) everyone knew what to do," he told former cricketer Subramaniam Badrinath on his YouTube channel.

"Although India failed to emerge successful in the World Cup, Kohli and Rohit lit up the event up with their explosive batting. 'Ashwin heaped praise on Rohit, both as a batter and leader.



"If you take a look at Indian cricket, everybody will be telling you that MS Dhoni is the best captain. (But), Rohit Sharma is an outstanding person, (and) he understands every single player in the team," he said.

"He knows the likes and dislikes of each of us and has a great understanding. He puts in the effort to know each player personally," he reckoned.

"Ashwin played just a game in the entire World Cup, India's opener against Australia in Chennai, finishing with figures of one for 34.

"Asked why Rohit didn't

include him in the playing XI for the final, he backed the skipper saying it's not easy to change the winning combination.

"As far as I playing the final is concerned, the team combination and all is secondary. Firstly, it's about empathy, (and) I keep stressing it a lot.

"It's like standing in someone else's shoes and looking at things from his/her perspective. Had I been in Rohit's shoes, I would have thought 100 times about altering the (winning) combination," he said.

"It was going alright for the team, so why rest a fast

bowler for three spinners?" he wondered

"Ashwin said he was prepared for the grand finale, but was not certain about his place in the playing XI.

"Honestly, I understood Rohit Sharma's thought process. Playing the final is big, (and) I was preparing for three days in the 'lead-up,'" Ashwin said.

"At the same time, I was also prepared to cheer for the side and run in with energy drinks if I was not given the opportunity.

"I was mentally prepared for that as well," the spinner concluded.