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## Tribal leader Sai new Chhattisgarh CM

Madhya Pradesh to get new CM on Monday evening, Rajasthan on Tuesday

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■  
NEW DELHI/RAIPUR/JAIPUR

Former Union Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, a prominent tribal face of the BJP in Chhattisgarh, will be State Chief Minister after he was elected as leader of BJP's legislative party during a meeting of 54 newly elected MLAs here on Sunday.

The saffron party returned to power after a gap of five years following the recently-concluded Assembly polls. Chhattisgarh may also see a Deputy Chief Minister.

While the decision in Chhattisgarh was made without any hiccups, Vasundhara Raje Scindia's situation appears to be a litmus test for the BJP. Central party observers, including Rajnath Singh joined by party vice president Saroj Pandey and general secretary Vinod Tawde, are involved in Rajasthan, where the party seized power from the Congress. Raje is a two-time former CM of the desert State. Sources said the new CM in Madhya Pradesh will be announced on Monday evening followed by Rajasthan on Tuesday afternoon to facilitate the oath ceremonies before December 15 in the three Hindi heartland States.

At Chhattisgarh, a delegation of BJP MLAs led by its Chief



BJP leader Vishnu Deo Sai being garlanded by party leaders Sarbananda Sonowal and Dushyant Kumar Gautam after he was elected as the next Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh during BJP Legislature Party meeting, in Raipur, on Sunday PTI

Minister-designate Vishnu staked claimed late evening at the Raj Bhavan in Raipur. "We have handed over a letter to the Governor stating that Sai has been elected as the legislative party leader," BJP MLA Brijmohan Agrawal informed the media.

Vishnu, 59, a prominent tribal leader, was elected as the leader of the BJP's legislative party in Chhattisgarh during a meeting of 54 newly elected party MLAs at Kushabhau

Thakre Parisar, the party's State headquarters. The BJP's three observers, Union Ministers Arjun Munda and Sarbananda Sonowal and party general secretary Dushyant Kumar Gautam, were present during the meeting of the newly elected party MLAs.

BJP's in-charge for Chhattisgarh Om Mathur, Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and party's co-in-charge for the State Nitin Nabin were also present. The BJP

won 54 out of the total 90 Assembly seats in the State. The Congress, which won 68 seats in 2018, was reduced to 35 seats this time. The Gondwana Gantantra Party managed to win one seat.

Vishnu thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP president J P Nadda and other party leaders for reposing faith in him to hold the top post in Chhattisgarh. "As the Chief Minister, I will try

to fulfil Modi's guarantees (pre-poll promises of the BJP) through the Government," he told reporters after the meeting.

Starting his political career as the sarpanch, Vishnu rose through the ranks and became a member of Modi's first Council of Ministers in 2014. Incidentally, addressing a poll rally in the Kunkuri constituency last month, Shah had urged voters to elect Vishnu, promising to make the latter a "big man" if the party comes back to power in the State.

Furthermore, amid a strong buzz within the BJP that leadership will introduce new leaders for Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, sidelining the claims of Vasundhara and Shivraj Singh Chouhan, sources mentioned that Raje has been making efforts to secure a prominent position. In this regard, she sought an audience with party chief J P Nadda after sources indicated that she was denied a meeting with Shah.

The choice of Rajnath, one of the senior most BJP leaders and a Rajput leader, is likely to help build a consensus around the leadership's chief ministerial choice among MLAs. Some newly elected BJP MLAs met Raje at her Civil Lines residence on Sunday, amid suspense over whom the party will pick for the CM post in the State.

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## Mayawati names nephew Akash as political heir

PREETAM SRIVASTAVA ■  
LUCKNOW

In a strategic move aimed at rejuvenating the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and securing a fresh voter base, Mayawati, the former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and BSP supremo, has named her nephew, Akash Anand, as her successor.

The announcement was made during an important meeting convened by Mayawati to discuss the party's preparations for the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections. This move is seen as a response to the party's recent electoral setbacks and a shift in focus towards attracting younger voters.

Mayawati, grappling with consistent losses and the departure of her traditional vote bank in recent years, is now looking to appeal to a younger demographic by entrusting Akash with the responsibility of fortifying the party's position ahead of the crucial 2024 elections.

BSP leader Udayveer Singh, who was present at the meeting, confirmed Mayawati's announcement, stating, "The BSP chief Mayawati has announced Akash as her successor." Singh said Akash would be tasked with assessing and strengthening the BSP's presence, particularly in areas



Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati with her nephew Akash Anand arrives for a meeting of party's office bearers ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, at the party office in Lucknow, on Sunday PTI

where the party faces challenges.

Mayawati's decision to appoint Akash her successor places added pressure on other political leaders, notably Mamata Banerjee, the chief of the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC). Mamata is now expected to announce her successor, with Abhishek Banerjee, the de facto number two in the TMC and Member of Parliament for Diamond Harbour, viewed as the likely heir.

Akash, an MBA graduate from London, has been actively involved in BSP affairs and was earlier appointed as the national vice-president of the party. His responsibilities grew fur-

ther after Mayawati's reshuffling of party positions in 2019, despite initial statements countering nepotism charges. Mayawati's brother Anand Kumar was later appointed as the vice president, while Akash assumed the role of national coordinator.

The 28-year-old Akash's involvement in party campaigns, including being listed as a star campaigner during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, underscores his growing influence. His active role in recent Assembly elections, particularly in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, positions him strategically within the party.

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## EAM speaks to Palestinian PM, restates India stance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar spoke to the Palestinian Prime Minister as Israel continues to pound Gaza. The Minister said he reiterated India's 'long-standing position' during the telephonic conversation.

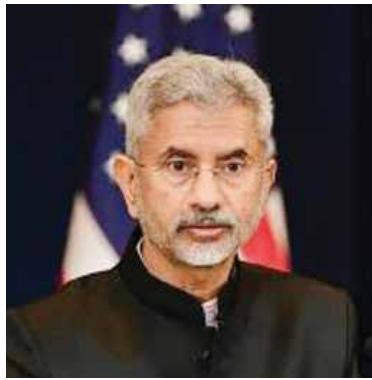
MEA Jaishankar took to social media to share that he "spoke to Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh on Saturday evening.

"He expressed deep concern on the situation in both Gaza and the West Bank. Reiterated India's long-standing position on Palestine. Agreed to remain in touch," the Minister added.

This comes a day after Jaishankar informed Parliament that India remains concerned over the deteriorating security situation arising out of the Hamas-Israel conflict. He also called for "restraint and de-escalation" while emphasising on a peaceful resolution of the conflict through "dialogue and diplomacy."

"We remain concerned at the deteriorating security situation and have called for restraint, de-escalation and emphasised peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy," the minister said in a written reply to a question.

The MEA also stated that India strongly condemned the October 7 terror attack on Israel by the Palestinian group Hamas as well as the loss of civilian lives in the ongoing conflict. "India's position regarding the Palestine issue has been



"longstanding and consistent," Ministry of External Affairs Arindam Bagchi said in a Press briefing on October 12. "India has always advocated the resumption of direct negotiations towards establishing a sovereign, independent and viable state of Palestine living within secure and recognised borders side by side at peace with Israel. That position remains the same," the MEA spokesperson had stated.

Earlier in October, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, and expressed his condolences over the loss of lives at Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza. Modi also reaffirmed India's commitment to provide the Palestinian people with humanitarian assistance while reiterating India's long-standing principled position on the Israel-Palestine issue.

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## INDIA Bloc gears up for key strategy meeting

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With less than six months to go for the 2024 general elections and amid the roller coaster journey for the mega alliance of Opposition parties under the INDIA Bloc, the group has decided to meet on December 19 to initiate talks for seat sharing and a programme to hold joint rallies, considered to be the main challenges before the Bloc. The meeting is being held in the backdrop of the Congress' poor show in the just concluded Assembly elections, where it suffered humiliating defeats in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, while the BJP asserted that people have affirmed their faith in "Modi's guarantees" and will re-elect his Government in 2024.

West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee would be in the national Capital from December 17 to 19 and is likely to take part in the meet. Leaders of 26 parties would gather for the strategy meeting in Delhi to address key issues before the alliance as it prepares to take on the BJP in the 2024 general elections.

Sources said INDIA Bloc would highlight 10 years under Manmohan Singh and whether the 10 years under Modi have brought any difference to the life of the common man and Adani issue too will also be raised during the Lok Sabha poll campaign. A senior Congress leader said the parties intend to move forward with the unity theme — "Main Nahin, Hum" (We, Not Me) — as a counter to Modi at the meeting which is likely to be held around December 18-19.

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## Supreme Court verdict on Article 370 today

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Was the decision taken by the Centre on August 5, 2019 to abrogate the provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution, which bestowed a special status on the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, constitutionally valid? The Supreme Court is scheduled to pronounce its verdict on Monday on a batch of petitions challenging the abrogation of the provisions of Article 370. According to the cause list for December 11 (Monday), uploaded on the apex court's website, a five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud would deliver the verdict.

The other members of the bench are Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna, B R Gawai and Surya Kant. The apex court reserved its verdict in the matter on September 5 after a 16-day hearing.

During the hearing, the top court heard Attorney General R Venkataramani, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, senior advocates Harish Salve, Rakesh Dwivedi, V Giri and others on behalf of the Centre and the intervenors defending the abro-



gation of the provisions of Article 370. Senior advocates, including Kapil Sibal, Gopal Subramaniam, Rajeev Dhavan, Zaffar Shah and Dushyant Dave, had argued on behalf of the petitioners.

The lawyers had dwelt on various issues, including the constitutional validity of the Centre's decision to abrogate the provisions of Article 370, the validity of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 that divided the erstwhile State into the Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were referred to the Constitution bench in 2019.

The arguments in the matter

the Governor's rule in Jammu and Kashmir on June 20, 2018 and the imposition of the President's rule on December 19, 2018 and its extension on July 3, 2019.

The petitions challenging the abrogation of the provisions of Article 370 and the validity of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 that divided the erstwhile State into the Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were referred to the Constitution bench in 2019.

The arguments in the matter

had commenced on August 2. During the hearing, the apex court had asked who can recommend the revocation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir when no constituent Assembly, the concurrence of which is required before taking such a step, exists there.

The top court had also asked how can a provision (Article 370), which was specifically mentioned as temporary in the Constitution, become permanent after the tenure of the Jammu and Kashmir constituent Assembly came to an end in 1957.

Some of the petitioners opposing the repeal of Article 370 had argued that the provision could not have been abrogated as the term of the Jammu and Kashmir constituent Assembly ended in 1957 after it drafted the erstwhile state's Constitution. With the constituent Assembly having become extinct, Article 370 acquired a permanent status, they had said.

The Centre had argued that there was no "constitutional fraud" in annulling the provision that accorded the special status to the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir.

## Wed in India call by Modi aims at fetching wealth from lavish overseas weddings

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's clarion call for "Wed in India" initiative can set the stage for a potential domestic influx of ₹1 lakh crore back to the country, redirecting expenditures incurred on destination weddings abroad.

According to the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), there has been no official survey yet about destination weddings by Indians abroad, but still as per an estimate, about 5,000 to 7,000 destination weddings take place abroad every year with an expenditure estimated to be between ₹75,000 crore to ₹1 lakh crore.

"The effort is similar to Modi's Make in India initiative that has now reported inflection growth of estimated ₹1 trillion similarly even if half of the people decide to hold destination weddings in India instead

of abroad then ₹50,000 crore will add on to the country growing robust economy," said CAIT Praveen Khadelwal.

Addressing the inaugural session of the Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit at Dehradun last week, Modi said it has become fashionable among millionaire and billionaire business families to go abroad for destination weddings.

Modi said India needs a movement like 'Wed in India' on the lines of 'Made in India' and asked affluent industrialists to hold at least one destination wedding in their families each year in Uttarakhand saying it will help the hill State emerge as a wedding destination. Modi had given a similar call during his last Mann Ki Baat programme to affluent business families to hold destination weddings in the country instead of going abroad.

Khadelwal said there are more



than 2,000 such places in and around about 100 major cities in the country where destination weddings can be held with big fanfare. "Prominent such cities includes Goa, Lonavala, Mahabaleshwar,

Mumbai, Shirdi, Nasik, Nagpur in Maharashtra, Dwarka, Ahmedabad, Surat, Baroda in Gujarat, Orchha, Gwalior, Ujjain, Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Jaisalmer, Pushkar

in Rajasthan, Mathura, Vrindavan, Agra, Varanasi, Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh, Chennai, Yadgiri Hill, Ooty, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Tirupati, Cochin, Trichy, Coimbatore, Pondicherry in South India beside Delhi, Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurgaon, Manesar, Bahadurgarh, Faridabad in NCR and Chandigarh, Mohali, Amritsar and Jammu in Punjab-Haryana," he said.

A destination wedding takes place in a location away from a couple's hometown. Couples these days choose to just hit the road, board a plane or a boat to get married away in a foreign land. The total costs can run up to ₹3-5 crore for a 2-day wedding for 200 guests, but can go up even further depending on the family's requirements.

Khadelwal said all these places are fully capable of organising destination weddings ranging from medium budget to any big budget.

"Besides, there are a number of companies or groups providing general to special facilities and arrangements for organising weddings. A large network has developed in India over the years and that is why wedding related goods and services have become a big business in the country. Be it a destination wedding in the country or abroad, these companies or groups are the best in getting it done," he said.

According to Gaurav Lochav, whose firm organises wedding in destination locations, said doing wedding in Thailand and Sri Lanka is not expensive and it is similar to Goa and other tourist resorts in India. The big fat Indian wedding ceremonies will be held till December 15 that are expected to generate business worth ₹4.5 lakh crore during the period. Around 3.5 million weddings are expected to be

held across the country during the period.

The CAIT study says Delhi alone would witness around 3.5 lakh weddings in these 23 days. The upcoming wedding season is expected to generate business worth nearly ₹1 lakh crore in the national Capital. The wedding season comes as a boon for the people involved in businesses of arranging tents, food and beverages, jewellery, clothing, furniture, footwear, decoration items, electric and electronic equipment, and hotel industry. The crockery, travel services, cab services, vegetable vendors, videography, DJs, also get benefited from the marriage ceremonies. The wedding season brings in employment opportunities for people as they get to work as cooks, waiters, decorators, musicians, tailors, carpenters, photographers, priests, painters, florists and others.



# Shah gives pep talk to Bihar BJP leaders

PTI ■ PATNA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday gave a pep talk to BJP leaders of Bihar where the party's performance will be crucial in ensuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi's return to power for a third consecutive term. Shah, widely regarded as the BJP's principal strategist, was here to chair the 26th meeting of the Eastern Zonal Council which was attended by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav and representatives of the states of Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha. After the three-hour-long meeting held at the chief minister's secretariat, Shah retired to the State Guest House, situated barely a few meters away, where he met members of the BJP core committee in Bihar. Those present at the meeting with Shah, who spent an hour



before boarding his return flight, included Union MoS Home Nityanand Rai, former Deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi and leader of the opposition Vijay Kumar Sinha. There was no official word on what transpired at the meeting though leaders speaking on condition of anonymity said that they were asked by Shah to

keep up the party's winning streak in Lok Sabha polls, which has received a big boost with impressive victories in the recently held assembly polls to Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. Notably, despite having done well in Bihar in the last Lok Sabha polls, when it won all the 17 seats it had contested, the

BJP faces a big challenge this time with Nitish Kumar having parted ways. Kumar, whose JD(U) had contributed 16 seats to the NDA kitty in 2019, has walked over to the Mahagathbandhan which includes Congress, RJD and three Left parties. In a bid to minimise the impact of Kumar's exit, the BJP has inducted into the NDA his disgruntled ex-allies like Jitan Ram Manjhi and Upendra Kushwaha, besides having by its side late Ram Vilas Paswan's brother Pashupati Kumar Paras and son Chirag Paswan, whose family feud cum political rivalry remains a problem for the coalition. The exit of Kumar from NDA last year had stripped the BJP of power. The Union Home Minister has since visited Bihar many times to address public meetings and interact with party cadre in different parts of the state.

## Journey of mutual respect, shared values, growing partnership: Modi on India, South Korea ties



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday lauded the ties between India and South Korea as a journey of mutual respect, shared values and growing partnerships as diplomatic ties between the two countries marked the 50-year milestone. "We are celebrating 50 years of establishment of diplomatic ties between India and

the Republic of Korea today. It has been a journey of mutual respect, shared values and growing partnerships," Modi said in a post on X. Extending warm wishes to Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, the prime minister said he is looking forward to working closely with him to deepen and expand the special strategic partnership between the two countries.

# Tribal leader...

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While no clarity emerged on the MP's contenders, former MP Balak Nath besides Rajee are amongst the front-runners in Rajasthan. Several other leaders of the party including Union Ministers Ashwini Vaishnav, Arjun Meghwal, former party MPs Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, CP Joshi, Rajyavardhan Singh, Diya Kumari, Kirori Lal Meena, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla are also believed to be in the fray. Prahlad Singh Patel, Kailash Vijayavargiya and Jyotiraditya Scindia are also among the top contender for the position in Madhya Pradesh. Party appointed Observers for Madhya Pradesh, Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar, OBC Morcha chief and Rajya Sabha MP K Laxman and party national secretary Asha Lakra are talking to the legislators to reach out for consensus. BJP won 163 seats out of the 230-member assembly, while the Congress managed to emerge victorious on just 66 seats, down from the 114 it had secured in the 2018 polls.

# Mayawati names nephew Akash as...

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In response to the announcement, BSP leaders BR Dhoni and Surendra Singh welcomed Mayawati's decision, noting that she had chosen the opportune moment to declare Akash as her successor. The move is seen as an effort to counter the challenges posed by emerging political figures, particularly after the underwhelming performance of Chandrashekhar Ravan's Azad Samaj Party in recent elections. Meanwhile, Mayawati has expressed skepticism regarding electronic voting machines

(EVMs) and advocated for elections through ballot-paper, a sentiment echoed by several party leaders. The BSP, in an official statement, announced its intention to analyse its performance in the recently concluded assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh. Mayawati has also delegated the responsibility of deciding candidates for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections to state-wise leaders, underscoring her commitment to strategic party development in the lead-up to 2024.

# Day of black flags in Kerala



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Sunday turned out to be a day of black flags, throwing of shoes and thrashing of warring factions of CPI-M and the Congress across Kerala. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's Cabinet Bus, a luxury coach costing ₹2 crores came under attack near Perumbavoor by activists of Congress who showed him black flags and flung black shoes at the bus. The chief minister and his council of ministers were on their way to Kothamangalam as part of Nava Kerala Sadass, the 2024 Lok Sabha election campaign. The CPI-M activists accompanying the high end custom built bus charged on the Congress workers and thrashed them blue and black with the help of policemen. It is reported that the CPI-M

leaders had warned the Congress workers that they would be dealt with an iron hand if they dare to show black flags at the chief minister's bus. The Congress demonstrators were arrested and taken to the police station with the help of Marxist activists. There were allegations by the Congress leaders including the local MLA that the injured party workers were denied medical aid. While Vijayan was at the receiving end at Perumbavoor, Governor Arif Mohammed Khan was shocked to see CPI-M workers waving black flags at him within minutes of the black flag demonstration against the chief minister. Governor Khan was on his way to attend an official function was shown black flags by the comrades to protest against saffronisation of education sector by appointing RSS and BJP activists as senate members in the State's universities. Education Minister Sivankutty, the intellectual face of the CPI-M has declared on Saturday that schools in the State would not use Bharat as prescribed by the NCERT and will continue using the term India as the name of the country.

# Newly married couple among 5 killed in car truck collision



PTI ■ JANJGIR

A newly married couple and three other persons were killed after a car they were travelling in collided with a truck in Chhattisgarh's Janjgir-Champa district on Sunday, police said. The accident took place in the wee hours near Pakariya Jhulan village under Mulmula police station area when the victims were returning after the couple's wedding in Shivrinarayan town, a police official said. As per preliminary information, Shubham Soni, a resident of Baloda village in the district, got married to a woman from Shivrinarayan on Saturday night. When the bride, groom and three other family members were returning to Baloda in the car, it collided head-on with a truck coming from the opposite direction, the official said. Four occupants of the car, including the bride, died on the spot. The groom, who was seriously hurt, succumbed to his injuries in a hospital, he said. The groom's father, Omprakash Soni, who was driving the car, was among the deceased, he said. After being alerted, a police team rushed to the spot and the bodies were sent for post-mortem. Efforts were on to trace the truck driver who fled from the spot leaving behind his vehicle, the police said.

# INDIA Bloc gears up for key strategy...

From Page 1

Sources add that the opposition alliance of the INDIA bloc is likely to take forward the issues of caste census, legal guarantee to MSP and social security for workers. But the challenge before the opposition parties now is to come out with an alternative positive agenda to counter the BJP in the next general elections, the leader said. Sources said during the meeting, the parties would chalk out plans on seat sharing, for holding joint election rallies and would evolve a common programme

for them. "The election results are not a rejection of issues that were raised in this poll campaign," the leader said on poll planks like caste census and restoration of Old Pension Scheme that have been raised by the opposition parties. He, however, admitted that the party would think out of the box to take on the BJP in 2024. "Main Nahin, Hum" (We, not me) is the likely slogan that the opposition parties would work on to counter Modi. "Evolving the core positive agenda for the INDIA bloc is

the biggest challenge for the opposition parties that would help it take on the BJP," the leader said. He added that the issues that dominated during the Bharat Jodo Yatra like "rising" economic inequality, social polarisation and political authoritarianism besides price rise and inflation are some issues that are likely to draw resonance on the ground during Lok Sabha polls. These issues would become part of the common agenda of the opposition parties that will help the opposition alliance take on the BJP.

# Mumbai police arrest man for fraudulently transferring shares worth ₹24 lakh in his name

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Mumbai police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) has arrested a resident of Ahmedabad for allegedly fraudulently transferring equity shares worth about Rs 24 lakh, belonging to another man, in his name, an official said here on Sunday. Accused Vikram Shankarlal Shah took advantage of the similarities between his name and that of Mumbai-based businessman Vikram Subhashchandra Shah to commit the alleged crime, the official said. The complainant, who lives in Mumbai's Borivali area, held 6,430 shares of Sa Re Ga Ma India Limited in physical form since 1999. The shares are now worth Rs 23.85 lakh, the official said. In 2021, the complainant tried to move the shares to his demat

account, which is in electronic form. However, he learnt that someone had already staked a claim over the shares. The complainant first reported the matter through SEBI SCORES, which is a web-based centralised grievance redressal system of the market regulator. In the subsequent inquiry, it was found that Ahmedabad resident Vikram Shankarlal Shah had got the shares transferred in his name. Taking advantage of similar names, the accused prepared a forged death certificate of the actual shareholder and made a false affidavit to get the shares transferred in his name, said the EOW official. The EOW arrested the accused from Ahmedabad on Thursday and brought him to Mumbai. A case has been registered against him under Indian Penal Code section 420 (cheating), the official added.

# Indigenous IQ test to detect disability in children to be launched



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Aligned with the 'Make in India' vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, indigenously made Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test to assess and certify intellectual disability in children (3-18 years) across the country will be launched at an event here. It replaces the currently used western tests that have been standardised to a large extent in line with the Indian experience, but are still considered not entirely suitable. Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment (HMSJE) Virendra Kumar will be presenting Unique Disability ID (UDID) cards to seven persons with disabilities, generated using the Indian IQ testing tool at an event here. The Minister will also hand over the one croreth UDID to 2-year-old girl named Vanshika Nand kishore Mane, a testament to the UDI project's far-reaching impact, said an official from the Ministry. The first UDID was generated on January 27, 2017, in Datia, Madhya Pradesh. The indigenous IQ testing tool is developed by the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID), Secunderabad and endorsed by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). "Aligned with the Make in India vision of the Prime Minister, this tool will play a crucial role in assessing the cognitive abilities of individuals with disabilities. The Minister will dedicate this

tool to the Nation, marking a significant stride towards self-reliance and inclusivity," the official added. As of the 2011 census, India is home to 2.68 crore persons with disabilities. In 2017, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) of the Ministry had initiated the Unique Disability ID (UDID) Card project, a groundbreaking endeavor aimed at providing a unique identity to the people from the sector and creating a comprehensive database for strategic welfare planning. The NEIPID Test of Intelligence is designed according to the socioeconomic and cultural conditions of the Indian population after an extensive survey across the country, said institute director Major BV Ram Kumar (Retd), according to reports. The test is crucial for certification of persons with intellectual disability, one of the 21 disabilities recognised in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act of 2016, and can be used to assess autism-spectrum disorders, specific learning disorders etc. The disability certification, based on which a Unique Disability ID (UDID) is issued, helps persons with disabilities avail of benefits under various government schemes. As per the officials at least 4,070 children in 12 states were surveyed and data was peer-reviewed by experts from AIIMS, Delhi, National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru, and the University of Delhi, among others.

# New drug shows promise for sclerosis treatment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A small molecule drug has shown promise as a potential new treatment for multiple sclerosis (MS), a team of researchers has said. The results are published in the journal Science Advances. MS is a progressive neurological disease that currently has no cure. It is associated with a wide-range of debilitating symptoms, including problems with coordination, cognition, muscle weakness and depression. For unknown reasons, it is more common in northern latitudes and more than twice as common in women. It is known that MS damages myelin, a protective sheath that forms around nerves in the brain and spinal cord. As the myelin damage is triggered by inflammation in the immune system, up until now all current drug treatments for MS target the immune system. In the study, senior scientist Dr. Fang Liu and her team treated MS in a completely different way—targeting the glutamate system. Study results showed that the newly synthesized lead compound not only reduced MS-like symptoms, it also may repair the damaged myelin in two different pre-clinical models of MS. "Our compound had a stunning effect on rescuing myelin and motor function in the lab models, and I hope these effects will translate to the clinic to add to current treatments and bring new hope to patients with MS," said Dr. Liu. "As with cancer chemotherapy drug cocktails, simultaneous targeting of the MS disease pathway at multiple points can have synergistic effects and result in better outcomes." Dr. Iain Greig, Reader in Medicinal Chemistry at the University of Aberdeen, alongside his team, are working to turn the molecules identified by Dr. Liu into advanced "drug-like" molecules suitable for continued development towards clinical use in patients. He added: "In all my years as a medicinal chemist, I have never seen a more promising starting point for a drug development project."

Office of the Superintending Engineer  
**3rd Circle, Public Works Department, Pithoragarh**  
 Email : sepwdpth@rediffmail.com

Letter No. : 7173 / 208C(Yata 'D')-03/2023 Dated : 08/12/2023

### National Competitive E-Tender Notice

The Superintending Engineer 3rd Circle, Public Works Department Pithoragarh invites tender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) on behalf of "Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand" for following works. All other information will be available online from date 15-12-2023 at 5.00 PM onward on website <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Earnest Money (in Lac)	Cost of Tender (in Rs.)	Validity of Tender (day)	Period of Completion (months)	Contractor's Category of Registration
1	Reconstruction and improvement of Barakote Rameshwar Okhlanj Motor Road (0.000 to 2.000) by bituminous work and 3 years maintenance work under Hr. CM Ghosna number 101/2023 of Barakote block head quarter roads at Lohaghat in district Champawat.	2.70	5000.00 +18% G.S.T.	120	09	Category 'B' & Above for Road works in any State Govt./ Govt. of India/ Govt. undertaking
2	Reconstruction and improvement of Udyouhunga Kothera Motor Road (0.000 to 3.550) by bituminous work and 3 years maintenance work under Hr. CM Ghosna number 101/2023 of Barakote block head quarter roads at Lohaghat in district Champawat.	4.75	5000.00 +18% G.S.T.	120	09	Category 'B' & Above for Road works in any State Govt./ Govt. of India/ Govt. undertaking

# Lok Adalat settles claim of ₹81 lakh for man's death in road accident

PTI ■ THANE/PALGHAR

A 'Lok Adalat' held at Belapur in Maharashtra's Thane district has brought about a settlement of Rs 81 lakh between the family of a man who died in a road accident in 2017 and the offending vehicle's insurer, a court official said on Sunday. This is the highest amount of settlement at the Belapur Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT), the official claimed, after the settlement was reached on Saturday. Niles Shambhaji Shivsharan (32), who worked as a senior associate with a private company, died after a taxi he was travelling in dashed against another vehicle on Mulund-Airoli road on October 29, 2017, his family told the tribunal. The claimants, comprising the man's wife, mother and minor son, told the MACT that he earned a salary of Rs 45,223 per month. They worked out a claim of Rs 1 crore for his accidental death. The owner of the taxi and its insurance company were named

as respondents in the claim. During the Lok Adalat held on Saturday, a settlement was reached in the presence of District and Additional Sessions Judge PS Vithalani for the payment of compensation of Rs 81 lakh by the vehicle's insurer to the man's family, the official said. Meanwhile, an accident claim related to the death of a contractor from Palghar was settled for Rs. 78,50,000. Janardan Patil was killed after the driver of the car he was travelling in hit a tree in Gokul Wadi on July 24 last year. The panel was told his monthly income at the time of Rs 50,997 per month while his age was 34. The claim by Pooja Janardan Patil (31), Manasvi (08), Shravani (05), Sudam Patil (61) and Mangala Sudam patil (49) was for Rs 1.19 crore. The settlement was reached between the claimants, represented by advocate Sachin Mane, and the Tata AIG General Insurance Company Limited, represented by advocate Balaji Umate.



# 2 shooters among 3 held in Karni Sena chief murder case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

In a major breakthrough, the Delhi Police Crime Branch, in collaboration with the Rajasthan Police, has successfully arrested three individuals, including two alleged shooters, in connection with the shocking murder of Shri Rashtriya Rajput Karni Sena chief Sukhdev Singh Gogamedi. The incident, which occurred on December 5, saw Gogamedi fatally shot in the living room of his Jaipur residence. Gogamedi fell victim to a fatal shooting in the confines of his Jaipur residence on December 5. Recent CCTV footage purportedly captured the assailants opening fire on Gogamedi, shedding light on the chilling events leading to his demise. The police had identified the two alleged killers as Rohit Rathore from Jaipur and Nitin Fauji from Haryana's Mahendragarh, and announced a cash reward of Rs 5 lakh for information leading to their arrests. "A team of the Delhi Police Crime Branch, in a joint operation with the Rajasthan Police, arrested the two alleged killers Rohit Rathore, a resident of Rajasthan's Jaipur and Nitin Fauji, a resident of Haryana's Mahendragarh, from Chandigarh's Sector 22. The duo were accompanied by one more associate, Udham Singh,



who was also caught," Delhi police sources said. "The accused had checked in at Kamal Palace around 7.40 pm. They submitted photocopies of their Aadhaar cards and paid Rs 900 for a room for one day," sources said. "Around 8 pm, a team, whose members were in plain clothes and uniforms, came and asked the receptionist about the two people wanted in a murder case. The team members showed photographs of the suspects to the hotel manager, Bhim Sen, who also arrived at the hotel. Later, the police team overpowered them," added sources. According to a Delhi Police officer, the accused will be handed over to the Jaipur Police for further interrogation. Additional Director General of Rajasthan Police (Crime) Dinesh MN said Fauji and Rathore were in hiding in

Chandigarh. "The SIT formed by the Rajasthan Director General of Police and the Delhi Police caught the accused late on Saturday," Dinesh, who is supervising the 11-member SIT, said. During initial investigation, a property dispute angle between Godara and Gogamedi had come to light. The question of caste equation is also being investigated. Sources have said the mastermind of the plot to kill the Rajput leader was Rajasthan gangster Rohit Godara, who is suspected to be living in Canada and closely associated with Goldie Brar and Lawrence Bishnoi's gangs linked to last year's murder of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moose Wala. Godara assigned the task of killing Gogamedi and the responsibility of hiring a shooter to his lieutenant, Virendra

Charan, sources said. Charan and Godara met in a jail in Rajasthan's Ajmer while serving time in a rape case. Godara told investigators that Gogamedi had been instrumental in the filing of the rape case against him, for which he planned to take revenge, sources said. Charan soon took advantage of Godara's anger and prepared him to kill Gogamedi. On Saturday, a man was arrested in Jaipur for allegedly contracting the shooters to kill Gogamedi. According to the police, Ramveer Jat, one of the conspirators in the murder, had prepared the groundwork for Fauji -- his friend -- in Jaipur ahead of the killing. The accused had entered the Gogamedi's home on the pretext of meeting him and, after talking for a few minutes, opened fire at Gogamedi. Police said that on November 9, Fauji and his associates fired on the police of Mahendragarh Police Station Sadar and absconded. During this period, Fauji sent his friend Ramveer to Jaipur on November 19. They also shot dead their accomplice Naveen Shekhawat, through whom they had secured access to Gogamedi's residence. Gangster Rohit Godara, linked to the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, had claimed responsibility for the murder, saying Gogamedi was backing his enemies.

## Shooters were staying on fake IDs in Chandigarh hotel while on run: Cops

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The two persons who allegedly shot Shri Rashtriya Rajput Karni Sena chief Sukhdev Singh Gogamedi in Jaipur were staying on fake IDs at a hotel in Chandigarh while on their run, Delhi Police said on Sunday. Sources said the duo attackers -- Rohit Rathore of Jaipur and Nitin Fauji of Haryana's Mahendragarh -- had planned to flee the country and had been allegedly promised Rs 50,000 each to kill Gogamedi. The two alleged killers were nabbed by the teams of Delhi and Rajasthan police from Hotel Kamal Palace at Sector 24 in Chandigarh on Saturday night. They were accompanied by another associate Udham Singh who had allegedly provided them logistical support for evading arrest. "The trio have been taken to Jaipur by Rajasthan police for further interrogation," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Amit Goel said. Goel said the arms used in the commission of the crime are yet to be recovered. According



to Special Commissioner of Police (Crime) Ravindra Yadav, the Delhi Police was tracking the shooters soon after they killed Gogamedi at his house in Jaipur on December 5. According to initial input shared by Rajasthan ADG (Crime) Dinesh M N, after killing Gogamedi, the two attackers had fled to Didwana in a taxi from where they took the bus to Delhi, Yadav said. The duo then got down in Dharuhera and took an autorickshaw to reach Rewari railway station from where they boarded a train to Hisar, he added. The CCTV footage collected by the Delhi police from the Hisar railway station

showed the duo walking out of the station. Rathore could be seen wearing a cap and shawl, the Special CP (Crime) said. Rathore and Fauji then met the latter's friend Udham Singh who helped them further in hiding from the police, he added. According to another police officer, Fauji and Singh became acquainted after they underwent training for the Indian Army at the same centre, four years ago. With Singh's help, the duo hired a taxi for Manali in Himachal Pradesh where they stayed for one or two days and later came back to Chandigarh on December 9, the officer said. The trio used forged aadhar

cards with the names of Devender, Jaiveer and Sukhbir to book a room at Hotel Kamal Palace. Based on a tip-off about their whereabouts, a team of Delhi Police Crime Branch accompanied by Rajasthan police reached the hotel at about 8.30 pm and nabbed the trio, the officer added. The Rajasthan Police took Fauji to Jaipur while Delhi Police brought Rathore and Singh to Delhi. They were taken to Jaipur on Sunday morning, officials said. Fauji was previously involved in a kidnapping case and attack on a cop in Haryana, while Rathore, too, has previous criminal records and spent some time in jail, the officer said. Delhi police officials said they suspected that Rathore had met one Virender Charan who is suspected to be involved in hatching Gogamedi's murder plan on the behalf of foreign-based gangster Rohit Godara. Rohit Godara, who is a close associate of the Lawrence-Goldy Brar gang, in a Facebook post took responsibility for killing Gogamedi soon after his murder on December 5.

## More than three challans may lead to cancellation of driving licence: Police



STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

More than three challans for violating traffic rules may lead to cancellation of a person's driving licence, the Gautam Buddha Nagar Police has warned citizens. A further repeat of offence may even lead to suspension or cancellation of registration of vehicles, the police said. According to police officers, this step will be taken to ensure road safety in the district. "In line with instructions given by the Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety and as per the decision taken in the meeting of Uttar Pradesh Road Safety Council, action will be taken to cancel the licence of a person who gets more than three challans in a row for offences like red light jumping, over speed, overloading, carrying passengers in

goods vehicles, use of mobile phone while driving, or drunk driving," the police said in a statement Saturday. "If such drivers repeat the offence thereafter, the registration of the vehicle will also be suspended or cancelled," the police added. According to officials, around 1,000 road accidents have been reported so far this year in which nearly 400 lives have been lost while several more left injured across Noida and Greater Noida. Till September 2023, over 14 lakh challans have been issued by the traffic police to offenders violating road rules, more than double of what was in 2022, official data showed. Of these challans in 2023, 69,906 were for speeding, 66,867 for red light jumping, and 10,516 for talking on mobile phone while driving, the data showed.

## Narela jail for housing high risk prisoners to be ready in two years

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national capital's fourth jail in Narela that will house "high-risk" prisoners will be ready in two years as the Delhi government has given administrative approval for it, officials said. The central government has allocated Rs 120 crore for the construction of the prison complex, which will have a design similar to that of the Cellular Jail in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, they said. The administrative approval from the minister concerned was taken and the file sent to the finance department. It had some queries and those have been answered. Following this, the public works department will invite tenders for the construction of the complex, an official said. "Looking at the current pace, the construction of the jail will be completed in two years," the official said and added that the building plan for the complex has been finalised and it will be in a semi-circle shape. Delhi has three prison complexes -- Tihar, Rohini and Mandoli -- and all of these comprise central jails. Tihar, which is considered one of the largest prison complexes in the world comprising nine central prisons, has a capacity to house 5,200 inmates, but more



than double the inmates are currently lodged in its different central jails. Similar is the case with the other two jails. Some of the high-risk inmates lodged in these jails include commander Sukesh Chandrasekhar and Kashmiri separatist leader Yasin Malik. On the Narela jail, officials said the prison's security features will include CCTV cameras, round-the-clock surveillance, isolation rooms with facilities to ensure that inmates do not interact much, high walls, and mobile jammers of superior technology. The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has allotted land for the jail in Narela and according to the rough plan, the prison will have 250 cells and has been modelled on the Cellular Jail in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, officials had earlier said. They had said the prison will have reformative facilities such as Yoga and a factory where inmates can engage themselves in making certain things, among others.

## Namo Bharat trial run held from Duhai to Modi Nagar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After commencement of the 17 km priority section of the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) that covers Delhi, Ghaziabad, and Meerut, a trial run of the Namo Bharat train was conducted from Duhai to Modi Nagar South on Sunday. The train departed from Duhai station, reached Murad Nagar station, and then continued to cover the distance of about 12 km to Modi Nagar South. This trial run is a major step towards the operations in this segment. "To start the trial run process, the electric OHE (Over Head Equipment) was charged with a capacity of 25 KV from Murad Nagar Receiving Sub Station to Modi Nagar South. Following this, the Namo Bharat train ran in this section. It departed from Duhai station, reached Murad Nagar station, and then continued to cover the distance of about 12 km to Modi Nagar South," a statement from the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) said. At present, the Namo Bharat trains are undergoing a trial run to test the track and traction. Initially, the train is being operated manually under the Train Control Management System. The train covered the distance from Muradnagar station to Modi Nagar South at a min-



imal speed. Later, it was brought back to Duhai while slightly increasing its speed. The 25 km stretch between Duhai and Meerut South RRTS station is the next section of the RRTS corridor to be operationalized for the public after the Priority Section. This section has a total of 4 stations, namely Murad Nagar, Modi Nagar North, Modi Nagar South, and Meerut South. In June, the construction of the viaduct up to Meerut South was completed with the installation of the last span. Since then, various construction works like track laying, OHE installation, signalling and telecom, and electrical have been progressing at pace

in this section. At present, track laying work is almost complete, and other works are in their final stages. Additionally, Muradnagar RSS is ready to supply electricity from Murad Nagar to Meerut South. Soon, OHE will be charged between Modi Nagar North and Meerut South stations, and trial runs will be conducted in this section by running trains up to Meerut South station. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had flagged off the Namo Bharat train in the 17 km long priority section between Sahibabad to Duhai Depot on October 20, 2023. Now, NCRTC is gearing up to operationalize the section ahead of it.

## UNICEF, YuWaah committed to greener future for children

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

UNICEF and its global Partnerships platform Generation Unlimited (also known as YuWaah in India) have partnered with key organisations committed to working towards a green future for children and young people as a part of the Green Rising India Alliance (GRIA). The alliance consists of YuWaah at UNICEF, Cagpemi, Children's Investment Fund Foundation, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies, ReNew Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation and SAP. The GRIA aims to equip 50 million children and young people to become climate-conscious, adaptable, and resilient by 2030. This coalition is galvanizing private organizations, foundations, youth networks, multilaterals, and the Government of India to unify their commitment to sharing knowledge, efforts, and innovative solutions. The primary goal is to equip young people with the requisite opportunities not only to embrace climate-conscious mindset but also to foster resilience, thereby enabling them to fully realize their potential.

## NDMC holds camp to promote Centre schemes to beneficiaries

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has organised a Camp at Vivekanand Camp, Chanakyapuri, under the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, which aims at promoting and publicising government schemes at several levels and ensuring that the benefits of these reach the eligible people. According to NDMC, camp of different schemes of Central Government are organized successfully to facilitate the beneficiaries like Ujjawla scheme, PMSawndhi, Health Camp, Aadhar Camp, TB Eradication, Yoga Camp, Post office Camp etc. Approx 700 persons attended the camp including various dignitaries viz Minister of State for External Affairs & Culture, Meenakshi Lekhi, MP and former Health Minister Harshvardhan, BJP National Secretary Maninder Singh Sirsa, MLA & Leader of



Opposition in Delhi Legislative Assembly - Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, MP Rajya Sabha - Naresh Bansal, Manish Singh - Vice Chairman, Delhi Cantonment Board also present and hundreds of beneficiaries with general people attended the Camp. Senior officials of NDMC and central government's

departments who set up the camp for the beneficiaries were also present during the Camp. During the camp under Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, PM interacted with beneficiaries of various Schemes through out country through online medium. PM speech and interaction / samvad was webcasted live during event.

## MCD organises camps providing practical training on geo tagging

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) organized training camps at 200 locations in the national Capital on Saturday and Sunday to provide practical training about the geo-tagging process. In these training camps, citizens were made aware about the need and benefits of geo-tagging of their properties. Citizens were trained about the process from downloading the mobile app to geo-tagging the property with photos. Also, citizens were encouraged to geo tag their properties. On this occasion, citizens were also given information about the Sahbhagita scheme of MCD. In a press statement, the MCD said in these training camps, citizens were informed that all those property owners, who are not registered on the property tax portal of MCD, will have to register their properties, generate UPIC and thereafter geo-tag their properties. "If property owners fail to register their properties by January 31, 2024, the Municipal Corporation of



Delhi will take legal measures to recover tax and also file cases against such defaulters. Citizens were informed that MCD has launched a mobile app for geo-tagging of all residential and non-residential properties. Property owners will have to download this mobile app from Play Store or by visiting the website http://mcdonline.nic.in/mcdapp.html. Further citizens were informed that geo-tagging of properties by taxpayers will provide location-wise identification of individual properties

and enable better provision of service to citizens by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi," the MCD said. According to the MCD, all the properties under its jurisdiction will be registered with the Tax Assessor and Collector Department by December 31, 2023 and geo-tagging of all the properties will also be done by January 30, 2024. Along with this, various means of communication will be used to make property owners aware about the process of geo-tagging.

## Students marching to mark Human Rights Day detained by cops

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Score of students from different institutions were detained on Sunday as they marched towards the Jantar Mantar protest site to mark the Human Rights Day, police said. Some students' organisations alleged police manhandled them and took the detained students to some undisclosed location and thrashed them, allegations rejected by the Delhi Police. "A group of protestors came at the Vijay Chowk and when they were asked to disperse as they were in violation of 144 CrPC, they became aggressive due to which they were detained," a senior police officer said. Police further said that in the process two police personnel sustained head injuries who were rushed to a nearby hospital and an action as per the law was taken. "The allegations regarding a missing person are wrong. No

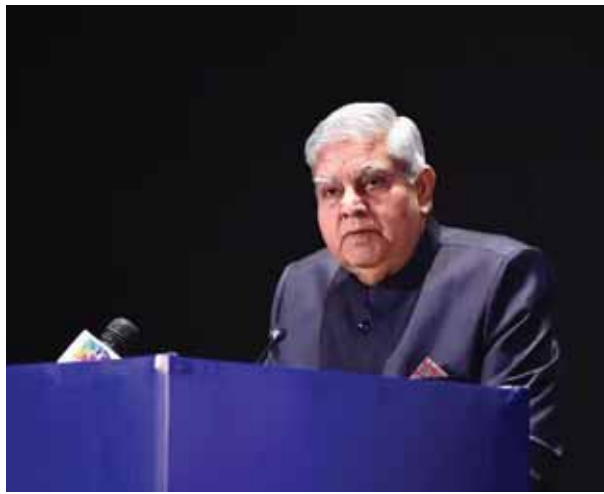
brutal action was taken against anyone," said the police officer. Meanwhile, the Campaign Against State Repression (CASR) in a statement condemned the Delhi Police action on protestors on the Human Rights Day. They demanded the release of all detained students. The Delhi Police detained and attacked the protestors who had gathered near Jantar Mantar. The gathering, comprised students, lawyers, farmers, mazdoors, women, LGBTQ and children marched towards Jantar Mantar but was met with barricading as well as a large cohort of Delhi Police and paramilitary personnel who brutally attacked the protestors. Women and LGBTQ persons were particularly targeted, with men constable dragging them by the hair and physically assaulting many," read the statement. Protesters said that a student, Gaurav Singh, was brutally beaten by the police.



# 'Freebies distort expenditure priorities'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said politics of so-called freebies for which society sees "mad race", distort expenditure priorities and asserted that the need was to "empower not pockets but human minds". In his address at a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) event here marking the Human Rights Day, he also said that no part of the globe is so "blossoming, prospering with human rights as our country is doing". The occasion also marked the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). UN Resident Coordinator in India Shombi Sharp also was present at the event. Sharp, in his address, also read out the message of UN Secretary-General António Guterres to the audience. Dhankhar was the chief guest at the event hosted by the



NHRC at Bharat Mandapam. "A coincidence, this (75th anniversary of UDHR) just follows our 'Amrit Kaal', and our 'Amrit Kaal' has become our 'Gaurav Kaal' primarily due to the blossoming of human rights and values," he said. "We had an occasion to get a message from the (UN) Secretary-General. It would

have been appropriate and worthwhile to take note of the massive, revolutionary affirmative changes that are taking place in Bharat, home to one-sixth of humanity, on the promotion of human rights," Dhankhar said. No part of the globe is so blossoming, and prospering with human rights as India is doing, he added. "And, why

not, our civilisational ethos, Constitutional framework, reflect our deep commitment to respecting, safeguarding and nurturing human rights. It is in our DNA," the vice-president said. In his address, he also emphasised that human rights are spinally strengthened when there is "human empowerment in sharp contradiction to fiscal patronage". "Empowerment of pockets by fiscal grant only increases dependence. The politics of so-called freebies for which we see a mad race distort expenditure priorities. Freebies, as per economic giants, undercut the basic framework of macro-economic stability," he said. There needs to be a "healthy national debate" on how expensive this fiscal patronage is for the economy, life quality and social cohesion in the long run, Dhankhar added. "I would greatly appreciate it if the National Human Rights Commission... Catalysing a

debate, coming out with a paper that can be extremely informative, motivational and inspirational for people at large, and those who are in seats of governance can be enlightened that we need to empower not pockets but human minds, human resource," he said. In his address, Dhankhar also said that "no one is above the law, be you ever so high, the law is always above you, is the new norm in the country. A peak paradigm shift." "There was a time when some thought they were above the law, there was a time when some thought they were beyond the reach of the law. Now, all high and mighty, you may be just anybody, you are accountable to the law," he said. It is an "inalienable facet of promoting human rights," Dhankhar added. Transparency and accountable governance, a new norm, is a game changer for promoting human rights, he said.

# Army conducts Honour Run to commemorate Kargil victory

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In commemoration of the historic military victory in the Kargil War, Indian Army on Sunday conducted 'Honour Run - Indian Army Veteran's Half Marathon' here. The event was conducted under the theme, 'Honour Run' and was aimed at strengthening the bond between the Indian Army, Veterans and the masses, especially the Youth. While paying homage to the brave hearts, the participants in 'Honour Run' coming from a diverse populace, highlighted the calibre, potential and energy of our nation. The event was flagged off by Army Chief General Manoj Pandey at Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium in presence of several military, veteran and civil dignitaries. Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena awarded the winners of various categories with medals, certificates and attractive prizes.



'Honour Run' was held under four categories. The first category of 21.1 km was aptly named Kargil Run. The other three categories were 10 km run, named Tiger Hill Run; 05 km run, called Tololing Run; and a 3 km run, named Batalik Run. An Expo was also organised by the Department of Indian Army Veterans, giving an insight into Indian Army's victory in the Kargil War. Various stalls were visited by the participants underscoring high spirit and endorsing their presence in the victory celebrations. Adjutant General and other senior military leadership ran alongside celebrities like Major D P Singh, a veteran Blade Runner and Subedar Avinash Sable, the ace Marathon Runner and athlete of world repute. Over 14,000 serving personnel, veterans, NCC cadets, families of army personnel and enthusiastic citizens of different age profile participated in the event. Lieutenant General MV Suchindra Kumar, Vice Chief of the Army Staff along with

# 'Holistic development of skills critical for progress in age of AI'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha Harivansh addressed a gathering at the foundation week celebration event of Maharana Pratap Shiksha Parishad, Gorakhpur on Sunday. Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath and Speaker of Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly Satish Mahana were also present at the event. During his speech, Harivansh urged the youth to focus on holistic development of character and skills that are key for progress in the age of Artificial Intelligence. He added that, thanks to India's younger population, the country will con-



continue to enjoy the demographic dividend till the middle of this century thereby putting it on the path to be a developed nation by 2047. He also appreciated the efforts of the Maharana Pratap Shiksha Parishad of working in this direction and implement-

ing the principles of National Education Policy 2020. Emphasising on the challenges of technology he said, "Technology is a double-edged sword. While it brings a lot of positive transformation in the society, it also comes with many challenges.

# World largest grain storage plans get underway

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant move to address the shortage of storage capacity for food grains in the country, the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) has embarked on the execution of the "World's Largest Grain Storage Plan in the Cooperative Sector." The pilot project has already commenced with construction underway in 13 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) across various States and Union Territories. The PACS, integral components of the short-term cooperative credit structure at the grassroots level, are at the forefront of this initiative. Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah revealed that a total of 1,711 PACS have



been identified for inclusion in the pilot project, with the collaboration of States, Union Territories, and national-level federations such as the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED) and the National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India Limited (NCCF). The plan, approved by the Government on May 31,

involves the creation of agricultural infrastructure at the PACS level. This includes the establishment of warehouses, custom hiring centers, processing units, fair price shops, and more through the convergence of existing central schemes. Notable schemes involved in the initiative include the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), Agricultural Marketing

Infrastructure Scheme (AMI), Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM), Pradhan Mantri Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme (PMFME), Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY), and Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH). The NCDC, in collaboration with organizations such as NABARD, NABCONS, Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC), Food Corporation of India (FCI), and National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC), is spearheading the implementation of the pilot project. A memorandum of understanding has been signed among the Ministry of Cooperation, Department of Food and Public Distribution, FCI, and NCDC to ensure the full utilization of the storage capacity created at the PACS level. To facilitate a seamless implementation process, an inter-ministerial committee (IMC) has been established. The IMC is authorized to modify guidelines and implementation methodologies of the schemes identified for convergence as needed. Through the utilization of the schemes converged at the PACS level, these societies will be empowered to establish godowns for storage of food grains and agricultural produce, marketing sheds, farm machinery banks, among other facilities. The initiative marks a pivotal step towards enhancing storage infrastructure and promoting agricultural development in the cooperative sector.

## AXIS BANK LTD. PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION OF PLEDGED ASSETS BEING GOLD ORNAMENTS

THE BORROWERS, IN SPECIFIC AND THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT PUBLIC AUCTION OF THE GOLD ORNAMENTS PLEDGED IN THE BELOW ACCOUNTS IS PROPOSED TO BE CONDUCTED BY THE AXIS BANK AT THE BELOW MENTIONED BRANCH. THE BELOW MENTIONED BORROWERS HAS AVAILED THE CREDIT FACILITY FROM THE AXIS BANK LIMITED AGAINST THE PLEDGE OF GOLD ORNAMENTS ('GOLD LOAN FACILITY') IN FAVOUR OF THE BANK TOWARDS THE SECURITY. THE DEMAND NOTICES WERE ISSUED TO THE BORROWERS/ GUARANTORS CALLING UP THE BORROWERS/ GUARANTORS TO PAY THEIR OUTSTANDING AMOUNT TOWARDS THE GOLD LOAN FACILITY AVAILED. AS THE BORROWERS/ GUARANTORS HAVE FAILED TO REPAY THE OUTSTANDING LOAN AMOUNT, THE BANK IS CONSTRAINED TO INVOKE THE PLEDGE AND PROPOSED TO CONDUCT AN E-AUCTION SALE OF PLEDGED GOLD ORNAMENTS MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED IN SCHEDULE OF PROPERTY HEREUNDER ON 21.12.2023 AT 12.30 PM TO 03.30 PM ON "AS IN WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS", "WHATEVER THERE IS" AND "NO RECOURSE BASIS".

DETAILS OF BORROWERS AND OUTSTANDING AMOUNT					
SER. NO.	CUSTOMER NAME	LOAN A/C NO.	AMOUNT OUTSTANDING (IN RS.)	DATE OF RECALL NOTICE	GROSS WEIGHT NET WEIGHT
<b>B.O.: ASHOK VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]</b>					
1	PRAMOD KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX3845	Rs. 219,357.00	20-09-2023	61.000 55.600
2	PRINCE KUMAR GOYAL	XXXXXXXXXXXX7519	Rs. 245,328.00	10-10-2023	110.400 75.700
3	PRATEEK KWATRA	XXXXXXXXXXXX8927	Rs. 88,162.07	29-09-2023	62.700 59.200
<b>B.O.: BADSHAPUR GUR HR</b>					
4	JAS RAM YADAV	XXXXXXXXXXXX8254	Rs. 50,646.00	20-09-2023	14.900 14.100
<b>B.O.: DARYAGANJ, DELHI [DL]</b>					
5	KULDEEP	XXXXXXXXXXXX6560	Rs. 271,920.00	30-05-2023	87.200 76.200
6	SACHIN KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX8291	Rs. 153,920.00	10-10-2023	57.800 54.100
<b>B.O.: DLF, GURGAON [HR]</b>					
7	SURAJ BHADUR	XXXXXXXXXXXX2547	Rs. 92,888.00	09-11-2023	25.840 25.340
<b>B.O.: FARIDABAD [HR]</b>					
8	TEK CHAND	XXXXXXXXXXXX5944	Rs. 681,238.72	27-06-2023	257.400 244.900
<b>B.O.: GHAZIABAD [UP]</b>					
9	GAURAV SENGAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX3388	Rs. 117,985.00	18-07-2023	37.000 35.000
10	S P SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX1815	Rs. 253,476.00	09-11-2023	75.100 69.800
<b>B.O.: GREATER NOIDA [UP]</b>					
11	LOVE	XXXXXXXXXXXX6150	Rs. 127,729.31	09-11-2023	40.800 39.300
<b>B.O.: JYOTI NAGAR DEL DL</b>					
12	AMIT PANWAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX1673	Rs. 161,463.94	25-10-2023	52.700 49.700
13	RAJEEV KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX6787	Rs. 28,296.92	28-07-2023	9.800 9.400
<b>B.O.: KALKAJI, NEW DELHI [DL]</b>					
14	ADEEBA JAMEEL	XXXXXXXXXXXX3749	Rs. 148,798.00	25-10-2023	38.200 37.200
<b>B.O.: LAJWANTI GARDEN, JANAKPURI, NEW</b>					
15	LAKHAN SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX5404	Rs. 58,704.20	09-11-2023	19.100 18.100
<b>B.O.: MAYUR VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]</b>					
16	HITISH LAMBA	XXXXXXXXXXXX4879	Rs. 1,911,973.93	25-10-2023	815.300 777.540
17	ABHISHEK PATHAK	XXXXXXXXXXXX8435	Rs. 395,497.65	10-10-2023	101.900 99.350
<b>B.O.: NANGLOI DEL DL</b>					
18	MAHENDER SHARMA	XXXXXXXXXXXX1933	Rs. 125,967.28	10-10-2023	98.100 93.500
<b>B.O.: NAZAFGARH, NEW DELHI [DL]</b>					
19	SANYOG KUMAR BHARTI	XXXXXXXXXXXX2764	Rs. 25,200.00	20-09-2023	7.900 7.800
<b>B.O.: NEW FRIENDS COLONY, NEW DELHI [DL]</b>					
20	MD KUMAIL	XXXXXXXXXXXX0313	Rs. 80,575.00	10-10-2023	29.900 24.000
<b>B.O.: NOIDA [UP]</b>					
21	ANIMESH ADITYA	XXXXXXXXXXXX2904	Rs. 127,979.00	30-05-2023	36.400 34.900
22	KULDEEP RAWAT	XXXXXXXXXXXX8984	Rs. 141,921.00	29-09-2023	42.400 41.000
<b>B.O.: NOIDA EXTENSION GNO UP</b>					
23	GAURAV SENGAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX5454	Rs. 86,839.00	30-05-2023	29.800 26.800
<b>B.O.: PALAM VIHAR, GURGAON [HR]</b>					
24	AARJU SAHRAWAT	XXXXXXXXXXXX8109	Rs. 63,610.46	09-11-2023	19.700 18.700
25	PAWAN KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX8290	Rs. 91,776.00	09-11-2023	27.000 26.100
<b>B.O.: PALAM, DELHI [DL]</b>					
26	RAJNI SAHAI	XXXXXXXXXXXX3592	Rs. 54,141.70	09-11-2023	36.300 32.800
27	ARVIND KUMAR SINHA	XXXXXXXXXXXX7234	Rs. 31,110.00	30-05-2023	11.200 9.700
28	SUDHISH KUMAR RAI	XXXXXXXXXXXX4791	Rs. 150,510.00	29-09-2023	51.700 46.800
<b>B.O.: PUNJABI BAGH, NEW DELHI [DL]</b>					
29	DHEERAJ .	XXXXXXXXXXXX1288	Rs. 142,573.00	28-07-2023	40.500 39.000
<b>B.O.: ROHINI, DELHI [DL]</b>					
30	ONKAR SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX7719	Rs. 145,294.00	25-10-2023	39.000 38.000
31	YASH MITTAL	XXXXXXXXXXXX4402	Rs. 337,115.73	09-11-2023	108.200 96.500
<b>B.O.: SECTOR 10A, GURGAON [HR]</b>					
32	BIRENDER KUMAR SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX5425	Rs. 34,348.00	09-11-2023	10.010 9.610
<b>B.O.: SECTOR 14, GURGAON [HR]</b>					
33	SANDEEP KUMAR YADAV	XXXXXXXXXXXX0400	Rs. 36,194.00	20-09-2023	11.900 11.500
34	ANOOP KUMAR JAISWAL	XXXXXXXXXXXX8603	Rs. 69,385.02	10-10-2023	27.600 25.100
35	SHIRAJ BAQUAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX2061	Rs. 34,210.00	09-11-2023	12.600 11.100
<b>B.O.: SECTOR 15, GURGAON [HR]</b>					
36	AMAR NATH	XXXXXXXXXXXX0547	Rs. 188,858.00	10-10-2023	59.700 51.500
<b>B.O.: SOUTH PATEL NAGAR DL</b>					
37	RAHUL	XXXXXXXXXXXX4199	Rs. 96,139.27	09-11-2023	33.980 30.350
38	ROHIT KUMAR	XXXXXXXXXXXX7180	Rs. 35,758.36	20-09-2023	9.700 9.400
<b>B.O.: SWASTHYA VIHAR, NEW DELHI [DL]</b>					
39	NEERU JAIN	XXXXXXXXXXXX9267	Rs. 249,247.00	09-11-2023	74.100 70.800
<b>B.O.: JEWAR GBAG UP</b>					
40	BHUPENDRA SINGH	XXXXXXXXXXXX3089	Rs. 69,063.00	20-09-2023	18.900 18.200

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# Clarification sought from MP in connection with cash recovery: Congress



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/RANCHI

The Congress on Sunday said a clarification has been sought from party MP Dheeraj Sahu in connection with the recovery of huge cash from premises linked to him. Jharkhand Congress in-charge Avinash Pandey Pandey, however, clarified that it is a private matter of Dheeraj Sahu and the party has nothing to do with it. "Since he is Congress MP, he should make an official statement about how such a big amount of money came to him," Pandey said. He also said, "The party has a clear-cut stand that it is a private matter of Dheeraj Sahu, which has nothing to do with the Congress party. A huge pile of cash has been recovered so far in the searches conducted by the Income Tax department against Odisha-based Boudh Distillery Private Limited and entities linked to it. Premises linked to Sahu were also covered as part of the searches, according to officials. The seizure amount is expected to reach Rs 290 crore, making it the "highest-ever" cash haul by any agency in a single operation, official sources said on Saturday. Pandey said that the Income-Tax department has so far not made any official statement regarding the raid and recovery but the way allegations are being made linking the party is unfortunate. "The family which has business establish-



ment for more than 100 years here and it is the joint business of the family. Dheeraj Sahu is just a part of the business. But, Sahu should clarify how such big amount came to him," Pandey said. He, however, said that an official statement should also come from the Income Tax department about the quantity of cash and how it came. Pandey was in Ranchi to welcome retired state administrative official Dr Sanjay Singh and retired Kargil warrior Hridaynand Yadav, who joined the Congress party at party headquarters. Speaking at Congress headquarters, Pandey alleged that a conspiracy is being carried out to defame the opposition parties in the country. "Since the day a majority alliance government came to power in Jharkhand, BJP has been hatching a conspiracy to destabilise it. This is not only in Jharkhand but the conspiracy is being done against all non-BJP governments elected through democratic process in the country under 'Operation Lotus'. BJP is doing it openly without caring about any constitutional values," he said. Taking a dig at Pandey's statement, senior BJP leader and Ranchi MLA CP Singh said, "Congress wants to get rid of Sahu so that its bosses could be protected. Is Sahu Congress MP or Independent? If he is an Independent candidate, then he can say that party has nothing to do."

# Offshore patrol vessel Sajag makes port call at UAE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Offshore Patrol Vessel 'Sajag' made a significant port call at Mina Rashid, Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Sunday as a part of ongoing strategic overseas deployment to West Asia, marking a pivotal milestone in the ongoing diplomatic maritime engagement. Giving details, Coast Guard officials said here during its three-day visit, the crew of Sajag will participate in a series of professional interactions in field of Marine Pollution Response, Maritime Search and Rescue and Maritime Law Enforcement including a Table Top Exercise towards Force Protection of Naval Establishment, cross-deck visits, joint yoga sessions and PASSEX with the UAE Coast Guard and UAE Critical Infrastructure and Port Authorities (CICPA). These collaborative efforts aim to further strengthen the existing ties between the Indian Coast Guard and their counterparts in the UAE. This overseas deployment aligns with the Indian Coast Guard's commitment to fostering bilateral relationships and enhancing international cooperation with Foreign Friendly Countries. Notably, prior to this visit, 'ICGS Sajag' had made port calls to Port Sultan Qaboos,

Oman, and King Abdul Aziz Port, AD Dammam, Saudi Arabia, demonstrating a seamless continuation of diplomatic maritime engagements in the West Asian region. The visit to Mina Rashid holds great significance as it contributes to the reinforcement of bilateral relationships with key maritime agencies. These longstanding relationships are integral to ensuring the safety, security, and environmental sustainability of the seas in the region, while also addressing contemporary maritime challenges. The deployment of 'Sajag' to West Asia exemplifies India's commitment to fostering warm and cordial relations with Gulf States. The overarching goal is to promote friendly relations through maritime cooperation, aligning with India's maritime vision encapsulated in SAGAR - Security and Growth for All in the Region and the 'Act West Policy'. ICGS SAJAG, stationed on the West Coast of India in Porbandar, Gujarat, operates under the operational command of Commander Coast Guard Region (North West). The vessel is equipped with modern weapon systems, advanced sensors, state-of-the-art navigation and communication systems, including an integral helicopter to support both surface and air operations. Over the years, Sajag has successfully undertaken various Coast Guard operations, including Coastal Security, IMLB/EEZ surveillance, counter-transnational crimes, and Maritime Search and Rescue and Pollution Response operations. The Indian Coast Guard looks forward to a fruitful and productive visit at Mina Rashid, reinforcing the shared commitment to maritime safety and security in the region.

# Sumedha arrives in Kenya as part of long range deployment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As a part of on-going long-range deployment to Africa, Indian naval ship Sumedha arrived at Port Lamu, Kenya on Saturday, Navy officials said here on Sunday adding the visit marks the maiden port call by any Indian naval ship at the recently developed Port in Kenya. During the port call, personnel from both navies will engage in a wide range of professional interactions, deck visits and sporting exchanges, aimed at enhancing cooperation and exchanging best practices. A joint Yoga session, deck reception, medical camp and a Maritime Partnership Exercise have been planned as part of the visit. INS Sumedha is the third of indigenously developed Saryu-class of Indian Navy. Commissioned

on 07 March 2014, the ship is deployed for multiple roles independently and in support of fleet operations. The ship is equipped with an array of weapons and sensors and can carry multi-role helicopters. It is part of the Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet based at Visakhapatnam and functions under the operational command of the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command. Indian Naval ships are regularly deployed overseas as part of Indian Navy's mission of building 'bridges of friendship' and strengthening international cooperation with friendly countries. The visit is in consonance with the Prime Minister's vision of Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) and seeks to further Indo-African ties.



# Bharat charts its course to reclaim nation glory as Vishwaguru: Dhankhar

PTI ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said that Bharat is charting its course to reclaim its glory as 'Vishwaguru' (world leader) and it is going to be the third largest economy by the end of this decade.

Speaking at the platinum jubilee celebration of XLRI in Jamshedpur, Dhankhar said that the country is standing at the threshold of the fourth industrial revolution.

"It is indeed a transformative era propelled by cutting-edge technologies. The dawn of technologies like Artificial Intelligence, internet of things, machine learning, quantum computing, 6G technology and green hydrogen present unparalleled opportunities. These have potential to redefine industries, reimagine solutions and revo-



lutionise how we live and work," he said while addressing the students and faculties of the institution.

The vice president said, "Today, there is global recognition of our nation's prowess, be it on land, sea, air or space. It needs the support of young leaders for creating an ecosystem that sustains

our democratic values and our age-old civilization ethos," he said.

India's efficient digital payment system is now being adopted by nations like Singapore," he said and added that the World Bank recently said what India has accomplished in six years for digital inclusion, which would

typically take 47 years.

"This commendation from World Bank is tribute to the present governance model that is highly accountable and transparent," he said.

The vice president told the students that it is crucial to understand that success is not solely measured by the weight of books

or the pressure of grades, but by the passion of learning and resilience to overcome challenges.

"If you have an idea, you have to be in mission mode with passion to achieve it. That is also the reason our entire economic structure is changing," he said.

"A stress-free mindset not only enhances creativity and innovation, but also cultivates holistic development. It ensures that each student flourishes not just academically, but as well-rounded individuals ready to tackle the complexities of life, beyond the classroom. Let us aspire to be the change makers as we move towards 2047," he said.

Earlier, Jharkhand Governor CP Radhakrishnan and Chief Minister Hemant Soren welcomed the vice president during his maiden visit to Jharkhand at Ranchi's Birsa Munda airport.

# 'Assamese should pledge not to sell land to suspected foreigners'

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday appealed to the Assamese people not to sell their land to any "suspected foreigner" in order to safeguard the culture and identity of the indigenous population.

He also urged the people, especially youths, to be economically independent, emphasising the importance of financial growth for the progress of any community.

Speaking at the 'Swahid Divas' programme, observed in memory of martyrs of Assam Agitation, at Boraagaon in Guwahati, Sarma said, "I believe that if every Assamese takes a pledge to not sell his or her land to any suspected foreigner, our 'jati' (community) will be protected. Some families sell their land for economic benefit, but many families don't even need the money and yet they sell it to



suspected foreigners."

"Let us pledge not to sell our land to any suspected foreigner anymore," he said, adding that the government will bring in a law prohibiting the sale of land to "outsiders" in places such as Majuli, Barpeta and Batadrawa, centres of Vaishnavite culture in the state.

Sarma, who recounted his association with the six-year-long Assam Agitation against illegal immigrants, culminating with the signing of the Assam Accord in August 1985, also highlighted the emphasis the leaders of the movement had laid on economic independence.

"The agitation was not just based on emotions, but also logic. Many leaders of the agitation had dreamt of making Assam economically self-sufficient and youths of that time had also responded by taking up odd jobs.

"But that is not the case anymore. Taking advantage of the Assamese youths' lack of will to work, suspected foreigners have taken over trade and commerce in important places," he claimed.

Asserting that economic independence is as important as steps taken for safeguarding culture and language, the CM urged the youth to be more hard-working and appreciate the dignity of labour.

Sarma also warned government officials who have "compromised" the progress of the state for some form of gratification, maintaining that society is weakened if the government officials fail to deliver.

# Adequate arrangements made to ensure peace in Kashmir: IGP

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

Adequate security arrangements have been made to ensure a peaceful atmosphere in Kashmir as the Supreme Court is scheduled to pronounce its verdict on Monday on a bunch of petitions challenging the abrogation of the provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution by the Centre in August 2019, a senior police officer said on Sunday.

"We are duty-bound to ensure that peace prevails in the valley under all circumstances," Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kashmir Zone V K Birdi told PTI.

The Supreme Court has listed for pronouncement of judgment the petitions challenging the abrogation of the provisions of Article 370 and bifurcation of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into Union territories by the Centre on August 5, 2019.

A five-judge bench of the apex court reserved its verdict on the petitions on September 5 after conducting daily hearings in the matter from August 2. While the IGP refused to divulge specifics of the security set-up for



Monday, he said "adequate arrangements" have been put in place.

"We are taking all precautions and will ensure that peace is not disturbed in Kashmir," Birdi, who held security review meetings in most of the 10 valley districts over the last two weeks, said.

Asked if orders invoking section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) on the misuse of social media were related to the Supreme Court's expected judgment, he said there have been several incidents of some elements trying to provoke people.

"There have been several posts recently, in which there were

attempts to provoke people. Action has been taken against such elements in the past and action will be taken in the future as well," he added.

The authorities here have issued guidelines for social media users under CrPC section 144 to curb the spread of contents that are communally sensitive or promote terrorism and secessionism.

"The guidelines aim to provide clarity on actions citizens should take when encountering content related to terrorism, secessionism, threats, intimidation or communally-sensitive material on social media platforms," the circular, issued by police in several districts, read.

According to the guidelines, the citizens have been asked to contribute to maintaining a safe online environment and promptly report any suspicious activity.

"If you receive a message containing objectionable content, then report it immediately to the nearest police station or police post with a screenshot and detailed information," the guidelines read.

# Ram Temple: Shinde hails PM as group of 300 leaves on foot for Ayodhya

PTI ■ THANE

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Sunday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for fulfilling the dreams of crores of Indians with the construction of a grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. He was speaking at an event to see off 300 devotees who will make the journey to Ayodhya on foot and reach there after 47 days.

"I am thankful to PM Modi and UP CM Yogi Adityanath for fulfilling the dreams of crores of people with the construction of the Ram Temple. It will be fruitful for their 'shraddha, asmita and bhakti' (devotion and pride)," Shinde said.

Asserting that Shiv Sena founder late Bal Thackeray also wanted a grand temple to be built in Ayodhya, the CM said the holy city has completely been transformed and has become an important pil-



grimage centre of the world. "We too will experience the grandeur and have darshan when we visit Ayodhya for the temple inauguration (idol consecration) on January 22," Shinde said.

He lauded the 300 'padyatris' saying the task ahead of them is not simple. "I appreciate your devotion and courage to undertake such a pilgrimage," he told them.

# BJP Government should release funds due to Bengal or vacate office: Mamata

PTI ■ ALIPURDUAR

Claiming that the Centre owed Rs 1.15 lakh crore to West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday said the BJP-led NDA government should either release the funds or vacate office.

Banerjee also said she has sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appointment, seeking release of the state's dues.

"Funds to the tune of Rs 1.15 lakh crore due to Bengal will be sought... We will raise the slogan that (either) give the poor people's money or leave the chair," the chief minister said, while addressing a public meeting in Alipurduar.

The chief minister, during the occasion, announced 70 projects worth over Rs 93 crore. "I will be in Delhi along with a few MPs. I have sought an appointment with the Prime Minister between December 18-20 to seek the release of our dues," Banerjee said.

She also claimed that her government could have included



more people under its social welfare schemes had the Centre cleared the state's dues.

"... I always keep my promise, unlike the BJP, which had promised to reopen all closed tea gardens... I could have offered social schemes to more people if we had received our dues," the Trinamool Congress supremo said.

The CM said West Bengal's dues are pending on various accounts, including 100 days of work under MGNREGA, housing, and the state's share of GST collection.

The BJP leadership in the state has often claimed that release of funds to Bengal under

MNREGA was suspended owing to its failure to submit accounts of monetary assistance provided earlier.

Banerjee also said her government would offer land 'pattas' (deeds) to all tea garden workers and provide Rs 1.2 lakh to each of them for building homes.

She assured the tribals of addressing their concerns regarding ST certificate, clean drinking water and access to social schemes.

Special camps would be set up to facilitate the delivery of social welfare programmes for the tribal people, the chief minister added.

# Binoy Viswam to lead Kerala CPI

KUMR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCCHI

Binoy Viswam (68), Rajya Sabha member and intellectual face of the CPI, has been elected as the interim secretary of the party's Kerala unit on Sunday. The election follows the demise of incumbent secretary Kanam Rajendran who



breathed his last on Friday evening. Binoy Viswam, an internationally respected face of the CPI, has been functioning from New Delhi as the main strategist of the party in formulating national and global affairs.

D Raja, the CPI's national secretary who presided over the Kerala State council meeting of the party at Kottayam immediately after the last rites of Rajendran said that Viswam would be the interim secretary of the party till a full time secretary is elected.

Raja himself wanted Viswam to be con-

posed by the BJP. Immediately after his election, Viswam told media persons that his top priority would be to demolish and destroy the RSS and the BJP. "They are the biggest threats to the country and our paramount task is to finish them off," said Viswam. He said that he would continue his fight against the Hindutva politics from Kerala itself.

Interestingly, the new secretary remained silent on Congress and its opposition to the chief minister's Nava Kerala Sadass. Binoy Viswam is a poet and writer of repute.

# Palaniswami tells TN Government to hike cyclone cash aid to ₹12,000

PTI ■ CHENNAI

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami on Sunday demanded that the DMK regime increase the cyclone relief to Rs 12,000 from Rs 6,000 as people have lost their belongings and income.

Alleging that the DMK regime did not complete stormwater drain work properly, Palaniswami blamed the government for 'not taking suitable preventive measures' to avert inundation.

In view of the flooding due to heavy rains induced by cyclone 'Michaung', daily wage earners and middle class people have lost income as they could not go for work. Also, they have lost their belongings as houses were flooded.

Hence, the cash assistance of Rs 6,000 announced for flood and rain



affected families should be increased to Rs 12,000. The cash aid must be disbursed to all affected people without any conditions.

The AIADMK chief demanded a crop loss compensation ranging between Rs 17,000 per acre and Rs 25,000 per acre for paddy (the difference is in view of factors such as

the readiness of crops for harvest) in Cauvery delta region and Kancheepuram, Tiruvallur and Chengelpet districts.

On December 9, Chief Minister M K Stalin had announced increasing the compensation for rain-hit crops (33 per cent and above) including paddy from Rs 13,500 per hectare to Rs 17,000.

For rain-fed crops, the compensation would be increased to Rs 8,500 from Rs 7,410 per hectare, the government had said.

Palaniswami, also Leader of the Opposition, urged the government to bear the cost of repairing vehicles submerged in rain water.

The former Chief Minister requested the government to provide compensation to industrial units where machinery and equipment were damaged as such units located in industrial estates came under water.

# Declare cyclone Michaung as national disaster: Naidu to Modi

PTI ■ AMARAVATI

TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi asking him to declare the destruction caused by cyclone Michaung as a 'national disaster'.

Citing widespread damages by the cyclone in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, Naidu requested Modi to recognise its impact.

"In light of these circumstances and recognizing that the impact of the cyclone has not been confined to Andhra Pradesh alone but has also affected neighbouring Tamil Nadu, I earnestly request the declaration of cyclone Michaung as a national disaster," Naidu stated in the letter.

He also urged the Prime Minister to dispatch a central



team to assess and estimate the extent of damage. Naidu said that preliminary assessments pointed to crop losses of up to Rs 10,000 crore with damages to 770 km of roads and considerable impact to drinking water, irrigation, power and other facilities. According to former CM, recognising the calamity as a national disaster will provide the necessary impetus for immediate relief efforts and the establishment of resilient and long-term infrastructure.

# Bihar caste survey has issues that need to be resolved: Shah

## Nitish seeks special status to State

PTI ■ PATNA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said there are some issues regarding the caste survey conducted by the Bihar government, which he hoped that the state will resolve.

Addressing the 26th Eastern Zonal Council meeting here in presence of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Shah said the central government never had any intention of creating hurdles in the caste-based survey.

Kumar raised before Shah his long-standing demand for grant of special category status to the state.

The chief minister also hoped that the Centre would consider the request for placing in the ninth schedule of the Constitution the state's recent legislations by which quotas for deprived castes were raised from 50 per cent to 65 per cent.

Following a caste survey in Bihar, the Nitish Kumar administration hiked reservations for deprived castes from 50 to 65 per cent in state government jobs and educational institutions and urged the Centre to incorporate the increased quota in the 9th schedule of the Constitution.

The Ninth Schedule of the

Constitution includes a list of Central and state laws that cannot be challenged in courts. In 1992, the Supreme Court capped reservations for the backward classes at 50 per cent. According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Shah said at the meeting that when his party was in power in the state, it had supported the caste-based survey.

"There are some issues regarding the caste survey, which he (Shah) hoped that the state government would resolve," the statement said, without elaborating.

Addressing the meeting that



Union Home Minister Amit Shah being presented a memento by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar during the 26th meeting of Eastern Zonal Council, in Patna, on Sunday

lasted for about three hours, the union home minister said that 1,157 issues have been resolved

in the meetings of the zonal councils. Shah said that in the zonal

council meetings, differences on political matters should be avoided and efforts should be

made to resolve issues in a liberal manner.

It is the first time that Shah and Kumar shared a dais in Bihar after the JD(U) dumped the BJP in August 2022 to form the Grand Alliance government in the state.

In his address, Kumar "urged the Centre to accord special status to Bihar in the meeting. Bihar has been raising the issue of Special status to the state since 2010. The fresh demand was necessitated by findings of the caste survey carried out by the 'grand alliance' government in the state," a CMO statement said.

The state government has planned to undertake several welfare measures for deprived families, he said adding that the

implementation of all such measures will incur an expenditure of Rs 2.50 lakh crore.

The meeting was also attended by senior ministers from Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand -- other member states of the Eastern Zonal Council.

Five Zonal Councils (Western, Eastern, Northern, Southern and Central) were set up under the States Reorganization Act, 1956 to foster Inter-State cooperation and co-ordination among the states.

They are mandated to discuss and make recommendations on any matter of common interest in the field of economic and social planning, border disputes, linguistic minorities or inter-state transport.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Cent per cent trust

Modi guarantee plays a crucial role in BJP success, Congress is looking to regain relevance

The recent Assembly election results have buried speculation about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's influence over the nation's electorate and political pulse. The remarkable triumph has emphasised his leadership, often associated with bold promises and guarantees, in characterising assurances aimed at addressing multiple facets. Such guarantees span from economic development to national security, and played a significant role in the BJP's recent campaigns. Popularly termed the 'Modi Guarantee', these assurances have resonated with almost all of the electorate, contributing to the party's success. Modi says these guarantees connect with people's aspirations and concerns, reflecting a commitment to addressing the challenges ahead. Highlighting the importance of these promises in building confidence among voters, he asserted that the BJP's successes are a testament to its credibility. These statements suggest that the electorate perceives Modi's guarantees as more than just political rhetoric; rather, those are seen as roadmap for progress.



This resonating trust has become a central theme in the BJP's narrative, influencing public perception and electoral outcomes. The BJP's recent wins underscore the significance of political guarantees in shaping opinion and outcomes. As they say, nothing succeeds like success but one must not lose sight of the ground reality. It is not that every single issue across the nation has been resolved; millions still depend on the Centre's dole of monthly ration, which speaks volumes about the hardships people are facing. The Prime Minister would do well to make his

guarantees work rather than just using them as punch lines for winning elections. Meanwhile, on the other side of the political spectrum, the Congress is grappling with the aftermath of its electoral setbacks, especially in view of the fact that it had hoped for a much better performance at the hustings. The grand old party's leadership recently held a two-day poll review meeting to analyse the reasons behind its rather dismal showing as well as to strategise for the elections ahead. The results have prompted an introspection within the Congress ranks as leaders assess their messaging, campaign strategies and overall appeal to voters. As the Congress engages in a thorough review of its electoral performance, leaders are contemplating strategies to reconnect with voters and regain the lost ground as quickly as possible. The election review meeting is expected to address issues related to messaging, leadership and the party's positioning on critical policy matters. It remains to be seen how the Congress will respond to the challenge posed by the BJP and Modi's guarantees in future elections. It seems the interplay among poll guarantees, governance and public perception will continue to shape the trajectory of Indian politics for many more years to come.

### PICTALK



Folk artists take part during the inauguration of the 'Namma Jatre' programme, in Bengaluru

PTI

## Commercial real estate is a good investment choice

With the advent of US and Europe-based outsourcing companies, the real estate sector has emerged as the most lucrative choice for investors

India's commercial real estate sector has witnessed significant growth since the outset of the new millennium, a watershed moment for the service sector and the genesis of US and Europe-based outsourcing companies in India. Subsequently, the introduction of REIT regulations in 2014-15 made investment more accessible to retail investors. The first REIT listing in 2018 allowed investors to own a fraction of commercial real estate. Today, in its exceptional growth phase, commercial real estate offers guaranteed and higher investment returns than other financial instruments, making it a valuable choice for retail investors.



real estate prices, particularly in urban areas, could lead to greater wealth generation. **Propellers of growth** The commercial real estate sector in India is experiencing growth due to a variety of factors such as rising entrepreneurial spirit, industrial expansion, business parks, and economic zones. NRI investments are also driving demand, with IT companies and startups seeking workspaces and e-commerce boosting warehousing demand. To reap benefits from the bullish realty market, reputable builders are leveraging technology to maintain the pace. A CBRE study manifests a 97% increase in lease activity in the Indian office market, with technology driving 34% of lease growth in Bangalore, Chennai, and Delhi-NCR. On the other hand, the Indian government's focus on infra-

structure development, such as industrial corridors, smart cities, and special economic zones, has further amplified the demand for commercial real estate.

#### Investment benefits

Commercial real estate is an asset with a solid intrinsic value, offering consistent returns and multiple income streams. It is a safe and secure investment due to its consistent returns and the ability to generate income even when tenants leave. Commercial properties can yield income more steadily than shares, stocks, and bonds, providing income stability even in volatile markets.

Equity, the amount an investor builds over time, can be built up quickly with commercial real estate properties, yielding steady and relatively high returns. Real estate investors also avail tax benefits for commercial real estate purchased with a loan are available under two subheads: standard deduction and Section 24 of the Income Tax Act of 1961. The standard deduction is 30% of the annual cost of maintenance, insurance, energy, and water supply, regardless of the owner-

ship of the property. Section 24 also allows for a tax deduction of Rs. 2 Lakh for commercial property owners who took out a loan to buy, construct, repair, or reconstruct their property.

#### Points of considerations

Investing in high development potential, like urban areas, can maximize returns. Even if future successors use the property, a loan can be requested to meet short-term financial needs.

Thereby, before investing in commercial real estate, it's essential to conduct thorough research, build a team, understand risks, have a clear strategy, consider financing options, and be patient. One should also research the local market, property types, and historical data to assess potential appreciation and cash flow to avert unforeseen risks. Moreover, a detailed analysis of financing options like traditional bank loans, private lenders, or crowd-funding platforms simplify the future course of action and minimize investment cost. (The writer is MD of Yugen Infra Pvt Ltd, views are personal)



SHEESHRAM YADAV

The issues in the growth of management educational institutions are many. To begin with, it is on account of varying understanding about the nature of 'management, as a discipline. The subject area is itself relatively recent and it found a place in educational institutions between the two world wars. The research traditions are, also, relatively young and area-wise variations in the methods of research are many. Many who have a management degree were at the best taught to be managers and those skills are not always the same as what may be needed for teaching management.

There are also variations on account of the nature of the management of educational institutions. Management has been attempted to be taught in general education institutions, agricultural sciences institutions, medical institutions, single discipline institutions and other types of institutions. The antiquity of such institutions, their administrative structure, their market-relatedness, their brand pulls and more are of varying nature. It is generally believed that management education, in its original incarnation, began as 'labor studies'. 'Leadership' was then not a fashionable area of research or teaching. As it so happens often, a 50-year-plus retrospect throws up many contenders for being named as being the first initiative in the domain of management education, in India. Xavier Labour Relations Institute of Jamshedpur was, as claimed by many, one of the first management teaching institutions in India.

Ranchi University also claims to be the pioneer in this area. There are other contending institutions, both in the form of colleges and universities, too many and with too little evidence to be listed here.

Slowly, however, labour studies grew to a broader and bigger cauldron to include inputs from other well-established disciplines for their focus and decision-making. Illustratively, Psychology was a popular choice as the basis for 'understanding behaviour'.



Many took it that if they knew Psychology they understood behavior. Attractive as the proposition might be, it was only a part truth. Behavior is influenced by many factors besides psychology. Behavior could be influenced by social factors which could be best understood with the help of Sociology. There were areas in which behaviour could not be understood without the understanding of local history. In other areas of behaviour, insights could be obtained through Political Science or even Geography.

The behavioural traits of people from a hilly region would be different from the behavioural traits of people of a river valley culture. Thus, it is that understanding behaviour requires a comprehensive and anthropological insight into areas other than just psychology. The emergence of this kind of approach in response to a felt need saw the emergence of an area called 'organizational behavior' within the domain of the management subject area. It was a relatively more recent specialization and required a multi-disciplinary approach. Since there were several so-called subject areas of Psychology, Anthropology, History, and Sociology, and more needed and capable of making their contribution to this new area of 'organizational Behaviour'

GRADUALLY DISCIPLINARY CONFLICTS REDUCED ITS INTERFACE FOR THE REQUIREMENT OF UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOR IN ORGANISATIONS

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SUBBRATA PAL RETIRES

Sir — Spider-Man Subrata Pal hangs up his boots on a glittering career spanning 16 years. Pal sent a letter to the All India Football Federation (AIFF) on December 8 announcing his retirement. It's a pity that the AIFF accepted his retirement letter without any benefit in his favour. People wonder if the AIFF president was also a goalkeeper like Subrata Pal, but he may have forgotten that Pal deserves some recognition from the AIFF. However, Subrata earned the sobriquet "Spiderman" for his heroics under the bar against South Korea in the 2011 Asian Cup in Doha. Not only against South Korea but overall, Arjun awardee Pal made more than 35 saves in the whole tournament and has become one of the stars of the team since. The 37-year-old played 67 times for the Blue Tigers and was one of the most reputed names in the Indian football circuit between the sticks. Subrata rose to become a first-team regular under head coach Stephen Constantine, and at the club level, he represented both India's Big Two—Mohun Bagan and East Bengal. Pal has an incredible 67 international caps. Subrata Pal was involved in a tragic incident when Dempo forward Cristiano Junior lost his life after a collision with the goalkeeper in the 2004 Federation Cup final against Mohun Bagan. He was the first Indian goalkeeper to sign for a European side when he joined former Danish first-division side FC Vestsjaelland in 2014 but failed to break into the main team. I wish all the best for all of Subrata's future endeavours and a peaceful long life!

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

### DROWNING CASES ON THE RISE

Sir — Whatever is said and done, drowning incidents have crippled the city and neighbourhood. This is happening for some time during weekends and mainly during picnics by school and college students. They lose their composure by seeing water and go mad to face fatal



## Deepfake menace

Technological advancements have brought many good changes to the world and helped humans achieve many great feats. Technology has always been a double-edged sword. It helps human civilization bring ease to its works on one side, but on the other, it opens up numerous opportunities for crimes and wrongdoings. Deepfake is a technological phenomenon that can be digitally manipulated to

replace one person's likeness convincingly with that of another. Deepfakes are the manipulation of facial appearance through deep generative methods. Recently, Deepfake gained a lot of attention as the world saw its potential. This technology can help a lot of people commit different kinds of cybercrimes, including intruding on personal space, faking identity online, and many more. Many experts and businessmen in this field have warned the world about the risks it poses.

The world now has a challenge, among many other challenges. If this technology is to be checked with time in hand, then all major countries around the globe need to discuss this issue in global forums. Global leaders and stakeholders need to frame international laws and guidelines for Deepfake to check future crimes. In India, specific criminal laws should be enforced to restrict online harassment and cybercrimes.

Deba Prasad Nayak | Dhenkanal

deaths by drowning in the deep sea. Tragedy at Devgad in Sindhudurg Beach accounted for 4 women of Sainik Academy, a training institute in Pimpri-Chinchwad.

It is a gruesome case of drowning. Miserable drowning deaths send the wrong signal among the picnickers in the city. More than 100 deaths are cause for worry all the time. Parents sending their daughters to these dangerous spots are having sleepless nights, and if they come without any serious mishap, then it is their good luck. Alibaugh Beach, near Panvel, was a death trap. The seniors should follow the instructions strictly and not exceed the limit as stipulated on the signboards around the coast with the caption "caution..". By ignoring warning signals, the trainee students endangered their lives in the name of adventure. The students lacked maturity by entering the choppy sea and inviting trouble. Let us take care to save human lives from drowning. Why don't Govt take measures to prevent it? They had the one one the

biggest drainage programme in all over the India but where are results. CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

### BAN ON THE EXPORT OF ONION

Sir — India has prohibited the export of onions until March 2024, a government notification said. However, it will be allowed based on permission granted by the central government to other countries based on their requests. Onions are being sold at around 60 per kg in retail markets at present. The export of onions somehow increases farmers' budgets, and stocking it only benefits stockholders, but then the public faces inflation. The present onion price is also above the poor class's capacity, so the government should make sure both sides benefit and think about poor families. Farmers have been facing low margin for their crops, is a big concern. Tauqueer Rahmani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com





## FIRST COLUMN

### LOGICAL PROWESS OF NYAYA DARSHAN

Logic and epistemology are the basis of Indian philosophy



SWAMI CHARANSHRIT

Nyaya Darshan, one of the six classical schools of Indian philosophy, stands as a beacon of logical reasoning and systematic analysis. Rooted in the pursuit of understanding the nature of knowledge and truth, Nyaya provides a framework for discerning valid inferences and reliable sources of knowledge. The term "Nyaya" itself translates to "logic" or "right reasoning," reflecting the essence of this philosophical system.

**Origins and Founders:** The Nyaya Darshan finds its roots in the Nyaya Sutras, attributed to Sage Gautama. Also known as Ak'apada Gautama, he is revered as the founder of the Nyaya school. Composed around the 2nd century BCE, the Nyaya Sutras lay down the fundamental principles that guide Nyaya philosophy.

**Fundamental Concepts:**

**Pramana (Means of Knowledge):** Nyaya identifies four pramanas, or reliable means of knowledge, that aid in the acquisition of valid knowledge. These are perception (pratyaksha), inference (anumana), comparison or analogy (upamana), and testimony (shabda).

**Padarthas (Categories of Existence):** Nyaya categorizes the fundamental constituents of reality into sixteen padarthas. These include substances (dravya), qualities (guna), actions (karma), universal (samanya), particularity (vishesh), and more. This exhaustive classification facilitates a systematic understanding of the world.

**Hetu and Hetvabhava (Cause and Fallacy):** Central to Nyaya logic is the concept of 'hetu,' or the cause, in inference. The Nyaya Sutras meticulously outline the conditions that constitute a valid inference and identify fallacies (hetvabhava) to be avoided.



**Logical Rigor:** Nyaya Darshan places a strong emphasis on logical rigour and systematic reasoning. The philosophy offers a structured approach to debate and discussion, providing rules for engaging in fruitful intellectual discourse. This logical precision contributes to the development of critical thinking skills and the refinement of intellectual inquiry.

**Application of Nyaya:** The Nyaya system has applications beyond philosophy, permeating various fields. Its emphasis on clear thinking and logical analysis has found relevance in law, debate, and the sciences. The Nyaya Sutras, with their detailed exploration of valid inference, have influenced the development of logical reasoning in India.

**Critiques and Interactions:** Throughout history, Nyaya has engaged in dialogues and debates with other philosophical schools, such as the Mimamsa, Sankhya, and Vedanta. These interactions have enriched the philosophical landscape of India, fostering a culture of intellectual exchange and mutual learning.

**Relevance in Contemporary Thought:** In the contemporary context, Nyaya philosophy continues to inspire scholars and thinkers interested in logic, epistemology, and the nature of knowledge. The principles of Nyaya provide a foundation for understanding and evaluating arguments, contributing to the broader discourse on rationality and reasoning.

Nyaya Darshan, with its focus on logic and epistemology, stands as a testament to the rich and diverse tapestry of Indian philosophical thought. Its systematic approach to understanding the nature of knowledge and reality has left an indelible mark on intellectual traditions, fostering a legacy of critical inquiry that transcends the boundaries of time and cultural shifts. As we delve into the intricacies of Nyaya, we unlock a treasure trove of wisdom that continues to resonate with those seeking clarity and reasoned insight in the pursuit of truth.

*(The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)*

# Cultural resilience and colonial mindset



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

Cultivating a meticulously designed culture has a formidable obstacle—the enduring spectres of colonial hangovers and internal discords.



India's minister of external affairs Dr S Jaishankar's recent address is a poignant reflection on the enduring struggle to reestablish Bharat's identity and the resolute commitment he has maintained throughout his odyssey. As a dedicated diplomat, he consistently focuses on the vital concept of strategic culture, recognising the profound malaise afflicting South Asia—an ingrained identity crisis exacerbated by hollow freedom, where the rhetoric of freedom coexists with the acceptance of oppressive methods, such as the caste system, strategically manipulated by colonial powers to erode our common roots across all facets of life. Regrettably, numerous nations have succumbed to pseudo-patriotism, decorated by false nationalistic narratives, compromising the bedrock principles of true identity in pursuit of so-called independence.

In this context, Minister Jaishankar astutely underscores the perilous tendency of society to laud figures like Alexander the Great while neglecting giants like Ashoka the Great—the last South Asian ruler to comprehend and successfully execute strategic culture. Ashoka's prioritisation of Buddhism, even in the face of a robust Hindu tradition, exemplifies a rare understanding of the nuanced dynamics inherent in shaping a nation's cultural fabric. The Minister eloquently delves into the essence of strategic culture, defining it as a distinctive and enduring amalgamation of beliefs, values, and practices governing the threat and use of power. Rooted in geopolitical settings, history, and political culture, strategic culture shapes the very foundations of a nation's strategic thought and action. It operates as an integrated symbolic system, employing logic structures, languages, analogies, and metaphors to establish broad and enduring grand strategic preferences. Minister Jaishankar emphasizes that a genuine strategic culture endures over time, maintaining consistent preference rankings across historical epochs and contemporary analyses. It achieves this by presenting these preferences authentically, lending them a unique realism and efficacy in the complex arena of interstate politics. In essence, strategic culture becomes the compass guiding a nation's strategic choices, a crucial element in shaping a resilient and authentic national identity.

It achieves this by presenting these preferences authentically, lending them a unique realism and efficacy in the complex arena of interstate politics. In essence, strategic culture becomes the compass guiding a nation's strategic choices, a crucial element in shaping a resilient and authentic national identity.



ASHOKA'S PRIORITISATION OF BUDDHISM, EVEN IN THE FACE OF A ROBUST HINDU TRADITION, EXEMPLIFIES A RARE UNDERSTANDING OF THE NUANCED DYNAMICS INHERENT IN SHAPING A NATION'S CULTURAL FABRIC

The stark revelations in the recently disclosed annual report by the National Crime Records Bureau are nothing short of alarming. In 2022 alone, a staggering 4,45,256 cases of crime against women were reported, marking a 4.0% surge from the preceding year. Equally distressing is the 8.7% increase in crimes against children, totalling 1,62,449 cases. Crimes targeting senior citizens rose by 9.3%, reaching 28,545 cases. The alarming escalation extends to crimes against Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), with rates surging by 13.1% and 14.3%, respectively. The overall crime rate witnessed a significant increase from 25.3 in 2021 to 28.6 in 2022. Notably, crimes against foreigners spiked by 28.0%, with theft and rape being the predominant offences. Disturbingly, 56.8% of the victims were from the Asian continent, while 18.0% hailed from African countries. Human trafficking cases rose by 2.8%, with 6,036 reported victims, comprising 2,878 children and 3,158 adults. Furthermore, the report disclosed a staggering 13.5% increase in missing persons, totalling 4,42,572 individuals in 2022. This dire situation demands urgent attention and a robust cultural strategy focused on rectifying these societal afflictions to safeguard the nation's integrity and international standing.

Though not exclusively delving into history or cultural studies, Jawaharlal Nehru demonstrated an unmatched understanding of the enduring cultural continuity in South Asia. In reflecting on India's history and ancient literature, he marvelled at the vigour of thought, the clarity of language, and the richness of the mind that had permeated the region for five millennia. He discerned the layers of cultural tradition, acknowledging the impact of invasions and upheavals, yet recognising the enduring thread that connected generations. Former Foreign Secretary and National Security Advisor J.N. Dixit highlighted the dual influences shaping India's foreign policy—the strategic wisdom of Chanakya and the compassionate ethos of Ashoka. While Chanakya's realism guided one stream, Ashoka's ideals, inspired by Lord Buddha, flowed as another undercurrent in the collective subconscious. In the contemporary arena, Jaishankar's exploration of India's foreign policy emphatically underscores the imperative to liberate ourselves from the shackles of Western paradigms and narratives. He vehemently argues that India, standing tall as the first non-Western power to ascend significantly post-1945, must harness the

rich tapestry of its cultural heritage to project a distinctly unique persona and narrative onto the world stage. With a penetrating critique of the prevailing ignorance in the West concerning India's intricate thought processes, Jaishankar issues a resounding call for a nuanced understanding. His lamentation over the conspicuous omission of epics such as the Mahabharata from standard introductions to Indian strategic thought is a stark indictment of the prevailing myopia. Jaishankar passionately advocates for the rectification of this glaring oversight, recognising its pivotal role in fostering a multicultural appreciation that is indispensable in navigating the complexities of a truly multipolar world.

Yet, the journey towards cultivating a meticulously designed strategic culture confronts a formidable obstacle—the enduring spectres of colonial hangovers and internal discord that afflict nations in the region. The pivotal question persists: who will take the lead in transcending the confines of Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh, mustering substantial efforts to erode profound polarization, and weaving a tapestry of unity grounded in mutual respect and sensitivities? Herein lies the essence of strategic culture—not a mere political instrument, but a foundational concept embodying concord both among and within nations. In the face of unparalleled global challenges, the clarion call for a strategic culture reverberates as the foremost catalyst for nurturing unity, surmounting political manoeuvring, and charting the course towards a collective destiny.

*(The writer is a journalist from Sri Lanka and worked with Colombo Guardian, views are personal)*

# Financing climate adaptation: Enough is not enough

The progress on committed finance by the developed world towards Global South has stayed well below the targeted \$100 billion annually

As a global stocktake is conducted in COP 28, climate financing which is intended to support the twin pillars of mitigation and adaptation alongside the recently introduced loss and damage fund, needs an amplified focus. While mitigation targets emissions reduction pathways, adaptation strategies revolve around building climate resilience in communities and their built environment.

The progress on committed finance by the developed world towards the global south has stayed well below the targeted \$100 billion annually and in particular, funds towards adaptation have been scarce. To put things in perspective, the UNFCCC standing committee on finance estimates that glob-



ISHOO RATAN SRIVASTAVA

ally, adaptation funds stand at \$49 billion, a staggering 38 times lower than the annual spending on environmentally harmful subsidies including those on fossil fuels.

Why adaptation is crucial: The World Meteorological Organisation reports, 2023 was the warmest year on record, the antarctic sea ice has been reported at its lowest, the increased frequency and longevity of cyclones, enhanced instances of wildfires, increased drought and flooding patterns when contextualised with a projected 30% decline in global agricultural production, habitat losses due to rising seas which in economic terms may cost around \$50 trillion per year 2050, the IPCC projection that at present 3.3 to 3.6 billion



people are highly vulnerable to climate change and the fact that current emissions trajectory makes the 1.5° or a 2° warming limit - a pipe dream; clearly bring out the urgency of action on the adaptation front.

**Structural distortions in adaptation finance :**

The disparity within the deployment of climate finance between mitigation and adaptation is significantly skewed

with only a support of USD 8.9 billion pouring in for adaptation versus USD 17.9 billion for mitigation. OECD data suggests adaptation finance is predominantly delivered through public grants and on its own, this grant-dominated scheme can only make a limited dent in the rapidly growing needs of the climate finance universe, as it offers a limited value and motivation for private sector involvement.

**Seeding innovation with blended finance :**

Blended finance can act as a catalyst for climate adaptation, when rolled out in the form of financial innovation, helping further the 'beyond aid' narrative and unlocking private finance flows, especially when used for structuring nature-based solutions for climate

adaptation. As an example, an instrument like a debt-for-nature swap can adjust a state's foreign debt against investments in nature conservation. In 2016, the Government of Seychelles bought back USD 21.4 m of its Paris Club debt at a discounted price, against marine conservation and climate adaptation work.

Participatory governance towards adaptation: Considering the inherently global nature of the climate, instead of a one-size-fits-all solution, adaptation models need to address the local needs using

Traditional knowledge systems. The remunerative ness of these models may be holistically built around the themes of reducing anticipated losses, enhancing socio-economic

well-being and driving innovations in the creation of climate-resilient infrastructure to provide the required risk assurance to financing institutions. As an example, the Global Commission on adaptation estimates that a marginal 3% increase in climate-proofing of infrastructure may result in a robust 4:1 cost-benefit ratio. Similarly, the opportunities for research in climate-resilient crop varieties or technology development towards early warning systems, promise to attract private initiatives. The social impact assessment where in India has developed a lot of expertise as it administers its targeted public welfare schemes or the learnings from the National Disaster Management Authority

**may be taken up for wider application.**

The call for urgency of investments in adaptation is an obvious one, particularly in light of recent losses of \$6 billion in India due to extreme climate events, the destruction of a quarter of Bahamas's GDP from Hurricane Dorian and the value extinction of over AUD 20 billion from Australian wildfires. Global prosperity will continue to hang in balance unless the financial viability of investments is assured by indispensable adaptation investments.

*(The writer is Deputy Chief Mechanical Engineer, North Western Railway and UK Commonwealth Scholar; views are personal)*



# Heavy fighting across Gaza

## Israel presses ahead with renewed US military

AP ■ DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP)

Heavy fighting raged overnight and into Sunday across Gaza, including in the devastated north, as Israel pressed ahead with its offensive after the US blocked the latest international push for a cease-fire and rushed more munitions to its close ally.

Israel has faced rising international outrage and calls for a permanent cease-fire after the killing of thousands of Palestinian civilians. Nearly 85 per cent of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been displaced within the besieged territory, where UN agencies say there is no safe place to flee.

The United States has lent vital support to the offensive once again in recent days, by vetoing United Nations Security Council efforts to end the fighting that enjoyed wide international support, and by pushing through an emergency sale of over USD 100 million worth of tank ammunition to Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thanked US President Joe Biden for the "important ammunition for the continuation of the war", and for supporting Israel at the Security Council.

The US has pledged unwavering support for Israel's goal of crushing Hamas' military and governing abilities, and returning all the hostages captured in the October 7 attack that triggered the war.

Hamas and other Palestinian militants stormed into southern Israel that day, killing some 1,200 people and capturing around 240, over 100 of whom were released during a weeklong cease-fire late last month. In response to the attack, Israel launched an air and ground war that has killed thousands of Palestinians, mostly civilians, and forced some 1.9 million people to flee their homes. With only a trickle of aid allowed in, and delivery rendered impossible in much of the territory, Palestinians face severe shortages of food, water and other basic goods.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who invoked



Friends and relatives of the Israeli hostages held in the Gaza Strip by the Hamas militant group attend a rally calling for their release, Saturday in Tel Aviv, Israel. AP/PTI

a rarely-used power last week to call for a cease-fire, said "we are facing a severe risk of collapse of the humanitarian system".

"The situation is fast deteriorating into a catastrophe with potentially irreversible implications for the Palestinians as a whole and for peace and security in the region," he told a forum in Qatar.

Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, told Israel's Channel 12 TV late Saturday that the US has set no deadline for Israel to achieve its goals of dismantling Hamas and returning all the hostages. "The evaluation that this can't be measured in weeks is correct, and I'm not sure it can be measured in months," he said.

### FIGHTING AND ARRESTS IN THE NORTH

Israelis forces continue to face heavy resistance, even in northern Gaza, where entire neighbourhoods have been flattened by air strikes and where ground troops have been operating for over six weeks.

Israel's Channel 13 TV broadcast footage showing dozens of detainees stripped to their underwear with their hands in the air. Several held

assault rifles above their heads, and one man could be seen slowly walking forward and placing a gun on the ground before returning to the group.

Other videos in recent days have shown groups of unarmed men held in similar conditions, without clothes, bound and blindfolded.

Detainees from a separate group who were released Saturday told The Associated Press they had been beaten and denied food and water. Israel has not commented on the latest video or the allegations of mistreatment, but government spokesman Eylon Levy said "increasing numbers" of Hamas fighters were surrendering and handing over their weapons, calling it a sign of "collapsing" morale.

### WAITING FOR FOOD

In central Gaza, hundreds of Palestinians waited for flour outside a UN distribution centre. The price of food has soared as much of the territory faces severe shortages. Abdulsalam al-Majdalawi said he has come every day for nearly two weeks, hoping to get food for his family of seven. "Every day, we spend five or six hours here and

return home (empty handed)," he said. "Thank God, today they drew our name."

With the war in its third month, the Palestinian death toll in Gaza has surpassed 17,700, the majority women and children, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-controlled territory. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths. Israel holds Hamas responsible for civilian casualties, saying the militants put civilians in danger by fighting in dense, residential neighbourhoods. The military says 97 Israeli soldiers have died in the ground offensive. Palestinians militants have also continued firing rockets into Israel.

Netanyahu's office said Sunday that Hamas still has 117 hostages, as well as the remains of 20 people killed in captivity or during the October 7 attack. The militants hope to exchange them for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Israel says it has provided detailed instructions for civilians to evacuate to safer areas, even as it continues to strike what it says are militant targets in all parts of the territory.

# 6 dead, nearly two dozen injured after storms tear through central Tennessee

AP ■ NASHVILLE (US)

Severe storms that tore through central Tennessee killed six people Saturday and sent about two dozen to the hospital as homes and businesses were damaged in multiple cities.

Three people, including a child, were killed after an apparent tornado struck Montgomery County north of Nashville near the Kentucky state line, county officials said in a news release. And the Nashville Emergency Operation Centre said in a post on a social media account that three people were killed by severe storms there. Montgomery County officials said another 23 there were treated for injuries at hospitals.

Photos posted by the Clarksville fire department on social media showed damaged

houses with debris strewn in the lawns, a tractor trailer flipped on its side on a highway and insulation ripped out of building walls.

"This is devastating news and our hearts are broken for the families of those who lost loved ones," said Clarksville Mayor Joe Pitts in a statement. "The city stands ready to help them in their time of grief."

No other information about the victims was immediately available Saturday.

The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office said in a statement that a tornado touched down around 2 pm. A shelter was set up at a local high school. Residents were asked to stay at home while first responders evaluated the situation. In a briefing shared on social media, Clarksville Mayor Joe Pitts said there was extensive damage.

"So please, if you need help, call 911 and help will be on the way immediately. But if you can, please stay home. Do not get out on the roads. Our first responders need time and space," he said.

Allie Phillips, who lives in Clarksville, said she was grabbing lunch when she began receiving notifications of the tornado that was quickly approaching her neighbourhood.

"It was excruciating watching the live stream and not knowing if my house was still there," she said. "When we finally decided to leave, the road to my home was shut down because so many power lines were on the road and we had to take a detour."

Phillips said her home survived with minimal damage - noting that her daughter's toys were banged up and that a

neighbour's dog kennel hit the back of her home - but she was saddened to see that her neighbour's house was missing a roof and a home up the block had all but completely disappeared.

"This doesn't happen enough that you're ever prepared for it," she said.

The National Weather Service issued multiple tornado warnings in Tennessee, and said it planned to survey an area where an apparent tornado hit in Kentucky.

About 85,000 electricity customers were without power in Tennessee on Saturday night, according to PowerOutage.us.

The storm came nearly two years to the day after the National Weather Service recorded 41 tornadoes through a handful of states, including 16 in Tennessee and eight in Kentucky. A total of 81 people died in Kentucky alone.

# COP28 releases crucial document to guide adaptation efforts

PTI ■ DUBAI

Just two days before the UN climate talks here are scheduled to end, negotiators on Sunday released a draft document to guide countries' efforts to adapt to climate change and monitor collective progress. However, it falls short of expectations. The Paris Agreement in 2015 introduced the concept of a Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), a parallel to the global mitigation goal aimed at limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius as compared to pre-industrial (1850-1900) levels. Unlike mitigation, where progress can be tracked using a single metric, adaptation requires a more complex approach. The Glasgow-Sharm El-Sheikh Work Programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation, initiated at COP26 in Egypt, started a series of workshops and negotiations to establish an operational framework for the GGA at COP28.

Though the document acknowledged that the finance required for adaptation "remains insufficient" and the gap between the funds available and the actual financial support needed is "widening", it doesn't quantify anything.

According to a UN report released last month, developing countries require USD 215-387 billion annually for climate adaptation, but they are only receiving about USD 21 billion.

This financial shortfall has led to frustration among poorer and developing nations most affected by climate change. Zambia's Environment Minister Collins Nvozu, speaking on behalf of the African group, on Saturday said adaptation is a matter of survival for Africa and an agreement on a global goal of adaptation would be the most important outcome for Africa from COP28.

"Droughts, storms, and rising seas threaten our lives and livelihoods. The Adaptation

Gap Report has revealed that the gap is much larger than previously thought. We must take immediate steps to close the adaptation gap," he said.

Mohamed Adow, the founder and director of Power Shift Africa, an independent think tank based in Kenya, said, "There is no mention of adaptation finance, and this is a challenge. If we don't close the adaptation finance gap now, there will be no way to do this ever." The document includes references to "equity and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC)" in the final text, something developing countries are fighting hard for during the negotiations. These principles recognise that countries' efforts to combat climate change should be viewed in light of their contributions to total emissions and that richer nations should shoulder primary responsibilities, given their significant his-

torical emissions. While the draft reiterates that developed countries should at least double adaptation support to developing nations by 2025 compared to 2019 levels, it lacks reference to any baseline.

There is a reference to "sustainable agriculture" in the text, as a solution for mitigation and resilience. It also includes goals without specific targets related to water, food, health, and agriculture. Harjeet Singh, head of global political strategy at Climate Action Network International, stressed the need to increase support for developing countries to meet specific adaptation targets currently under discussion.

"This action aims to protect communities from worsening climate impacts. Without immediate measures, we risk exposing people to increasingly severe consequences such as rising seas, intensified floods, and recurring droughts," he said.

# Major changes to US immigration policy under discussion

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Congress is discussing changes to the immigration system in exchange for providing money to Ukraine in its fight against Russia and Israel for the war with Hamas.

President Joe Biden has said he is willing to make "significant compromises on the border" to meet Republican demands that the assistance be tied to an overhaul of US border policy. Republicans say the record numbers of migrants crossing the southern border pose a security threat because authorities cannot adequately screen all the migrants and that those who enter the United States are straining the country's resources. GOP lawmakers also say they cannot justify to their constituents sending billions of dollars to other countries, even in a time of war, while failing to address the border at home.

But many immigration advocates, including some Democrats, say some of the changes being proposed would gut protections for people who desperately need help and would not really ease the chaos at the border.

Much of the negotiating is taking place in private, but some of the issues under discussion are known: asylum standards, humanitarian parole and fast-track deportation authority, among others. A look at what they are and what might happen if there are changes:

### HUMANITARIAN PAROLE

Using humanitarian parole, the US government can let people into the country by essentially bypassing the regular immigration process. This power is supposed to be used on a case-by-case basis for "urgent humanitarian reasons" or "significant public benefit". Migrants are usually admitted for a pre-determined period and there's no path toward US citizenship. Over the years, administrations, both Democratic and Republican, have used human-

itarian parole to admit people into the US and help groups of people from all over the world. It's been used to admit people from Hungary in the 1950s, from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos during the latter half of the 1970s, and Iraqi Kurds who had worked with the US in the mid-1990s, according to research by the Cato Institute.

Under Biden, the US has relied heavily on humanitarian parole. The US airlifted nearly 80,000 Afghans from Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and brought them to the US after the Taliban takeover. The US has admitted tens of thousands of Ukrainians who fled after the Russian invasion. In January the Democratic administration announced a plan to admit 30,000 people a month from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela via humanitarian parole, provided those migrants had a financial sponsor and flew to the US instead of going to the US-Mexico border for entry.

The latest US government figures show that nearly 270,000 people had been admitted into the country through October under that program. Separately, 324,000 people have gotten appointments through a mobile app called CBP One that is used to grant parole to people at land crossings with Mexico.

### WHAT MIGHT CHANGE WITH ASYLUM?

Asylum is a type of protection that allows a migrant to stay in the US and have a path to American citizenship. To qualify for asylum, someone has to demonstrate fear of persecution back home due to a fairly specific set of criteria: race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinions. Asylum-seekers must be on US soil when they ask for this protection. They generally go through an initial screening called a credible fear interview. If they are determined to have a chance of getting asylum, they are allowed to stay in

the US to pursue their case in immigration court. That process can take years. In the meantime, asylum-seekers can start to work, get married, have children and create a life. Critics say the problem is that most people do not end up getting asylum when their case finally makes it to immigration court. But they say migrants know that if they claim asylum, they essentially will be allowed to stay in America for years.

"People aren't necessarily coming to apply for asylum as much to access that asylum adjudication process," said Andrew Arthur, a former immigration court judge and fellow at the Centre for Immigration Studies, which advocates for less immigration in the US. Some of what lawmakers are discussing would raise the bar that migrants need to meet during that initial credible fear interview. Those who do not meet it would be sent home. But Paul Schmidt, a retired immigration court judge who blogs about immigration court issues, said

the credible fear interview was never intended to be so tough. Migrants are doing the interview soon after arriving at the border from an often arduous and traumatising journey, he said.

### WHAT IS EXPEDITED REMOVAL?

Expedited removal, created in 1996 by Congress, basically allows low-level immigration officers, as opposed to an immigration judge, to quickly deport certain immigrants. It was not widely used until 2004 and generally has been used to deport people apprehended within 100 miles of the Mexican or Canadian border and within two weeks of their arrival. Defenders say it relieves the burden on the backlogged immigration courts. Immigration advocates say its use is prone to errors and does not give migrants enough protections, such as having a lawyer help them argue their case. As president, Republican Donald Trump pushed to expand this fast-track deportation policy nationwide and for longer periods of time.

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# Egyptians vote for president



AP ■ CAIRO

Egyptians began voting Sunday in a presidential election in which President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi faces no serious challenger and is certain to win another term, keeping him in power until 2030. The election has been overshadowed by the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. Almost all Egyptians' attention has been on the war on their country's eastern borders and the suffering of Palestinian civilians in the coastal enclave.

The three-day vote, beginning on Sunday, is also taking place amid a staggering economic crisis in Egypt, a country of 105 million people in which nearly a third live in poverty, according to official figures. The crisis stems from mismanagement of the economy but also from the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic and the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine, which rattled the global economy.

El-Sissi faces three other candidates: Farid Zahran, head of the opposition Social Democratic Party; Abdel-Samad Yamama, chairman of Wafd Party; and Hazem Omar, head of the Republican People's Party. An ambitious young presidential hopeful, Ahmed Altantawy, dropped out of the race after he failed to secure the required signatures from residents to secure

his candidacy. He blamed his failure on what he said was harassment by security agencies of his campaign staff and supporters.

The vote runs for three days, starting Sunday, with a runoff scheduled for January 8-10 if no candidate secures more than 50 per cent of the vote, according to the National Election Authority, a judicially-chaired body that runs the electoral process.

Egyptian expatriates cast their ballots on December 1-3. Ahead of the vote, the interior ministry, which oversees police forces, deployed thousands of troops across the country to secure the election.

More than 67 million people are eligible to vote, and authorities are hoping for a high turnout to give the election legitimacy.

A career military officer, el-Sissi was first elected as president in mid-2014, a year after he, as defence minister, led the military overthrow of an elected but divisive Islamist president amid widespread street protests against his one-year rule. El-Sissi was reelected in 2018 for a second, four-year term. He faced only one challenger, a little-known politician who joined the race at the last minute to spare the government the embarrassment of a one-candidate election after several hopefuls were forced out or arrested.

# West African leaders acknowledge little progress in their push for democracy

AP ■ ABUJA (NIGERIA)

In a renewed push for respect for democracy in coup-hit West Africa, leaders from across the region kicked off a crucial meeting in Nigeria on Sunday and acknowledged for the first time that their efforts to stem the tide of coups have so far met with little success. The 15-nation regional bloc, ECOWAS, has unsuccessfully tried to restore political stability across the entire West and Central Africa which has recorded eight military takeovers since 2020, including in Niger and Gabon. In the past month, the governments of Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau have also described their country's political crises as attempted coups.

Under his leadership, the regional bloc has imposed its most stringent travel and economic sanctions yet against Niger after elite soldiers deposed and detained President Mohamed Bazoum. He said that would send a strong message to other nations. But rather than deter the soldiers who took over power in Niger and elsewhere, the sanctions appear to have emboldened them, analysts say. Niger's junta has set up a transitional government that could remain in power for up to three years and has increasingly sought legitimacy elsewhere, including by forging an alliance with Burkina Faso and Mali and by turning to Russia for a military partnership after severing ties with European countries, particularly France.

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# Elon Musk restores X account of conspiracy theorist Alex Jones

AP ■ SAN FRANCISCO

Elon Musk has restored the X account of conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, pointing to a poll on the social media platform formerly known as Twitter that came out in favour of the Infowars host who repeatedly called the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting a hoax.

It poses new uncertainty for advertisers, who have fled X over concerns about hate speech appearing alongside their ads, and is the latest divisive public personality to get back their banned account.

Musk posted a poll on Saturday asking if Jones should be reinstated, with the results showing 70 per cent of those who responded in favour. Early Sunday, Musk tweeted, "The people have spoken and so it shall be." A few hours



later, Jones' posts were visible again - the last one from 2018, when the company permanently banned him and his Infowars show for abusive behaviour. Musk, who has described himself as a free speech absolutist, said the move was about protecting those rights. In response to a user who posted that "permanent account bans are antithetical to free speech",



# Philippine vessels targeted with water cannons by Chinese coast guards

AP ■ MANILA

The Chinese coast guard targeted Philippine vessels with water cannon blasts on Sunday and rammed one of them, causing damage and endangering Filipino crew members off a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, just a day after similar hostilities at another contested shoal, Philippine officials said.

The Philippines and its treaty ally, the United States, immediately condemned the latest confrontation near the Second Thomas Shoal, where two Philippine navy-operated supply boats and two Philippine coast guard escort ships had sailed to deliver food and other supplies to Filipino forces in a long-marooned navy ship that serves as a territorial outpost.

"We condemn, once again, China's latest unprovoked acts of coercion and dangerous maneuvers against a legitimate and routine Philippine rotation and resupply mission to Ayungin Shoal that has put the lives of our people at risk," a Philippine government task force that deals with the territorial disputes said in a statement, using the Filipino name for the shoal.

The Chinese coast guard's high-pressure water cannon blasts disabled and severely damaged the engines of the Philippine supply boat M/L Kalayaan, which had to be towed back to the western Philippine province of Palawan, Philippine officials said, adding

the action seriously endangered the lives of the crew. One of two Philippine coast guard escort ships, the BRP Cabra, sustained damage to its mast due to the water cannon blast. Another supply boat was rammed by a Chinese coast guard ship but still managed to maneuver away and deliver supplies to Filipino marines at Second Thomas Shoal, they said.

Drone video footage and photographs issued by the Philippine coast guard show two Chinese coast guard ships separately blasting water cannons at close range at BRP Cabra and a smaller supply boat. "The systematic and consistent manner in which the People's Republic of China carries out these illegal and irresponsible actions puts into question and significant doubt the sincerity of its calls for peaceful dialogue," it said. "We demand that China demonstrate that it is a responsible and trustworthy member of the international community."

The Chinese coast guard said it had "implemented controls in accordance with laws and regulations." The statement gave no details about the measures taken but said the Philippines action "seriously infringed on China's sovereignty."

It also claimed a Philippine vessel ignored warnings and in violation of international navigation regulations made a sharp turn in an "unprofessional and dangerous manner" and intentionally collided with a



Chinese coast guard ship, causing "scratching".

"The responsibility lies entirely with the Philippine side," the coast guard said.

Coast guard spokesperson Gan Yu described China's actions as "reasonable, legal and professional," and said such operations would continue unabated. "We sternly warn the Philippines to immediately cease its infringing actions ... and strictly control its provocations on the front line so as not to drop a stone on its own foot," Gan was quoted as saying on the coast guard's website.

China's actions were strongly condemned by foreign diplomats in the Philippines, including the ambassadors from treaty partner the US, the European Union and Japan.

"The US stands with the Philippines and partners in vehemently condemning the PRC's repeated illegal and dangerous actions against vessels," US Ambassador MaryKay L. Carlson posted on X, former-

ly known as Twitter.

China's ships, which have surrounded the Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal for years, have blocked Philippine coast guard and supply boats in a yearslong effort to take control of the hotly disputed atoll claimed by both nations.

China has rejected all international condemnation and attempts at legal intervention, including a 2016 ruling by a UN-backed arbitration tribunal that invalidated China's claims, leaving them without any legal basis. China insists it has a legal right to "defend its sovereignty" in keeping with its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea, one of the world's most crucial waterways for shipping and other maritime activities.

On Saturday, the Chinese coast guard and accompanying ships also trained water cannons at three Philippine fisheries vessels to prevent them from approaching Scarborough Shoal in the disputed waters off

the northwestern Philippines.

That caused "significant damage" to the communication and navigation equipment of one of the three Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources vessel, Philippine officials said.

They added that suspected militia vessels accompanying Chinese coast guard ships used a long-range acoustic device that could impair hearing, causing "severe temporary discomfort and incapacitation to some Filipino crew."

In other high seas clashes this year, Chinese coast guard ships used a military-grade laser that caused Filipino crewmen temporary blindness and engaged in dangerous blocking and shadowing maneuvers that caused minor collisions, Philippines officials say. More tensions loom.

"The Philippines will not be deterred from exercising our legal rights over our maritime zones," the Philippine government task force said.

A flotilla of 40 civilian fishing boats, backed by Philippine coast guard escort ships, initially was en route Sunday to Second Thomas Shoal but decided to proceed first to two Philippine-occupied islets in the South China Sea to deliver Christmas food packs.

From there, organisers will reassess before the flotilla proceeds with a plan to sail along the vicinity of the Second Thomas Shoal, said one of the organizers, Rafaela David, who denounced the latest Chinese action.

# Zelensky heads to Argentina to win support from developing nations

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is heading to Buenos Aires to witness the swearing-in on Sunday of Argentina's new president, Javier Milei, Zelensky's office said. It is the Ukrainian leader's first-ever trip to Latin America as Kyiv continues to court support among developing nations for its 21-month-old fight against Russia's invading forces.

A political outsider who has railed against what he calls entrenched official corruption in Argentina and promised to uproot the political establishment, Milei ran on a pro-Western foreign policy platform, repeatedly expressing distrust of Moscow and Beijing.

Zelensky phoned Milei shortly after the Argentinian's electoral victory, thanking him for his "clear support for Ukraine" which he described in social media posts as "well-noticed and appreciated by Ukrainians."

In its readout of the call published shortly later, Milei's office said he had offered to host a summit between Ukraine and Latin American states, a potential boon to Kyiv's monthslong effort to strengthen its relationships with countries of the global south. Zelensky and other senior Ukrainian officials have repeatedly presented Ukraine's war against Russia as resistance against colonial aggression, hoping to win support from Asian, African and Latin American states that in the past struggled to free themselves from foreign domination, sometimes turning to Moscow



for support against Western powers.

According to Zelensky's official website, he broke his journey to Argentina to meet with the prime minister of the West African country of Cape Verde, Ulisses Correia e Silva, thanking him for his support for Kyiv's diplomatic initiatives and discussing efforts to boost Ukrainian grain exports to Africa. It was not immediately clear where the meeting took place.

Zelensky expressed his appreciation for Cape Verde's backing of UN resolutions supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity and calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory before

peace talks can begin. The African country previously supported UN documents condemning Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014.

According to Zelensky's website, he and Correia e Silva also discussed Kyiv's efforts to expand a corridor for grain exports in the Black Sea that has seen over 7 million metric tons of Ukrainian produce shipped out since its inception, months after Moscow pulled out of a UN-brokered deal to facilitate shipments of Ukrainian and Russian food and fertilizer to countries in need, as well as a proposal to establish transport and storage hubs for Ukrainian grain in Africa.

# Taliban must embrace, uphold human rights obligations in Af

Kabul (AP): The Taliban must embrace and uphold human rights obligations in Afghanistan, the UN mission in the country said on Sunday on Human Rights Day and the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since seizing power in 2021, the Taliban have erased basic rights and freedoms, with women and girls deeply affected. They are excluded from most public spaces and daily life, and the restrictions have sparked global condemnation.

The UN mission, highlighting the Taliban's failures in upholding rights' obligations, said it continues to document extrajudicial killings, torture and ill-treatment, corporal punishment, arbitrary arrest and detention, and other violations of detainees' rights. People who speak out in defense of human rights face arbitrary arrest and detention, threats and censorship, the mission said.

"We pay tribute to and express our solidarity with

Afghan human rights defenders, many of whom are paying a heavy price for seeking to uphold the fundamental tenets of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: peace, justice and freedom," said Fiona Frazer, representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Afghanistan.

The head of the UN mission in Afghanistan, Roza Otunbayeva, said rights must be upheld to ensure the country's future prosperity, cohesion and stability. The US on Friday hit two Taliban officials with sanctions over human rights abuses in Afghanistan. Fariduddin Mahmood made decisions to close education centres and schools to women and girls after the sixth grade, said the State Department. He supported education-related bans on women and girls.

The second target of the US sanctions is Khalid Hanafi, from the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.

# Hong Kong holds first council elections under new rules

AP ■ HONG KONG

Residents went to the polls on Sunday in Hong Kong's first district council elections since an electoral overhaul was implemented under Beijing's guidance of "patriots" administering the city, effectively shutting out all pro-democracy candidates.

Turnout is expected to be much lower than in the last elections, held at the height of the 2019 anti-government protests. Some pro-democracy voters, dismayed by the drastic rule changes, including the elimination of most directly elected seats, are turning their backs on the polls.

Members of the League of Social Democrats, one of the city's remaining pro-democracy political parties, had planned to stage a small protest to express their discontent over the electoral rule changes. But their members were arrested by the police after being stopped and searched, the group said.

The police said three people were arrested on suspicion of intending to incite others to disrupt the elections, but did not provide names.

The final turnout in the vote will be a barometer of public sentiment toward the "patriots" — only system, the new political order under the Hong Kong government's crackdown on dissidents following the 2019 protests — the most concerted challenge to Beijing since the former British colony returned to China's rule in 1997. China promised the semi-autonomous territory could retain its Western-style liberties for 50 years under the "one country, two systems" framework. But that promise has become increasingly threadbare after Beijing imposed a national security law that led to the arrest and silencing of many pro-democracy activists.

In 2021, the city amended its electoral laws for its legislature, drastically reducing the public's ability to vote and increasing the number of pro-Beijing lawmakers making decisions for the city. After the changes, the turnout rate plunged from 58 per cent to 30 per cent in a legislative election that year.

The district councils, which primarily handle munic-



ipal matters such as organizing construction projects and public facilities, were the last major political bodies mostly chosen by the public. The elections four years ago held symbolic importance in the anti-government movement, with a record turnout rate of 71 per cent. The pro-democracy camp's landslide victory acted as a rebuke to the government's handling of the 2019 protests.

But an amendment passed in July slashed the proportion of directly elected seats from

more than 10,000 police officers were deployed across the city to ensure the elections would be conducted in a safe and orderly manner.

Housewife Ivy Sze, 37, said the overhaul did not shake her confidence in the electoral system. But she said she felt there were fewer voters in the morning than in previous elections.

"There used to be a long queue outside," she said, holding a thank-you card from the government, part of what officials called a "heartwarming" gesture for those who voted. But university student Timothy Cheung, 21, decided not to vote following the rule changes, saying his peers also intended to abstain from the polls. "It's useless even if I vote. All candidates are leaning to one side," he said, referring to their pro-government backgrounds. Government officials have downplayed the significance of the turnout rate as a measure of the overhaul's success. On Friday, Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Erick Tsang said not voting doesn't necessarily imply opposition to the elections,

adding one's non-participation could be due to other reasons. Still, Hong Kong leader John Lee and his administration have stepped up efforts to drum up support for the polls. The government held various promotional activities, including carnivals, an outdoor concert and free admission to some museums. The city's prominent airline, Cathay Pacific, also offered discount fares for passengers traveling back from mainland China to Hong Kong, saying it wanted to help residents "actively participate" in the polls.

Lee earlier this month said civil servants have a responsibility to support the government to implement its policies, urging them to lead by example and vote. He and his wife went to a polling station to vote on Sunday morning and described the elections as the "last piece of the puzzle" to implement the principle of "patriots" administering the city. "The elected councilors will serve the interests of Hong Kong. They won't betray the interests of Hong Kong and the interests of the country," he said.

# Indonesia temple a testimony to India's cultural ties with SE Asia

PTI ■ YOGYAKARTA

Centuries-old Prambanan temple, a large compound consisting of 240 Hindu temples on the outskirts of Yogyakarta city in Muslim-majority Indonesia, stands as a testimony to India's deep-rooted cultural and historical ties with South East Asia. The 10th-century Prambanan temple, located approximately 17 kilometres northeast of Yogyakarta city, is considered Indonesia's largest Hindu temple.

A UNESCO heritage site, the Prambanan temple popularly known as Candi Prambanan is among many such temples in Indonesia which are aiming to attract tourists from India beyond Bali. India has been generous with its funds in the restoration of some of the temples in the region and has extended services under cultural diplomacy to nations that are geographically as well as culturally close.

In ASEAN nations, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has restored historical sites in Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia and Cambodia. In Jakarta, India's Ambassador to ASEAN Jayant Khobragade said that New Delhi is not involved in the restoration work at the Prambanan temple. However,



India has been assisting in the renovation of a few temples in some of the ASEAN states, he added. The original Prambanan temple compound, destroyed by major earthquakes and volcanic eruptions over centuries, was rediscovered in the 17th century and is now being restored.

"The temple was built on the method of interlocking stones. It's a very complex structure. So far, only 22 temples out of 240 temples in the compound have been restored," a local official said, adding that work on restoring more structures is in progress. The temple is dedicated to three main Hindu deities 'Trimurti' - Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

"Restoration works have been conducted since 1918, both in the original traditional method of interlocking stone

and modern methods using concrete to strengthen the temple structure," according to the UNESCO website.

A government-authorised tourist guide at the temple complex while explaining the unique construction style of the structure said that the restoration work was difficult because there were no pictures available of the original compound.

"It's a UNESCO heritage site. The rules don't allow more than 25 per cent of new stones to be used for restoration. That's also one of the reasons why restoration work is taking time," he added. The original plan of the Prambanan temple was rectangular, consisting of an outer courtyard, middle courtyard and inner courtyard. The temples are subdivided into a higher and a lower terrace.

# 'EC dilly-dallying tactics in allocating symbol'

Islamabad (PTI): Jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's party accused the election commission of "dilly-dallying tactics" in granting it permission to retain the cricket bat as its election symbol. The same day, the party announced that it had elected 71-year-old Imran Khan's nominee, Barrister Gohar Khan, as the party Chairman.

The ECP on Friday issued a notice to the party on a petition challenging its recent organisational polls, which were termed as "rigged and fraudulent". In a statement on Saturday, a PTI spokesperson alleged that the PTI was the target of the worst state repression

and ongoing political engineering before the elections, the Dawn newspaper reported.

The spokesperson added that all the evidence and signs were enough to expose the state's ambitions to commit historical electoral fraud in the coming general election, the report said. After completing its intra-party elections on December 2 and submitting all necessary documents to the ECP, the party expressed dismay at the ECP's "dilly-dallying tactics".

"Since general elections are around the corner, this delay by the ECP was a severe form of pre-poll rigging," the

spokesperson said. He argued that withholding the 'bat' symbol is tantamount to undermining the country's Constitution, democracy, transparent elections and political identity from millions of Pakistanis. The spokesperson asserted that these actions reflected a desperate attempt by anti-democratic forces to exclude the party from politics.

The official also condemned the ECP's decision in November to invalidate PTI's intra-party elections and the demand for a re-election within 20 days. He insisted that it was unprecedented in the country's history that Imran

Khan, PTI's founder, voluntarily stepped down from the position for the sake of democracy and the rule of law.

The spokesperson said that instead of handing over the chairmanship of the party to someone from his family, Imran Khan nominated a capable and loyal party worker as a candidate for the post of chairman in the intra-party elections. He went on to say that "the country's most popular political party", which he claimed enjoyed the support of over three-fourths of the eligible voting population, was being subjected to a conspiracy and a "technical knockout".

# Iran bans Amini's family from travelling to receive EU prize

Dubai (AP): Iranian authorities banned members of the late Mahsa Amini's family from travelling to receive the European Union's top human rights prize on her behalf, a civil rights monitor reported. Amini's death while in police custody in 2022 sparked nationwide protests that rocked the Islamic Republic.

The US-based HRANA said late Saturday that authorities have refused to allow Amini's father, Amjad, and two

of her brothers to fly out to Strasbourg, France, to receive the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought.

Reports said only the family's lawyer, Saleh Nikbakht, would be able to travel to receive the award on their behalf. The EU award, named for Soviet dissident and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Andrei Sakharov, was created in 1988 to honour individuals or groups who defend human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is "the highest trib-

ute paid by the European Union to human rights work," as per the EU Parliament website.

Earlier in September, Mahsa Amini was granted the prize. The 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman died after Iran's morality police arrested her for allegedly violating the country's strict headscarf law that forced women to cover their hair and entire body. Her death led to massive protests that quickly escalated into calls to overthrow Iran's clerical rulers.

# Kids of Narges Mohammadi to accept Nobel Peace Prize on her behalf

Helsinki (AP): The children of imprisoned Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi are set to accept this year's Nobel Peace Prize on her behalf in a ceremony on Sunday in the Norwegian capital. She is renowned for campaigning for women's rights and democracy in her country, as well as fighting against the death penalty. Ali and Kiana Rahmani, Mohammadi's twin 17-year-old children who live in exile in Paris with their father, will be given the prestigious award at Oslo City Hall, after which they will give the Nobel

Peace Prize lecture in their mother's name. Mohammadi, 51, was awarded the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize in October for her decades of activism despite numerous arrests by Iranian authorities and spending years behind bars. She is currently detained in a prison in Tehran. At a news conference in Oslo on Saturday, Kiana Rahmani read out a message from her mother, in which the activist praised the role international media played in "conveying the voice of dissenters, protesters and human rights defenders to the world".



# Market to focus on macro data, global trends: Analysts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Global trends, macroeconomic data, and the outcome of the US Fed policy meeting are the major factors that will drive the movement in the domestic equity markets this week, analysts said.

"In the upcoming data-centric week, the focus will be on crucial releases, including inflation data from India and the US. Indian inflation is expected to rise, while US inflation will remain steady. "Indian industrial and manufacturing production is also expected, while consensus expects expansion. However, the outcome of the awaited Fed policy meeting will be pivotal in shaping market sentiments," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rose 303.91 points, or 0.44 per cent, to scale its new peak of 69,825.60, while the broader index Nifty breached the crucial 21,000 mark and hit the highest intra-day level of



21,006.10 on Friday. The market achieved an all-time high, driven by robust domestic GDP growth. Despite the RBI maintaining the policy status quo, an upgraded GDP growth forecast for FY24 (6.5 per cent to 7 per cent) boosted investor confidence, Nair said. On Friday, the six-member Monetary Policy Committee of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decided to keep the benchmark repurchase (repo) rate at 6.5 per cent. The central bank raised its forecast for economic growth to 7 per cent from 6.5 per cent, maintaining India's position as the world's fastest-growing major economy, after a

stronger-than-expected 7.6 per cent growth in the July-September quarter. Mid and small caps continued to outperform, driven by a healthy economic outlook, strong Q2 earnings, and corrections in oil prices, Nair added. Last week, the BSE benchmark rallied 2,344.41 points or 3.47 per cent. "Markets remained upbeat for yet another week and gained nearly three and a half per cent. After a strong gap-up start, benchmark indices moved from strength to strength and finally settled around the week's high," Ajit Mishra, senior vice-president of technical

research at Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Global trends, money injected by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), the outcome of state elections, and RBI's interest rate decision were the major drivers behind the markets' rally last week.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) injected Rs 26,505 crore into the Indian equity markets in the first six trading sessions of this month on expectations of political stability after the BJP stormed to power in three major states and robust economic growth.

"We maintain our positive view on markets despite the overbought conditions and suggest participants look for buying opportunities on dips. "Nifty has the potential to test the 21,200-21,500 zone and expects the index to hold the 20,300-20,550 zone in case of profit taking. Among the key sectoral indices, we reiterate our preference for banking and IT majors and suggest staying selective in the others," Mishra said.

# Finance Ministry to empanel merchant bankers, law firms

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry has invited bids for the empanelment of merchant bankers and legal advisors for assisting the government in CPSE divestment transactions undertaken through OFS and stock market dribbling. The bids have been invited in four categories -- A++, A+, A and B, based on the size of the transaction.

To be eligible for empanelment in the A++ category, which is an OFS transaction size of more than Rs 2,000 crore, interested merchant bankers would be required to have completed at least one equity market transaction of the size of Rs 2,000 crore. For empanelment for managing OFS transaction size of Rs 750 crore to Rs 2,000 crore (A+), and less than Rs 750 crore (A), the interested merchant banker would be required to have managed at least one capital market trans-

action of Rs 750 crore and Rs 500 crore respectively between April 2020 and till now.

In the fourth category, which is B, interested merchant bankers would be involved in the sale of CPSE shares on the stock exchanges (Dribbling). The minimum experience for bidders in this category would be of five years in share broking. The bidder should have a minimum net worth (including that of its parent entity) of at least Rs 25 crore. The merchant bankers and selling brokers would be empanelled for two years. "The Government of India (GOI) envisages disinvesting its shareholding in CPSEs through the Offer for Sale through Stock Exchange Mechanism/sale of Shares in the stock market (Dribbling) from time to time for which this Request for Proposal (RFP) for Empanelment of MBSBs is being floated," the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) said.

# Optimistic about wrapping up EFTA deal with India before 2024 polls: Swiss envoy

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Switzerland's Ambassador to India, Ralf Heckner, has expressed optimism that the crucial European Free Trade Association (EFTA) deal with the country would be wrapped up before the 2024 general elections.

Heckner stressed on the importance of the proposed trade deal for unlocking innovation and investment opportunities.

"Both sides have been negotiating very closely and seriously over the last more than 12 months. I remain positive that the deal would be wrapped up before the (2024) elections," he told PTI.

The envoy was recently in the city to unveil the Kolkata chapter of the Swiss-India Chamber of Commerce.

Parliamentary elections in India are due in early 2024.

"If India wants innovation, it needs to work with about 12 to 15 countries, and one of those countries is Switzerland for a world of investments and innovation."

"We will have a more strategic innovation relationship with India," Heckner stated.



India and the EFTA states - Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland - are negotiating a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with a view to boost economic ties between the two regions. Negotiations on the agreement were officially launched in January 2008.

The EFTA members are not part of the European Union (EU). Noting the sharp rise in visa application processing numbers, which hit a record 2 lakh in 2023 compared to pre-COVID levels of 1.6-1.7 lakh, Heckner said this trend would lead to enhanced trade and cultural ties between India and Switzerland in the years ahead. The EFTA-India merchandise trade exceeded USD 6.1 billion in 2022.

# Sebi plans to introduce fast track concept

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To deepen the bond market, Sebi is looking to introduce the concept of 'fast track' public issuance for debt securities and further reduce the face value of debt securities, including non-convertible debentures, issued on a private placement basis to Rs 10,000 from Rs 1 lakh at present.

If implemented, the move would also promote ease of doing business.

"The main intention of a fast track public issuance of debt securities is to facilitate frequent issuers with a consistent track record, to make public issues of debt securities with reduced time, cost and effort," Sebi said in its consultation paper.

To further enhance the participation of the non-institutional investors in the corporate bond market, Sebi has "proposed to permit issuers to launch NCDs (non-convertible debentures) or NCRPS (non-convertible redeemable preference shares) with the face value of Rs 10,000".

However, in such cases, the issuer should appoint a merchant banker who would carry out due diligence for issuance of such privately placed NCDs and NCRPS and disclosure requirements in the private placement memorandum, Sebi said.

Further, such debt securities should be plain vanilla with a simple structure and should not have any credit enhancements or structured obligations, it added.

This came after Sebi in October 2022 cut the face value to Rs 1 lakh from Rs 10 lakh earlier. The decision along with the mainstreaming of Online Bond Platforms (OBPs) has helped in enhancing the participation of non-institutional investors in the bond market.

During the period from July to September 2023, it was observed that non-institutional investors subscribed to 4 per



cent of the total amount raised as compared with the general average of less than 1 per cent. Besides, the total volume of trades undertaken on the OBPs aggregates to around Rs 333 crore by 1974 users (investors), Sebi noted. Further, the regulator has suggested the requirement of appointment of a merchant banker in case of issuance of Securitised Debt Instruments (SDIs) at a face value of Rs 10,000. Sebi suggested that instead of inserting the audited financials for the last three financial years and Stub period financials in the offer document, the same should be allowed to be provided as a QR code scanning which opens the web link to the financials on the issuer's website.

Further, details of certain information required for the current year such as Related Party Transactions (RPTs), and remuneration of directors among others to be specified as required up to the latest quarter. Also, Sebi has suggested that record dates should be standardized 15 days before the due date of payment of interest or redemption.

The regulator has "proposed to consider, like equity issuance, an avenue to debt issuers to make the issuance of public issues on fast-track basis". Suggesting modalities, Sebi said that the need to seek comments from the public on a draft offer document for fast-track public issues should be reduced to two working days.

# India's power consumption grows nearly 9 per cent in April, November

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Power consumption has increased by nearly nine per cent to 1,099.90 billion units (BU) in the country during April-November this fiscal compared to the same period a year ago, showing a surge in economic activities.

The power consumption in the country was 1,010.20 BU in

April-November 2022-23, higher than 916.52 BU recorded in the same period of 2021-22.

Power consumption in the entire fiscal 2022-23 was 1,504.26 BU, higher than 1,374.02 BU witnessed in 2021-22 financial year.

Industry experts said that around nine per cent growth in power consumption in the first eight months of this fiscal year

shows buoyancy in the economy. The power ministry had estimated the country's electricity demand to touch 229 GW during summer. The demand did not reach the projected level in April-July due to unseasonal rain.

The peak demand, however, touched a new high of 224.1 GW in June before dropping to 209.03 GW in July. Peak

demand touched 238.82 GW in August. In September this year, it was at a record high of 243.27 GW. The peak demand was 222.16 GW in October and 204.86 GW in November this year.

According to experts, power consumption was affected in March, April, May, and June this year due to widespread rainfall. They said power consumption

grew in August, September, and October, mainly due to humid weather conditions and also perk up in industrial activities due to the effect of festive rush.

Earlier this week, Union Power Minister R K Singh had told Lok Sabha in a written reply that the power demand has gone up by 50.8 per cent in energy terms from 2013-14 to 2022-23.

# Gautam Adani details green elements of ₹7 lakh cr investment planned across verticals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Adani group will spend Rs 7 lakh crore in capital expenditure over the next 10 years and its billionaire chairman Gautam Adani has shared some details of the plans which will further consolidate the conglomerate's position as infrastructure leader in India. Adani in posts on X, formerly Twitter, has over the last few days detailed 'green' initiatives of the investment plan across some verticals of the apples-to-airport conglomerate.

"The portfolio recently announced its plan to invest over Rs 7 lakh crore over the next 10 years to consolidate its preeminent position as the largest infrastructure player in India," Adani Energy Solutions said in a stock exchange filing. While flagship Adani Enterprises Ltd incubates and develops new businesses spanning mining, airports, defence and aerospace, solar manufacturing, roads, metro and rail, data centres and resource management, its ports business



is on a greening drive.

"By 2025, we will set a national benchmark being the only carbon-neutral port operations and be net zero for APSEZ by 2040. Our climate-friendly transformation includes electrifying all cranes, switching all diesel-based internal transfer vehicles to battery-based ITVs, and installing an additional 1000 MW of captive renewable capacity," Adani said in a post on X.

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone is the nation's largest seaport operator in the

country, with ports on both east and west coasts.

"Our dedication to protecting the environment is also reflected in our expanding mangrove plantations, aiming for a remarkable 5000 hectares by FY 25. This is yet another step towards a greener future and further testament of our commitment to climate stewardship," he said.

This is alongside the fast-expanding renewable energy business. Sharing pictures of the massive construction work in Kuch deserts in Gujarat, Adani said his group is building "the world's largest green energy park".

"This monumental project, covering 726 sq km in the challenging Rann desert, is visible even from space. We will generate 30GW to power over 20 million homes. Also, just 150 km away, in our Karmabhoomi Mundra, we are creating one of the globe's most extensive and integrated renewable energy manufacturing ecosystems for solar and wind," he said.

# Affordability levels to buy homes hit in last two years: JLL

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The rise in housing prices and mortgage rates have impacted affordability levels to buy homes in the last two years across seven major cities but it may improve next year due to a likely reduction in repo rate, according to JLL India.

The improvement in affordability levels would further boost housing sales, which have risen despite increases in property prices and interest rates on home loans.

The consultant on Sunday released its 'Home Purchase Affordability Index' (HPAI), which signifies whether a household earning an average annual income (at an overall city level) is eligible for a housing loan on a property in the city at the prevailing market price.

"The rising repo rate in 2022 as the RBI reacted to the global recessionary and inflationary trends, plus a strong demand recovery spurring price hikes, worsened affordability in 2022,"

the report said. In 2023, the consultant said that affordability levels are likely to marginally worsen or remain the same when compared to 2022.

A stronger price increase has been countered by stagnancy in repo rate movement, declining inflation and relatively higher growth in household incomes, the consultant explained.

"In 2024, we are likely to see a renaissance with affordability levels expected to be on an improving trajectory as macro-economic fundamentals support a repo rate reversal and thereby interest rate reduction that could provide another fillip to the residential sales market," the report said.

JLL expects a 60-80 basis points reduction in repo in the next year.

It has derived this index through a combination of variables, which include home loan interest rates, average household income and price of the residential apartment.

# Air conditioned truck cabin must from October 2025

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

All new trucks manufactured on or after October 1, 2025, must be equipped with AC cabins for drivers, as the Road Transport and Highways Ministry has issued a notification for mandating air-conditioned truck cabins. In a gazette notification, the ministry has said, "...The vehi-

cles manufactured on or after October 1, 2025, shall be fitted with an air-conditioning system for the cabin of vehicles of N2 and N3 category". The testing of the cabin fitted with an air-conditioning system shall be as per IS14618:2022, it added.

In July, Union Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari said the draft notification to man-



date the installation of air-conditioning systems in the cabins of trucks has been approved.

Recently, the minister said that truck drivers play a key role in the transport sector, one of the most important areas for India, and there is a need to address issues regarding their working conditions and state of mind.

Air-conditioned cabins for trucks will soon be made mandatory, Gadkari had said. Lamenting that truck drivers have been forced to work in extreme heat conditions, the minister said that he has been pushing for air-conditioned cabins for truck drivers for a long time even as "some people objected to it saying it will increase costs".

# Tata Motors to hike commercial vehicle prices

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Motors on Sunday said it will hike prices of its commercial vehicles by up to 3 per cent from January 1, 2024, to offset the residual impact of the past input costs.

The increase will be applicable across the range of commercial vehicles, Tata Motors said in a statement. Passenger vehicle makers such as Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai Motor India, Tata Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra, Honda and Audi have also announced plans to increase vehicle prices in January.

# At COP28, sticking points remain on fossil fuels, adapting to climate

PTI ■ DUBAI

Negotiators have been urged to narrow down their options so they can agree on how to save Earth from disastrous levels of warming and help vulnerable societies adapt to weather extremes as the clock runs down on United Nations climate talks.

COP28 President Sultan Al-Jaber told journalists Sunday afternoon that negotiators were "making good progress", just not fast enough. "Am I satisfied with the speed and the pace?" al-Jaber said, as protesters could be heard nearby calling for the end of fossil

fuels. "The answer is no. ... Time has come for us to shift gears. Time has come for us to deliver."

There were some signs negotiators were moving forward on Sunday: A new draft agreement on global adaptation goals - which will determine how poor countries will brace themselves for climate change-fuelled weather extremes like drought, heat and storms - was released. The draft text expresses concern over the gap between the money needed for adaptation and how many countries are getting, but it doesn't say exactly how much cash countries need to adapt to climate change.



One option in the draft proposes an assessment of each country's

vulnerability to climate change by 2025 and to establish early warning systems for extreme weather events by 2027. Another option is for countries to come up with national adaptation plans and implement them by 2030.

The new draft "presents the skeleton of what could be a reasonable framework" on how to adapt to climate change, said Ana Mulio Alvarez of climate think tank E3G, but to be effective, adapting to climate change "requires developed countries to provide support to developing countries" to actually enact plans. Mohamed Adow of climate

think tank Power Shift Africa said that the draft "sets clear targets, but overall the text is weak" as it doesn't adequately address how to finance adaptation.

Thibyan Ibrahim from the Small Islands Developing States negotiating bloc called the progress on adaptation "a bit disappointing". A draft text on the Global Stocktake - the part of the negotiations that assesses where the world is at with curbing warming and how countries can stick to climate goals - were still stuffed with several options over how to phase-out planet-warming fossil fuels.

"Now is the time to shift gears and get to consensus," COP28 President Sultan al-Jaber said in a plenary session late Saturday. Shantal Munro-Knight, a climate negotiator for Barbados, said motivation to get a strong deal among countries was high. "I don't think anyone wants to go away from the COP without a really ambitious program, and that's where I think everybody is. You didn't hear negative pushback too much because we are all in that moment," Munro-Knight said. But Marshall Islands Climate Envoy Tina Stege acknowledged "there is a lot more work that needs to be done."

## BUSINESS BRIEF

### GODREJ HOME LOCKERS NEW RANGE INTRODUCED

New Delhi: Godrej Security Solutions, a division of Godrej & Boyce, the flagship company of the Godrej Group, has strategically expanded its Home Lockers category in Delhi - NCR with the introduction of the range of latest innovations; NX pro plus, NX advanced, and Verge series. This initiative, aimed at enhancing convenience and safeguarding valuables, involves the addition of new counters in the city during the fiscal year FY23, with a target to grow the category by 10% over the next fiscal year. Recognizing Delhi - NCR's distinctive security needs and the increasing awareness of home safety, Godrej Security Solutions sees a significant opportunity to fortify its position in the home lockers market. Currently holding a substantial market share of 80% in the home locker category, the brand plans to bolster its presence further through the introduction of various locking mechanism-enabled lockers and safes. These innovative solutions not only prioritize security but also integrate smart features for a seamless and advanced customer experience.



# India beat USA 3-2

## To finish ninth at Junior Women hockey World Cup

PTI ■ SANTIAGO (CHILE)

Goalkeeper Madhuri Kindo shone under the bar as India displayed remarkable resilience to eke out a 3-2 win over USA in sudden death to finish ninth at the Junior Women's hockey World Cup here.

In an exhilarating classification match, both India and USA displayed tremendous grit as the match ended at 2-2 in regulation time. Kindo then produced an amazing save in sudden death, while Rutaja Dadaso Pisal calmly converted her shot to lead India to victory.

During the allocated 60 minutes, India's Manju Chorsiya (11') and Sunelita Toppo (57') scored a goal each, while Kiersten Thomassey (27, 53') netted a brace for the USA.

The tense penalty shootout witnessed Mumtaz Khan and Rutaja Dadaso Pisal successfully converting their chances for India, while the latter also scored in sudden death to secure the win for India.

On the opposing side, Katie Dixon and Olivia Bent-Cole managed to score for the USA in the penalty shoot-out. India dominated the start, pressing



the USA relentlessly and penetrating their defense multiple times. Chorsiya's perfectly placed goal from the first penalty corner gave India a well-deserved lead in the

game. Buoyed by this advantage, India maintained aggressive play, keeping the USA under constant pressure. However, the USA still managed to

win a penalty corner in the very last minute of the quarter but failed to capitalise on that as the opening quarter concluded with India leading 1-0.

Aiming to retain their lead in the second quarter, India focused on ball possession while consistently penetrating the USA's circle. Despite their efforts, the USA defended solidly, thwarting India's attempts to widen the gap while launching counter-attacks themselves.

This tactic proved effective when Thomassey's precise strike levelled the score, showcasing the USA's resilience.

India launched a barrage of attacks in the third quarter, relentlessly pressuring the USA's defense. Despite several near misses, including from a penalty corner, India couldn't convert their opportunities into goals as the 1-1 deadlock continued.

At the start of the fourth quarter, India earned an early penalty corner, yet their efforts to convert it fell short. It was the USA who seized the opportunity against the run of play, as Thomassey netted her second goal, putting her team in the lead.

With time slipping away and the score against them, India escalated their offensive efforts. Their determination paid off when Toppo levelled the score with a brilliantly placed shot from a penalty corner, bringing them back into contention.



## Ashwini, Tanisha win Guwahati Masters Super 100 title

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Indian women's doubles pair of Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa on Sunday secured their second Super 100 title with a straight game win over Chinese Taipei's Sung Shuo Yun and Yu Chien Hui at the Guwahati Masters here.

The second seeded Indian combination, which finished runners-up at the Syed Modi International Super 300 tournament last week in Lucknow, beat the world no. 81 combination 21-13 21-19 in a 40-minute final.

This was the third title for the Indian pair, which had clinched the Abu Dhabi Masters Super 100 and Nates International Challenge this

year. Ashwini, 34, and 20-year-old Tanisha started playing together only in January and were part of India's Asian Games squad which competed in Hangzhou, China in September-October.

The BWF (Badminton World Federation) World Tour is divided into six levels, namely World Tour Finals, four Super 1000, six Super 750, seven Super 500, and 11 Super 300. One more category of the tournament, the BWF Tour Super 100 level, also offers ranking points.

Each of these tournaments offers different ranking points and prize money. The highest points and prize pool is offered at the Super 1000 level.



## Griffiths, Chaufla bag trophies at Bombay Gymkhana Racketlon

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Britain's Luke Griffiths and India's Vikramaditya Chaufla won title in their respective categories at the Bombay Gymkhana International Racketlon Open here.

Griffiths beat brother Leon Griffiths 12-21, 21-17, 21-14, 21-11 in the Elite A category final.

Chaufla defeated Switzerland's Graham King to win the B category title. Unseeded Chaufla upset third seed King 20-22, 21-4, 21-13 in the final. The Indian had beaten compatriot Abhijit Ghagre and top seed Weijei Guidi of Netherlands earlier in the competition.

Racketlon is a combination sport in which the competitors are required to play four racket sports: table tennis, badminton, tennis and squash.

Chaufla, a former badminton player, has also represented in the World Racketlon Championships in the previous two editions including the one in Rotterdam this year. K K Cheema, president of Racketlon India Sports Association (RISA) and association founder Krishna Kotak, presented the trophies to the winners.

## National Billiards & Snooker

# Malkeet emerges 6 Red snooker champion

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Malkeet Singh has emerged as the new National 6-Red snooker men's champion, beating his RSPB colleague E Pandurangaiah in the final at the ongoing National Billiards and Snooker Championships here. Singh defeated Pandurangaiah 7-5 in a keenly-contested best-of-13 frames summit clash on

Saturday. Earlier, he had come up with a morale-boosting come-from-behind 6-5 triumph over favourite and 26-time IBSF world champion Pankaj Advani (PSPB) in the semi-final stage.

Pandurangaiah came into the title round high on confidence after getting past a fancied Aditya Mehta (PSPB) 6-4 in the other semi-final.



Regardless, it was former champion Advani's loss, after having all but sealed the match at 5-3, which left the Indian cue sports community astounded. Malkeet prevailed in the final three frames 59-0, 43-1, 67-13 in a sensational fashion against Advani to register the greatest upset in the event.

"Malkeet held his nerve and got the better of me towards the

end," said Advani, last edition's runner-up, who later also lost the third-place playoff to Mehta. In women's 6-Red snooker, defending champion Vidya Pillai (Karnataka) will be headlining a strong quarterfinal field that includes the reigning IBSF world U-21 snooker champion Keerthana Pandian (Karnataka) and runner-up Anupama Ramachandran (Tamil Nadu).

# Aston Villa beats Arsenal

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Unai Emery came back to haunt Arsenal as Aston Villa cut another English Premier League title challenger down to size. A 1-0 win at Villa Park set a new club record of 15 straight home victories in the league and moved Emery's team to within two points of first-placed Liverpool.

How sweet it must have been for the Spanish coach to get the better of his former club after being fired by Arsenal in 2019. He had already rebuilt his reputation before taking over a Villa team that was in danger of being relegated last season.

But his work with the Midlands club could be his finest yet in a career that has seen him win four Europa League titles.

Third-placed Villa looks like a serious title contender after a recent run that includes wins against Manchester City and Tottenham.

"We are increasing mentality and believing how we can be stronger," Emery said.

"We want to be in the top eight teams, but a lot of teams want to be there. At the beginning there were seven top teams, but we will fight to be in there. While we are in we can be excited and motivated to get it."

John McGinn scored the only goal after seven minutes and Villa held on to deny late-goal specialist Arsenal an equalizer that manager Mikel Arteta believed was the least his team deserved.

"I'm really proud of the way the team played in this stadium against this team," Arteta said. "We deserved to win the game, but you have to be better in the boxes and things have to go your way as well."

"I see many, many teams come here and I haven't seen many do what we have done to them today. The result is not there but, certainly, the way we played it was there." Arsenal led the league at the start of the day



and dropped to second and a point behind Liverpool.

**LUCKY LIVERPOOL** Manager Jurgen Klopp was relieved after "lucky" Liverpool pulled off a comeback 2-1 win at Crystal Palace.

Klopp admitted his team was "horrendous" as it trailed 1-0 at Selhurst Park after Jean-Philippe Mateta's penalty in the 57th. The attitude and momentum flipped when Palace's Jordan Ayew was sent off in the 75th and a minute later Mo Salah's deflected shot levelled the score. Almost inevitably, Harvey Elliott struck from distance to seal victory in stoppage time.

"I'm a very happy manager in this moment, but I know we were lucky as well," Klopp said. "If you only win your really good games you have no chance to be really successful, that's how it is, and obviously today was not a really good game from us."

**SALAH'S RECORD** Salah's latest landmark goal launched Liverpool's revival at Selhurst Park.

The Egypt international reached 200 goals for Liverpool - the fifth man to the mark - and 150 in the Premier League, which moved him into the all-time top 10, tied with Michael Owen.

"The most important thing was that we won the game," Salah said. "It's a great feeling. I'm happy for the record and that we won the game."

**FANS TURN** Erik ten Hag looked like he had the weight of the world on his mind after another setback for Manchester United against Bournemouth.

An abject performance by United at home saw it lose 3-0 and spark loud jeers from the Old Trafford crowd. Goals by Dominic Solanke, Philip Billing and Marcos Senesi piled the misery on Ten Hag, a day after he was named the Premier League manager of November.

It was United's seventh defeat in the league and 11th defeat in all competitions. It was all the more perplexing just three days after United's mood-lifting defeat of Chelsea by 2-1. United missed a chance to go level on points with fourth-placed Manchester City. "Of course (I'm) annoyed, disappointed, definitely. I expected something different," Ten Hag said. "I hoped before the game you can build on the performance and result from Chelsea, so it's very disappointing."

**WILDER WINS** It didn't take long for Chris Wilder to get a reaction from Sheffield United after returning to the club as manager this week. Having suffered defeat to Liverpool in midweek, he led his team to a 1-0 win against Brentford in his second game in charge. James McAtee scored the decisive goal in first-half stoppage time.

But Sheffield United remained at the bottom of the table after 19th-placed Burnley drew with Brighton 1-1.

# Eintracht Frankfurt routs Bayern Munich 5-1

AP ■ BERLIN

Eintracht Frankfurt routed Bayern Munich 5-1 to deal the 11-time defending champion on its first Bundesliga defeat of the season.

Omar Marmoush starred for the home team to end its run of four straight defeats across all competitions, and Bayern star Harry Kane failed to score for just the third time in the Bundesliga this season.

Bayern had an unexpected long break as last weekend's match with Union Berlin was called off at short notice because of heavy snowfall in the Bavarian capital. "When you have a week to prepare, you don't have many arguments on your side," said Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel, whose team hadn't played since Nov. 29. Union put its break to good use, however, ending its run of 16 games without a win across all competitions by beating Borussia Mönchengladbach 3-1. Benedict Hollerbach and Mikkel Kaufmann scored their first Bundesliga goals to lead Union to victory in coach Nenad Bjelic's first home game in charge. Kevin Volland broke the deadlock for Union with a penalty. "Hurrah, hurrah, Union is back!" the fans chanted afterward. It rhymes in German.

Union next plays Real Madrid for its last Champions League game of the season on Tuesday.



### LEIPZIG EYES BIG PRIZE

Leipzig struck an early blow in the race for Champions League places with a 3-2 win over 10-man Borussia Dortmund. Dortmund's Mats Hummels was sent off early for bringing down Lois Opendo as the last defender. Referee Sven Jablonski initially awarded Leipzig a penalty and showed Hummels a yellow card, then changed it to red and withdrew the penalty after a VAR check showed the foul was just outside the penalty area. Leipzig went ahead through Rami Bensebaini's own goal in the 32nd minute when the Dortmund defender inadvertently deflected in the visitor's corner.

Niklas Süle equalized before the break, but Christoph Baumgartner restored Leipzig's lead on a rebound in the 54th. Yussuf Poulsen sealed the win in injury time, Niclas Füllkrug replied for Dortmund, and Leipzig withstood the home team's push for an equalizer.

# Inter back on top of Serie A after big win over Udinese

AP ■ MILAN

Inter Milan moved back on top of Serie A with a statement 4-0 victory over relegation-threatened Udinese.

Inter knew it had to respond and leapfrog back above Juventus, which beat defending champion Napoli 1-0 on Friday.

Three goals in seven minutes at the end of the first half from Hakan Calhanoglu, Federico Dimarco and Marcus Thuram put Inter firmly in control and Lautaro Martinez capped a great night for his team with a fine individual goal late on. Inter moved back to two points above Juventus and nine above third-placed AC Milan, which lost at Atalanta 3-2.

Udinese remained a point above the bottom three.

Inter dominated and Martinez hit the post early. Their first-half siege paid off from the 37th minute with Calhanoglu scoring from a penalty then turning provider for Dimarco. Another lovely team move - 21 passes - ended the match as a contest before halftime when Henrikh Mkhitaryan lifted the ball to Thuram for a cushioned volley at the back post. It is a rare match that Martinez does not score in and the Argentina World Cup winner netted six minutes from time when he won the ball in midfield and raced forward before unleashing a shot into the bottom left corner from just outside the area.

**STOPPAGE-TIME WINNER** Luis Muriel netted in stoppage time for Atalanta to win



moments after AC Milan captain Davide Calabria was sent off. Olivier Giroud and substitute



Luka Jovic canceled two goals from Ademola Lookman and it appeared as if they would end in a draw.



But Milan defender Calabria was sent off in stoppage time for a second booking and Muriel scored the winner soon

after to see Atalanta move to within one point of the top four.

Atalanta broke the deadlock seven minutes from halftime when Lookman controlled a ball over the top, forced his way between two players and unleashed an effort that took a huge deflection off Milan defender Fikayo Tomori to loop over goalkeeper Mike Maignan.

Giroud headed in a corner on the stroke of halftime to level but Lookman restored Atalanta's lead 10 minutes into the second half when he fired in a Charles De Ketelaere cross. Milan equalized 10 minutes from time. Christian Pulisic rolled the ball across from the left and Giroud got out of the way, allowing Jovic to slot home.

However, after Calabria was sent off in the third minute of stoppage time, Aleksey Miranchuk carved out space on the right and spun around before finding Muriel, who side-footed into the far bottom corner.

### FORMER PLAYER SCORES

Lazio could manage only 1-1 at relegation-threatened Hellas Verona despite the capital team dominating and its opponent finishing the match with 10 men.

Lazio coach Maurizio Sarri hit out at talk his team was in crisis after a midweek Italian Cup victory - its third straight win in all competitions.

But Lazio has won only one of its past five league matches and the draw at Verona left it ninth. Verona, which is without a win

since August, remained in the bottom three.

Lazio took the lead in Verona with a spectacular goal in the 23rd minute. Following good interplay with Manuel Lazzari on the right, Felipe Anderson rolled the ball across for Mattia Zaccagni to send home with a cheeky, backheeled flick at the near post. The former Verona player refused to celebrate, and instead waved an apology to the home fans.

Verona leveled with 20 minutes remaining. Tomás Suslov's rebound attempt was probably meant to be a shot but turned into an assist that Thomas Henry bundled over the line with his stomach.

Verona was forced to play the final 13 minutes with 10 men after Duda was sent off for a second yellow card.



# Chahar to miss first game

## Remains doubtful for T20I series between India, South Africa

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior seamer Deepak Chahar is not in contention to be selected in the playing eleven for the opening T20I between India and South Africa in Durban on Sunday as he is yet to join the squad due to personal reasons. It is understood that Chahar is currently at home as a close family member has not been keeping well and he urgently needed a break from the sport.

Chahar, in fact, missed out on the fifth and final T20 International against Australia in Bengaluru, last Sunday, as he had to rush back home after being intimidated about a family member's illness.

"Deepak hasn't yet joined the team in Durban as a close family member needed urgent hospitalisation. He had taken permission for a break as he needed to attend



to his family member. He may or may not join the squad depending on his family member's health in coming days," a senior BCCI official told PTI on condition of anonymity.

The BCCI brass understands that Chahar might not be in the best frame of mind till the family member in question fully recovers and hence if he doesn't wish to join the team now, he would be excused.

The 31-year-old Rajasthan veteran boasts best figures of 6/7 in T20 an International and his prolonged absence due to injury did affect the T20 squad's balance in the past two years.

However, the other two members of the T20 squad, Shubman Gill and vice-captain Ravindra Jadeja, who were holidaying abroad after the World Cup final have directly linked up with the squad in Durban and have attended practice sessions.



## Want to gift my parents their dream car: Vrinda

PTI ■ MUMBAI

It was a red-letter day for Vrinda Dinesh having hit the WPL pay-dirt with a whopping Rs 1.30 crore deal but still the 22-year-old couldn't muster enough courage to call her mother as she would be overwhelmed and emotional in equal measure.

Vrinda on Saturday became the second-highest paid uncapped Indian player at the Women's Premier League auction after Kashvee Gautam, who went to Gujarat Giants for Rs 2 crore.

Vrinda's love for her parents is such that after UP Warriorz bought the Karnataka batter, she did not make a video call from Raipur to her mother in Bengaluru, knowing that she wouldn't be able to control her emotions.

"I think she (mother) was in tears. I did not video call her because I knew I would see those tears. I just called her and it was a very faint voice," Vrinda said on Saturday during an interaction organised by UP Warriorz.

Parents make a lot of sacrifices for their off-springs without any expectations but a worthy child knows the value of bringing a 1000-watt smile in their faces. Asked what would he do with the purse, Vrinda had her plans in place.

"I just knew that, you know, they were really overwhelmed. They were very happy for me. And, you know, I just want to make them proud said. I will give my parents the car they have always dreamed of. That is my first goal right now and I will see what- ever later on," added Vrinda, who is currently in Raipur preparing for the Women's Under-23 T20 Trophy.

**No Pressure of price-tag**  
Easier said than done, often a huge price-tag creates a lot of pressure on players and becomes an impediment towards performance.

"This price tag, it is not something in my hands. I have just been picked and I just want to give it my best. I do not think this price tag is going to make much of a difference because at the end of the day, I am just here to play and enjoy the sport," said Vrinda. The right-hand batter said that one of her wishes is to open the innings alongside captain Alyssa Healy.

"To be able to play under Alyssa Healy's captaincy, having Tahlia McGrath, having Dani Wyatt, having Sophie Ecclestone... Some of the greats of women's cricket. It's going to be surreal because I've always thought of it, but, you know, I've never imagined it happening to me,"

she said.

Vrinda said that she has always admired Alyssa, the Australian wicketkeeper-batter known for her tactical acumen and leadership skills. "Alyssa is someone I have always looked up to. I like the way she bats and it's something I probably try doing here," Vrinda said. "To see to be able to open the batting with Alyssa. She is very destructive and because she's someone I want to be. I mean, it is going to be like a dream come true," Vrinda said.

### Secret wish

The cricketer admitted that her secret wish was to play for Royal Challengers Bangalore, as she hails from the city, but was nevertheless happy to have been picked up by the Warriorz. "Because I am a local and I am from Bangalore, I have always liked RCB, but I was ready for anything that came my way. I just want to give my best to whichever team I am picked for. And now it is UP Warriorz, so I am really looking forward to giving my everything and make sure we win the WPL," she said.

### Attending trials of all WPL teams

Vrinda, who recently played for India Women's A against England A, said she had auditioned for each of the five WPL sides before being picked by UP Warriorz. "Last year, yes, I did attend all five trials. I enjoyed UP the most. We had a lot of match simulations, open nets. We also played a match where, you know, prior to the match or any simulation, they came and spoke to me," she said. "They asked me to be very free and just play the game that I have always been playing. Also on the last day, where they had a skill session for the batters, the UP Warriors players had to stay back for that session. "They also asked me to attend the session and they also taught me a lot of skills that I could develop. That's something I used during the season this year," she said.

### Turning point

Looking back at her journey, Vrinda said missing a string of games for Karnataka and then scoring consecutive centuries in senior women's competition in 2020 was the turning point in her career. "I started cricket at the age of 13. Prior to that, I was playing a lot of gully cricket with the boys," she said. "One day, my father put me into a summer camp saying, 'let us try, let us see how it goes'. I just enjoyed the sport ever since.

## RCB captain hopes Kate Cross will complement Renuka

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper Smriti Mandhana hoped that veteran England pacer Kate Cross could complement Renuka Singh and fortify her team's bowling, particularly in the Power Play, in the second edition of the Women's Premier League 2024.

The Royal Challengers had acquired Cross in the player auction on Saturday for Rs 30 lakh, and the 32-year-old brings with her a rich experience of playing franchise cricket for teams like Brisbane Heat and Manchester Originals.

"We have Kate Cross now, and I think she will complement (pacer) Renuka well in the power play with both swinging the other way," said Mandhana in a release issued by the RCB.

RCB's focus was more on garnering more bowlers and all-rounders than specialist batters, and Mandhana said the team attended the auction precisely with that target in mind.

Apart from Cross, RCB bought Ekta Bisht (left-arm spinner), Georgia Wareham

(leg-spinner), Sabbineni Meghana (all-rounder), Simran Bahadur (medium-pacer), Sophie Molineux (left-arm spinner) and home-grown talent Shubha Sathesh (all-rounder).

Mandhana explained the buys. "Bowling is definitely very important in T20s. This year, we were looking to strengthen our spin unit and also look for overseas pacers who could complement Renuka [Singh] well," she said.

"With Molineux and Wareham with us, the bowling looks very experienced. We also have the likes of Shreyanka [Patil], [Sophie] Devine and [Ellyse] Perry." RCB had a poor outing during the inaugural WPL, finishing fourth in the five-team league and they failed to enter the playoffs.

RCB squad for WPL 2024: Smriti Mandhana, Asha Shobana, Disha Kasat, Ellyse Perry, Heather Knight, Indrani Roy, Kanika Ahuja, Renuka Singh, Richa Ghosh, Shreyanka Patil, Sophie Devine, Georgia Wareham, Kate Cross, Ekta Bisht, Shubha Sathesh, Sabbineni Meghana, Simran Bahadur and Sophie Molineux.

## Wahab does U-turn on Rauf



PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan chief selector Wahab Riaz, who had slammed fast bowler Haris Rauf for opting out of the Test series in Australia, has now defended the NOC given to him to play in the Big Bash down under.

Wahab, while announcing the Pakistan Test squad for the series last month had criticised Haris, for not making himself available for selection for the three games in Australia.

While talking to media on Saturday, Wahab stated that the PCB has orchestrated this NOC to ensure Haris remains in optimal form in the lead up to the T20 series in New

Zealand. "From now until the New Zealand series, there is a gap of 1.5 months during which Haris Rauf isn't playing any cricket. His contract with Cricket Australia for the Big Bash comprises only 5 games. "Considering the thought that there won't be any cricket for 1.5 months and he's a fast bowler, to ensure he maintains his rhythm, we have given him a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from December 7th to 28th. "This will cover his 5 Big Bash matches so that he can then travel with the Pakistan team for the New Zealand tour. This is the science behind giving him the NOC," Wahab explained.

Wahab's comments on the pacer signalled a contrasting change in his stance. "Two days back he (Haris) told us he was available for the test series and last night he said he had worries over his workload and fitness issues so he was not available," Wahab said at the press conference on November 20.

"I and the Director of Pakistan team, Muhammad Hafeez we went and spoke to him in detail and told him that both the captain and coach wanted him (Haris) to play in Australia as he was an impact bowler and we assured him he would not bowl more than 10-12 overs in a day in Australia," Wahab narrated. "As a centrally contracted player we felt he should have not taken a step back. We felt Haris, if he wanted to play for Pakistan, should as a player be ready to make a sacrifice and play for the team," the chief selector had said. Interestingly, Wahab at his November 20 presser had claimed that as a policy in future only those players would be considered who gave preference to play for the country.

"Any player no matter who he is or how big a player is, if he is not giving priority to the Pakistan team then he will not feature in our future plans," he added.



## Wicket of Healy will give Kashvee most joy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Pacer Kashvee Gautam, the most expensive uncapped Indian buy at the Women's Premier League (WPL) auction, says the wicket of Australian opener Alyssa Healy will bring her most joy in the upcoming edition.

Gautam, the seamer from Chandigarh, was bought for Rs 2 crore by Gujarat Giants at the auction on Saturday. She is also a hard hitting batter.

"It's quite unbelievable at the moment. I was travelling in the team bus after practice and was informed about the auction by a teammate. The amount kept rising and I was selected. "It's a huge opportunity for me to showcase my skills. We have always looked up to Mithali ji. It's a great opportunity for me to interact with her and seek tips from her," said Gautam, referring to Giants mentor Mithali Raj, who was at the auction table.

On the players she is excited about bowling to, Gautam said: "I think Alyssa Healy or any other foreign batter like Hayley Matthews." Gautam was not part of the opening WPL edition but she tracked the proceedings from the sidelines and learned from them too.

"I think teams need to be more impactful in the lower middle order batting. They need to accelerate in the last 3-4 overs, so I have practiced accordingly. I have worked on range hitting. I have to be flexible with my bowling, to be able to bowl well with both the new and old balls." She is also hoping that a good outing in WPL will lead to an India debut.

"I just knew that, you know, they were really overwhelmed. They were very happy for me. And, you know, I just want to make them proud said. I will give my parents the car they have always dreamed of. That is my first goal right now and I will see what- ever later on," added Vrinda, who is currently in Raipur preparing for the Women's Under-23 T20 Trophy.

"This price tag, it is not something in my hands. I have just been picked and I just want to give it my best. I do not think this price tag is going to make much of a difference because at the end of the day, I am just here to play and enjoy the sport," said Vrinda. The right-hand batter said that one of her wishes is to open the innings alongside captain Alyssa Healy.

"To be able to play under Alyssa Healy's captaincy, having Tahlia McGrath, having Dani Wyatt, having Sophie Ecclestone... Some of the greats of women's cricket. It's going to be surreal because I've always thought of it, but, you know, I've never imagined it happening to me,"

## 'Pitch was tricky but not as challenging as we made it appear'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Indian all-rounder Deepti Sharma has refrained from blaming the pitch for their shoddy batting performance, saying the wicket was not as challenging as they made it appear to be during the second women's T20I against England here.

The hosts, who lost the opening T20I by 38 runs, were shot out for a mere 80 in 16.2 overs on Saturday night.

India went on to lose the game as well as the series here at the Wankhede Stadium, though they did put up an inspirational show with the ball, taking six wickets during England's chase of a paltry 81-run target.

"The pitch was not as challenging that only 70 or 80 runs would be possible. A few more runs could have been scored to get to a total of around 110-115," Sharma told media after the match.

"But there are such days when conditions do not favour you. As a team, we try to do well but anyone can have an off day. We did not feel, that since we could not do well in the first innings, we will not be able to make any impact whatsoever in the second.

"Had we built partnerships in between, the score would have been a lot different but we will learn from this going into the match tomorrow (on Sunday)." The 26-year-old praised the



bowlers for showing a strong fight despite having not enough runs on board.

"Whatever happened in the first innings, we wanted to do better in the second innings as a bowling unit," she said. "We wanted to take the game as deep as possible and the bowlers did a good job with

that. The bowlers did well since the opposition lost six wickets. It is not easy for the batters and the bowlers deserve credit for pulling things back. "We have played such matches in the past as well. We wanted to maintain a positive approach and keep close-in fielders as much as possible, and that would back each other up and not give up that easily," Deepti, however, said the surface as a bit "tricky".

"The wicket could also be a factor since both the matches panned out differently," Deepti said. "The wicket for the first match was better given that the ball was coming onto the bat nicely and it was easier to bat com-

pared to today, when the pitch was a little tricky for the batters and the ball was also skidding a bit."

**No real demon in the pitch: England's Charlie Dean**  
England off-spinner Charlie Dean, who returned with figures of 4-0-16-2 to be named the Player of the Match, said there were no "demons" in it. "There were quite a lot of wickets today in the game. I would not have any complaints on the pitch myself," she said. "Of course I would not, I am a bowler. I did not get a chance to have a bat out there but that is good. A lot of our guys were saying it was skidding on a bit but no real demons in the pitch."

# Om wins SSP Chawrasia Invitational title

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Om Prakash Chouhan displayed nerves of steel in a close finish as he won the Rs 1 crore SSP Chawrasia Invitational golf tournament to secure his 11th career title and fourth of the season here on Sunday.

Om Prakash (70-69-70-73), the overnight leader by four shots, was not at his best this day as he shot a one-over 73

but closed out the match in style with a last hole birdie to triumph by one shot for a total of six-under 282 at the Royal Calcutta Golf Club (RCGC).

American rookie Varun Chopra (73-72-69-69) took the runner-up spot at five-under 283 after shooting the day's joint lowest score of 69.

The 37-year-old 'OP', as Om Prakash is popularly known, walked away with the winning

cheque worth Rs 15 lakh that saw him become the first player to cross the INR 1 crore barrier in season's earnings on the PGTI.

Om Prakash, who originally hails from Mhow in Madhya Pradesh but is now attached with the Kalhaar Blues and Greens golf course in Ahmedabad, further extended his lead in the TATA Steel PGTI Ranking as his season's earnings moved to Rs



1,13,80,559, giving him a lead of more than Rs 39 lakh over second-placed Karan Pratap Singh.

Om Prakash began his day with a birdie on the first hole but then lost his way with four bogeys over the next 13 holes as he struggled with his putting, missing a few putts from short range and thereby conceding a one-shot lead to 24-year-old Chopra. However, Om Prakash made a

final push with a gallant effort on the closing stretch as he sank a 10-footer birdie on the 15th and followed that up with a great chip-putt and another crucial 10-foot conversion for par on the 17th.

He finally wrapped it up with a terrific approach shot on the 18th that landed four feet from the flag and set up the winning birdie for him.

"I normally play attacking golf but today I played a little con-

servatively to begin with. I wasn't happy about that approach and about taking the match to the last hole despite having a comfortable overnight lead," he said.

"But I'm delighted that I came through in the high-pressure situation at the end when it mattered the most. Having closed out a few matches earlier in the year, I had that quiet confidence that I can do it again.