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IS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
TAKING OVER THE CONTROL?

WORLD 9
OVER 4 LAKH AFGHANS RETURN
HOME FROM PAKISTAN

MONEY 10
SENSEX, NIFTY FALL
FOR SECOND DAY

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Complete Chaos in Uttarkashi

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A tense situation persists for the 41 workers trapped in the Silkyara tunnel since November 12. Despite it being the ninth day of their ordeal, authorities on Monday are still grappling to devise effective rescue strategies, leaving the fate of the stranded individuals in a precarious balance between hope and despair. As delays continue, discussions have begun to circulate about the potential man-made nature of this catastrophe, raising questions about Government officials' negligence and a lack of consideration for basic scientific principles in executing infrastructure projects in the vulnerable Himalayan region. Amid the challenges, there is a glimmer of hope, as international tunnelling expert Arnold Dix has arrived at the disaster site to assess the ongoing rescue efforts. Dix, who leads the Geneva-based International Tunnelling and Underground Space Association, brings his expertise to contribute to the rescue mission. Rescuers on Monday pushed through a six-inch-wide pipeline through the rubble of the collapsed Silkyara tunnel, a breakthrough that will help them supply larger quantities of food and possibly allow live visuals of the trapped workers. So far, a four-inch existing tube was being used to supply oxygen and items like dry fruit and medicines into the section

of the tunnel beyond the rubble of the collapsed portion of the under-construction tunnel on the Char Dham route in Uttarakhand. As the rescue operations unfold, experts are raising concerns about the Government's oversight during the planning and initiation of this project. Criticisms include questions about the project's approval despite concerns about fragile rock strata and the absence of an escape tunnel in the Silkyara project. This has led to speculation about whether due diligence was exercised before the project's implementation. The 4,531 metre long Silkyara tunnel being constructed under the Radi Pass area is to join the Gangotri and Yamunotri axis at a cost of ₹853.79 crore under the ambitious Char Dham all-weather road project. Geologists, scientists, and environmentalists have been asserting that landslides have increased along the roads since the commencement of the all-weather road project. Founder of Himalayan Environmental Studies and Conservation Organisation (HESCO) and Padma Bhushan recipient Anil Prakash Joshi said the Silkyara incident appears to be a lapse by the construction company. The work in the mountains is slower and different than work in the plains. It is necessary to consider the geological features of the fragile Himalayas and climate change while taking up infrastructure develop-



International Tunnelling and Underground Space Association president Arnold Dix near the site after a portion of an under-construction tunnel between Silkyara and Dandalgaon on the Brahmakhal-Yamunotri national highway collapsed in Uttarkashi district on Monday

PTI

ment. He said construction work in the mountains is being done just like the work in the plains and this must be looked into. "We need infrastructure development in our mountains but it has to factor in the geological aspect of the terrain and the impact of climate change which is now a reality," Joshi said. He said sustainable development has to keep science at the heart of all planning and execution. MPS Bisht, Geologist at HNB

Garhwal Central University, said whenever taking up such massive engineering work, it is of vital importance to conduct thorough geotechnical and geophysical mapping of the specific rock on which the tunnel is to be constructed. The exercise is a must before initiating any infrastructure project in the mountains. While the work is in progress, one must consistently uphold and monitor the safety measures. "The rock conditions vary so geophysical mapping gives

details of the rock quality across the mountain. The load-bearing capacity of the mountain rocks is also to be looked at before taking up such projects. For sustainable development, the prescribed checks and set norms have to be strictly followed to avoid any loss in the future," Bisht said. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a telephonic conversation with Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhumi on Monday. The PM sought information about the current

status of the rescue operation. Now, the authorities are focusing on six options to rescue the stranded workers. National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHID-CL) director Anshu Manish Khalkho called it the "first breakthrough" at the site. "We have sent the pipe 53 metres to the other side of the rubble and the trapped workers can hear and experience us," he said. "First achievement, big achievement. The next step is the more vital one and the most important — that is to get them out intact, happy," his colleague Col Deepak Patil said. Drones and robots from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) have also been brought to the site to look into the possibility of other escape routes for the trapped men. Rescue workers were yet to resume the horizontal boring through the debris after a boulder appeared to block the progress of the heavy-duty auger machine earlier this week. But an official statement said this was scheduled to begin in the evening. The first machine for construction of a vertical rescue shaft — possibly around 80-metre deep — by drilling from near the hilltop has also reached the tunnel. A road to the hilltop has been laid, and the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is arranging for more equipment, the statement said.

Kartarpur Sahib desecrated

PTI/AGENCIES ■ LAHORE

Condemnation poured in after a video of the desecration of Pakistan's Kartarpur Sahib Gurdwara went viral. Jagdip Singh Kahlon, the General Secretary of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, has alleged that alcohol and meat were served during a dance party held by Project Management Unit (PMU) on the premises of the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan's Punjab province. The party was organised at the reception of the gurdwara on November 18. However, days after the video, the authorities on Monday dismissed the report. Two PMU officials told PTI that alcoholic beverages were not served or there was no dance at the reception held on November 18. The officials said the video which showed alcohol at the dinner party "must have been doctored for propaganda purposes". The officials also clarified that the dinner reception was held about two kilometres from the Gurudwara Darbar Sahib in the Project Management Unit (PMU) complex. Inaugurated on November 9, 2019, on the eve of the 550th Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak, the first Guru of Sikhism, Kartarpur has a special significance in the Sikh religion as Guru Nanak had spent the last years of his life at the

place. Separately, the PMU in a statement said a dinner reception was held last weekend for stakeholders for the development of Phase-II of Kartarpur and providing better facilities to the visitors. "On Saturday night (November 18) the PMU hosted an informal dinner at Kartarpur in which heads or their representatives of all important Government departments of district Narowal, including the judiciary, district administration, police, Rangers, Customs, Anti-Narcotics officials and journalists attended the dinner, the PMU said in the statement. It said the purpose of the event was to enhance coordination and cooperation among all departments/stakeholders concerned with the deployment of Phase II of Kartarpur. It said Narowal Deputy Commissioner and all other participants assured of their complete cooperation and role in further development of Kartarpur and religious tourism. The visa-free Kartarpur corridor links Gurudwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan to Dera Baba Nanak shrine in Punjab's Gurdaspur district. The crossing allows devotees from India to visit Gurudwara Darbar Sahib, Narowal, some 130 kilometres from Lahore in Pakistan, from Gurudwara Dera Baba Nanak, Gurdaspur district, Punjab, India.

Visakhapatnam harbour blaze destroys 35 boats

PTI ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A fire broke out in a jetty area where in which at least 35 fishing boats were gutted, even as the police launched a hunt for 10 to 15 persons who allegedly partied in one of the boats, officials said on Monday. The fire broke out around 11.30 pm on Sunday in a boat owned by Balaji in zero jetty and was doused by 4 am on Monday, officials said. However, no death or injury was reported in the accident, the officials added. Visakhapatnam Harbour Assistant Commissioner of Police B Moses Paul said police are probing the role of the group of 10 to 15 people who quarrelled over a transaction. "After a boat caught fire, the group untied it and pushed it into the sea but it drifted back towards the boats and sparked a bigger fire," Paul told PTI. The blaze occurred in an area near the Visakhapatnam Container Terminal and an Indian Oil Corporation facility where fishing boats were anchored. Police received the names of the persons involved in the skirmish while Paul said more clarity over the cause of the fire will emerge on questioning them. Though 25 fire tenders were



Flames and smoke rise after a fire broke out in a jetty area in Visakhapatnam early on Monday

PTI

pressed into service from across the city over time, it was the Navy's Sahara firefighting boat which managed to extinguish the flames by spraying foam and sand, he said. According to Paul, the fire tenders could not put off the blaze initially because almost every boat had diesel and cooking gas cylinders. Every 10 to 15 minutes, he said those cylinders exploded.

Visakhapatnam Deputy Commissioner of Police-Zone II K Ananda Reddy said the intervening night of Sunday and Monday was quite windy, causing the fire to spread quickly among the boats made of fibre (plastic) and anchored closely. "Many of these boats also carry up to 5,000 litres of diesel as the fishermen venture into the sea for weeks. Many boats also car-

ried LPG cylinders which the fisherfolk use for cooking," Reddy added. Considering the critical location of the fire, Reddy said the Vizag Steel Plant fire brigade and the Navy were also alerted, while controlling the fire without further spread proved to be a big task. Visakhapatnam District Fire Officer S Renukayya said he received a call about the acci-

dent around 1 am, prompting him to rush firefighters and 12 fire tenders initially, including seeking help from the National Disaster Response Force and the Visakhapatnam Port Trust. According to Renukayya, the firefighters managed to control the fire from spreading to other boats in the vicinity within half an hour but it took almost two hours to douse the fire completely. According to estimates, each boat is valued between ₹35 lakh and ₹50 lakh, Ananda Reddy said. Police booked a case of accidental fire, he added. Paul said the port city has about 11 jetties, each of which could accommodate the anchorage of up to 60 fishing boats. Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed sorrow over the fire accident and directed Fisheries Minister Seediri Appalaraju to personally visit the accident spot. The Chief Minister directed officials to carry out a thorough investigation and find the reasons for it, said an official statement. Further, the CM instructed officials to support the fishermen who lost their boats and help them in whatever way possible.

Religare refutes media reports

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Religare Enterprises Ltd (REL) on Monday refuted the allegations levelled against its Chairman Rashmi Saluja with regard to excessive remuneration, terming those as "completely false and erroneous". In a strongly worded response, the Board expressed its shock and disappointment at the allegations, emphasising that they are not isolated to Dr Rashmi but are a targeted attack on the entire Management and Board. The statement comes with in days of proxy advisory firm InGovern Research alleging that Saluja was paid excessive remuneration. Religare said the performance-linked remuneration was paid to Saluja after approval of the Nomination and Remuneration Committee (NRC), Board, and the shareholders of REL. "The allegation that the executive chairperson draws a remuneration of more than ₹150 crore per annum is completely false and erroneous. As per the annual report for FY 22-23 of REL, the remuneration for the Executive Chairperson was ₹8.12 crore. Even after including the perquisites value of the ESOPs,

it reached a figure of ₹42.06 crore," Religare said in a statement. It further said that Saluja was reappointed as the Executive Chairperson in February 2023 for a second term for a five-year period through a resolution by the Board and approval of shareholders. This period has witnessed a historic revival, with Religare completing a one-time settlement of REL (Religare Finvest Limited) through organic collections and payments exceeding ₹9000 crores to the country's banking system. Religare further said that Saluja was instrumental in creating value for all the shareholders of REL. The share price of REL, which saw a low of ₹17 in 2020, rose to a high of ₹280 in September 2023. "The ESOP perquisite value is also reflective of this significant value creation a part of which was also shared by her as a shareholder/employee of the company," Religare added. Currently, Religare management is engaged in a tussle with the Burman family, promoters of FMCG major Dabur India. Burman family which has hiked its stake in Religare through creeping acquisition to

around 26 per cent, is now proposing to make an open offer for acquiring another 25 per cent stake in the financial services company. As per market regulator Sebi rules, it is mandatory for a company to make an open offer of 26 per cent to all shareholders. Religare also denied that the Burman family, at a meeting on September 20, had informed Saluja of a proposed open offer. The Burman family, it may be mentioned, had announced an open offer to buy additional share of REL at ₹235 apiece, amounting to a total consideration of up to ₹2,115 crore in cash. Religare had objected to the open offer price and sought an independent valuation report. On allegations that Saluja had liquidated the ESOPs after meeting a representative of the Burman family on September 20, the Religare statement said, "The process of liquidation of ESOPs through financing and sale was set in motion several days before the said meeting." The actual sale, it added, happened on September 21 and 22 at the prevalent market price and the share sale proceeds were utilised to further invest in Religare group entity.

Retired bureaucrat gives all to Ram Lalla in sacred pledge

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Inspired by the devotional Isentiment of Sanatan Dharma, a retired bureaucrat has offered his life's earnings, totaling ₹5 crore, in obeisance to Lord Vishnu with the words, "Tera Tujhko Arpan; Kya Laage Mera" (it is all yours and nothing mine). This contribution is dedicated to the construction and related paraphernalia for the completion of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. The temple is scheduled to open its doors in January 2022. The devotee has not only dedicated his financial savings but also all his movable and immovable property to the purpose of Bhakti. Inspired by the lines from Lord Vishnu's Aarti, "My offering to you, what will I like?" S Lakshmi Narayanan, former Union

Home Secretary of the 1970 IAS batch, has devoted his life's earnings to Ram Lalla. Although the donor has chosen not to seek public credit, sources in the Temple Trust reveal that, following the consecration of Lord Ram, the donor has committed to commissioning a 151 kg Ramcharitmanas at a cost of ₹5 crore, which will be installed in front of the idol. Each page of this epic, comprising 10,902 verses, will be crafted from copper. The emerald will be dipped in 24-carat gold, and gold-studded letters will be inscribed. This ambitious endeavor will necessitate 140 kg of copper and five to seven kg of gold, with other metals being employed for decoration. To fund the creation of this unique book, Narayanan has made the decision to sell all his properties and empty his bank



accounts. The resulting work, the 'Manas', will be reverently placed near the feet of Ramlala, as revealed by sources within the trust to *The Pioneer*. Narayanan, who recently visited the holy town of Ayodhya with his wife, sought permission from Champat Rai, the General Secretary of the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, regarding his desire to make a donation. The largest asset financing NBFC in India announced the

election of Narayanan as Chairman by the Board of Directors of the company in a board meeting held in Colombo on January 24, 2015. Narayanan has served as an Independent Director of STFC since September 2009. In addition to his distinguished career in civil services, Narayanan has also served as Chairman in a major finance company. In an interview with Rai, it was mentioned that around ₹1,800 crore is expected to be spent on the construction of the Ram Temple. Rai also stated that 70,000-75,000 people could have easy darshan if the temple is open for 12 hours. Sources reveal that the firm responsible for preparing the design for the new Parliament has agreed to create the gold-studded Ramcharitmanas. In a brief interaction with the temple community, the retired

IAS officer shared that he received his name due to a vow made to Goddess Lakshmi. During pregnancy, his mother had prayed at Delhi's Birla Temple, also known as Lakshmi Narayan Temple, pledging that if she had a son, she would name him Lakshmi Narayan. "God has blessed me abundantly throughout my life. I have held prominent positions and my life has been prosperous. Even after retirement, I continue to receive a significant income. Despite this, I am a person of simple tastes, content with basic necessities. My pension remains largely untouched. I believe in returning what God has bestowed upon me. I find it more meaningful to offer His book at the feet of God rather than accumulating wealth in the name of charity," shared the former

Union Home Secretary, accompanied by his wife Saraswati, as he conveyed his thoughts to the people in the temple trust. In an interview, Nripendra Misra, Chairman of the Ram Temple Construction Committee, stated that the funds for the temple construction are entirely sourced from devotees, with no government involvement. As of the end of September this year, approximately ₹3,500 crore has been collected through donations. On January 15, 2021, the then President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, initiated the contributions toward the construction of the Ram Mandir by donating ₹5,01,000. The first phase of the project is set to be completed by the end of next month, allowing pilgrims to witness Lord Ram in his child form before January 26, 2024. Preparations are underway for

the grand inauguration of the much-awaited temple on the banks of the Saryu river in 2024, which will be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22, 2024. The puja for the occasion will commence on January 14, coinciding with the celebration of Makar Sankranti, and the installation of Lord Ram's idol in the Garbhagriha of the Ram Mandir is scheduled for January 22. "Jai Siya Ram! Today is a day full of emotions. Recently, officials from the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust visited my residence and invited me to Ayodhya for the consecration of the Shri Ram Temple. I feel truly blessed. It is my good fortune that in my lifetime, I will witness this historic occasion," posted PM Modi on social media last month.

CAPSULE

JAWAN, TRIBAL SHOT BY TERRORISTS IN MANIPUR
Imphal: A security force personnel and his driver were shot dead by suspected members of the Imphal Valley-based terror groups in Kangpokpi district of Manipur on Monday, officials said here. The duo were travelling in a vehicle when suspected terror group members belonging to the state's majority community carried out an ambush between Haraothel and Kobsha villages, the officials said. One of the deceased was working with the India Reserve Battalion (IRB), the officials said. The incident took place in an area adjacent to the Singda dam, which has become a hotspot for insurgent groups to target tribal community members during the ongoing ethnic violence in the northeastern state.

AQI of Bhopal city reaches 326, making life misearable

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The air of the capital Bhopal is getting polluted. The situation is such that people are breathing more polluted air than on the night of Diwali. Due to this, the air quality index (AQI) of the city has reached 326. In view of this, Commissioner Dr. Pawan Sharma informed Collector Ashish Singh, Corporation Commissioner Frank Noble A took a meeting with other responsible officials. They have asked the Collector to issue a restrictive order under Section 144 in Bhopal. So that AQI can be improved. The polluted air of the city has also affected the health of the people. The number of

The number of patients suffering from asthma has started increasing in the ODP of hospitals. The number of patients has increased in Jaypee and Hamidia Hospital. To measure air quality in the city, automatic systems have been installed in TT Nagar, Paryavas Bhawan and Idgah Hills

patients suffering from asthma has started increasing in the ODP of hospitals. The number of patients has increased in Jaypee and Hamidia Hospital. To measure air quality in the city, automatic systems have been installed in TT Nagar, Paryavas Bhawan and Idgah Hills. At present, AQI is beyond 300 in all three places. Commissioner Dr. Sharma

has instructed the Collector and the Corporation Commissioner to take immediate initiative to bring the increasing pollution and contaminated air in Bhopal city to normal levels. Dr. Sharma also held a meeting with officials of Pollution Prevention Board and construction agencies. It was told in the meeting that the district administration will prepare

a quick action plan in a meeting of the concerned people to improve the level of polluted air and will start implementing it immediately. Commissioner Dr. Sharma directed the officials to increase the number of PUCs in the city and to make it mandatory to check the pollution level of vehicles passing through all the borders of Bhopal. He has also asked to conduct PUC at all petrol pumps. Commissioner Dr. Pawan Sharma also instructed officials of construction agencies to install green nets to prevent dust particles from entering the air. Also, to maintain the standards, water sprinkling should also be done from time to time. He has also asked to find out the source of smoke from all

types of fuels and to immediately ban burning of garbage here and there. The Commissioner has told Collector Singh that if necessary, the AQI should be improved by issuing a restrictive order under Section 144. He also directed to immediately inspect all the major construction works going on in the city and ensure that the environmental standards adopted in the construction works are followed. He has also asked the citizens not to burn garbage unnecessarily and also carry out necessary construction work with all precautions. He has also given instructions to take cognizance of the cases of stubble burning and to make the farmers aware and also to take action if necessary.



BJP MP and State President VD Sharma along with party workers handing over a memorandum to the collector for a false FIR lodged on BJP candidate from Rajnagar seat Arving Pateria and his other supporters in Chhatarpur, Madhya Pradesh on Monday. Pioneer photo

Awareness programme towards piles disease organised

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The World Piles Day was observed with great enthusiasm at AIIMS Bhopal, where healthcare experts and professionals gathered to raise awareness about the prevention and management of hemorrhoids and other ano-rectal diseases. The event was inaugurated by the esteemed Executive Director, Prof Dr. Ajai Singh, who served as the Chief Guest. Dr. Singh emphasized the crucial role of maintaining good bowel habits to prevent constipation, a leading cause of hemorrhoids. He highlighted the significance of incorporating Yoga and Ayurveda into daily routines to regulate a healthy lifestyle. The event commenced with an impactful audio-visual awareness song on Piles and constipation, setting the tone for an



informative and engaging program. Mr. Achal Mehra, a renowned Yoga Instructor, was a guest speaker who demonstrated various Yogasanas tailored for piles patients to help regulate bowel movements effectively. Dr. Danish Javed, Senior Medical Officer Ayush, delivered valuable insights on the importance of not withholding

natural urges, such as feces, flatus, and urine, to combat constipation. He also shed light on the benefits of Kshar Sutra treatment for ano-rectal diseases and cautioned against seeking treatment from unqualified practitioners. Ms. Bhavana Aharwar, Senior Dietitian, addressed the audience on the crucial role of a balanced diet in preventing con-

stipation and piles, underlining the connection between dietary habits and digestive health. A noteworthy contribution came from nursing students who formed six groups, creating well-crafted models and posters to explain the scientific details about piles. They also demonstrated Yoga and meditation techniques, providing practical insights to the public. The event saw active participation from 105 attendees who engaged in the two-hour program. To conclude the event on a healthy note, nutritious millet snacks and jal jeera were served to all participants. The World Piles Day celebration at AIIMS Bhopal proved to be a comprehensive initiative, combining expert insights, practical demonstrations, and community engagement to promote bowel health and a holistic lifestyle.

Four-day training for councilors starts at BMHRC

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A four-day training program was started at Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Center (BMHRC) to train counselors who provide information about testing, treatment etc. to HIV suspected and HIV positive patients in the government hospitals of the state. This program is being organized by Madhya Pradesh State AIDS Control Committee. Total 43 counselors participated in the training. Addressing the counselors present in the program, Dr. Tamonud Modak, Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry, AIIMS Bhopal, said that HIV is increasing among the people under the influence of drug addiction. This is happening due to reusing used syringes. According to a survey by the National AIDS Control



Authority in 2016, 9.5 percent of people suffering from AIDS got the disease due to used syringes, whereas four years ago this figure was only 4-5 percent. He asked the counselors to tell such patients about the ill effects of drugs. Prepare them to send them to a de-addiction center. Tell them about the benefits of a drug-free lifestyle. Be sympathetic to

HIV patients. Treat them like a normal patient. BMHRC Director Dr Manisha Srivastava said that HIV positive patients should talk openly about their disease. Many people with HIV suffer from depression and stress. Send them to a psychiatrist if needed. She said that BMHRC has been training state government employees since 2006 on

prevention of blood related diseases. So far, the blood bank has organized 175 training camps to impart training to blood bank officers, nurses and paramedical staff on the functioning of the blood bank, in which 2990 people have been trained. Dr. Ankita Patil, Deputy Director of Madhya Pradesh State AIDS Control Committee, said that every district hospital and civil hospital of Madhya Pradesh has an Integrated Counseling and Testing Center (ICTC), where counselors provide HIV counseling to the common people and also conduct testing as well. This training camp is being organized so that the counselors can explain well to the people about the issues related to HIV and provide correct information. In the training, refresher training is being given on various aspects related to HIV.



On the call of UNICEF, Kushabhau Thackeray International Convention Center decorated with blue lighting on the occasion of International Day of Children's Rights or World Children's Day, in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

Collector inspects govt schools, finds four teachers missing

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Collector Ashish Singh suddenly inspected the government schools of Bhopal on Tuesday morning. During this period, four teachers and one clerk (Assistant Grade-3) were found missing. They were suspended. At the same time, instructions were given to terminate the services of two outsourced operators. Collector Singh on Tuesday conducted a surprise inspection of the government primary, secondary and higher secondary schools of Runaha, Nazirabad and Surajpura and observed the arrangements. Many teachers were found absent during inspection. On which the Collector expressed his displeasure and asked to take action against the absent teacher. District Panchayat CEO Rituraj, SDM Vinod Sonkia and related officials were also present. Collector Singh conducted surprise inspections of Government Umav Runaha, Government Secondary School Nazirabad,

Collector on Tuesday conducted a surprise inspection of the government primary, secondary and higher secondary schools of Runaha

Government Mavi School Surajpura. In the surprise inspection, absent secondary teacher Sushila Solanki, Assistant Grade-3 Shubham Singh, primary teachers Kumud Kushwaha, Meena Chaturvedi, Nanakprasad Ahirwar were suspended. Along with this, show cause notices were issued to teachers Neelam Sharma and Aarti Tripathi. The services of two outsourced operators Kanha Meena and Bhajan Gaur who were found absent have been terminated. Two increments of the head teacher in-charge of Government Secondary School, Nazirabad have been stopped.

Counting training for employees commences

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

After voting took place in all seven assemblies of Bhopal on November 17, preparations for counting have now started. About 1200 employees will conduct the counting. For this they will be given training twice. In which they will learn the basics of counting. So that, there is no problem of any kind during counting of votes. Counting will take place in the old jail on December 3. It will start at 8 am. The responsibility of conducting the counting will be on about 1200 employees. Therefore, they will be given detailed training in this. This training will be given twice. The first training will take place after 26th November. Whereas, the second training can be given on 30th November. Training will be held in two sessions at Samanvay Bhawan and Model School in Bhopal. 600-600 employees will participate in both the sessions. According to the information, master trainers will give every information related to counting to the employees.

Murderous assault on 36-year-old man in Chhola locality

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 36-year-old man was attacked with a sharp edged weapon by miscreants in his head and his aide attacked him with a hammer and stick at Prem Nagar Colony, Chhola Mandir police have started investigation. The man had gone to the shop to buy goods on Saturday night where a criminal from the locality asked him for bidi. When he refused, he started misbehaving. The argument escalated into a fight within a short time. Meanwhile, the accused brought a sharp edged weapon from his house. The man was hit in the head and his two aides also beat him with sticks and hammers until he became unconscious and all three escaped the spot. After the incident, the family took the youth to Chhola Mandir police station and was taken to hospital. The police registered an FIR in the matter after 18 hours on Sunday evening. Dharmendra Sharma, brother of the injured Naresh told that we live in street number one of Prem Nagar Colony. My younger brother Naresh works in DTH fitting. He left home around 11:30 pm on Saturday night. He

bought a bundle of beedis from a nearby grocery shop. Nitesh, who was already living in the colony, was standing there. He asked for a beedi. My brother refused. On this Nitesh started abusing. When he protested, he started dancing. Meanwhile, the accused ran to his home and brought the sword. Within a few minutes both his brothers also arrived. Nitesh hit Naresh on the head with a sword. When he fell down, his brothers started hitting him with hammers and sticks. They kept beating him until he became unconscious, and ran away leaving him bleeding. When we reached there after getting information from the local people, we saw my brother lying on the ground. We took him to Chhola Mandir police station. At the police station policeman said that at present there are only 2 people in the police station. Take this medical form, and get admitted to the hospital. We did not have a vehicle at that time. Somehow reached Hamidia Hospital by auto. Chhola Mandir police station in-charge Suresh Chandra Nagar said that the statement of injured Naresh Sharma has been recorded at 7 pm on Sunday. Case has been registered.



Hindu devotees perform rituals at the banks of Upper Lake as they worship the rising Sun while celebrating Chhath Puja festival in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

Woman abudcted in daylight by bike-borne miscreants

PNS ■ GWALIOR

A woman was kidnapped in broad daylight by two unidentified men in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior. The kidnapping was captured on CCTV cameras installed at the spot. The video shows a man riding a bike waiting near a petrol pump, while another man is seen dragging a

woman and making her forcibly sit on the back seat of the bike. The second man is then seen trying to also sit on the bike, but ends up chasing after the bike for some distance. The incident took place on Monday morning. According to the woman's family, they had arrived in Gwalior in the morning. After the family got off at the bus

stop, the woman had taken a young child who was travelling with them to use a toilet near the petrol pump. A family member, said, "The child came running, saying somebody had taken his sister away...I saw a man running after the bike. The woman, who was not even sitting properly, was crying...the people near the petrol pump also heard her crying."

D-RERA directs sub-registrars to register sale-deeds with permission

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Real Estate Regulatory Authority (D-RERA) directed sub-registrars not to register sale deeds for any dwelling unit without the dwelling unit number given by the civic body in the sanctioned building plan. It has come to the notice of the Authority that various civic authorities like Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Delhi Development Authority, New Delhi Municipal Council and Delhi Cantonment Board are sanctioning building plans with dwelling units having kitchen with additional dwelling units without kitchen built with pantry or store and The builders after sanction of building plans, convert these pantry or store into kitchens and sell units as separate dwelling unit.

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Monday claimed the Delhi government's notification regarding dwelling units on plots of various sizes has stalled the property registration in the city

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Monday claimed the Delhi government's notification regarding dwelling units on plots of various sizes has stalled the property registration in the city. He also said the AAP Government misused the Supreme Court concern for protecting the interest of property buyers. The Arvid Kejriwal Government's RERA notification says that on plots of up to 50 mtrs only 3 Dwelling Units will be allowed that is on plots of 50 mtrs only 3 floors can be

constructed or sold while Delhi is full of small plots of upto 50 mtrs have 4 to 5 Dwelling Units, Sachdeva said. Similarly, the order says that only 4 Dwelling Units will be allowed on plots of 50 to 250 mtrs while Delhi is full of properties of above 100 mtrs up to 250 mtrs with 6 to 8 Dwelling Units, he said. Sachdeva said it was shocking to note that in a city where a common middle class man opts for a 50 mtrs to 250 mtrs flat, the Kejriwal Government's RERA notification restricts the

accommodation but allows increased FAR and Dwelling Units on rich man plots of above 250 mtrs to 3750 mtrs. Delhi BJP President said Delhi has 1,671 unauthorised colonies with lacs of units where no building plan is sanctioned till date and so one fails to understand how will property sale purchase happen in these areas. In unauthorised colonies 3 to 4 houses of say 200 mtrs normally have 8 to 10 Dwelling Units and people want to know from Kejriwal what will the future of their homes as after this RERA Notification these homes become illegal with their sale purchase not possible, Sachdeva said. Delhi BJP President said entire walled city and parts of East Delhi, West Delhi and South Delhi have commercial and

mixed use buildings and Delhi Government RERA Notification, if implemented, will destroy the future of these mixed trade cum residential zones. Property occupants in areas likes Chandni Chowk, Chawri Bazar Gandhi Nagar, Shahdara, Rajouri Garden, Uttam Nagar, Kamla Nagar, Kotla Mubarakpur, Lajpat Nagar with Mixed Land Use fail to understand how they will sell property in hour of need, he claimed. Sachdeva said Kejriwal should clarify whether this RERA notification will apply on properties constructed before today 20 November 2023 or hereafter as this notification will not only destroy the property trade in Delhi but also severely effect the interests of individual property owners.



Principal Secretary Madhya Pradesh State Assembly AP Singh addresses during the inauguration of Audit Week-2023, in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo



Students participate in a state level band competition at Government Subhash School of Excellence, organised by Madhya Pradesh School Education Department in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

BJP leaders from Madhya Pradesh are moving to Telagana for assembly polls

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

After state Assembly elections are over in Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram and Chhattisgarh, Congress and BJP are gearing up for Rajasthan and then Telangana state assembly elections. Both BJP and Congress are putting their full strength in Rajasthan and Telangana. Voting for the assembly elections is now to be held in these two states. BJP has fielded its team of leaders in these states. BJP leaders from Madhya Pradesh are now leaving for Telangana. After the orders of the party

high command, now these star campaigners have to campaign in these states. The fatigue of the election campaign in Madhya Pradesh had not yet gone away and the leaders of Madhya Pradesh BJP are ready to enter into a new battle. Assembly elections are held first in Rajasthan on November 27 and then in Telangana on November 30. Madhya Pradesh BJP leaders will now put their strength in Telangana. They will hold meetings and campaign in support of BJP candidates there. Responsibility of 22 leaders for Telangana - Veteran leaders of Madhya Pradesh

have been asked to go to Telangana. These leaders have been given the responsibility of campaigning in the assembly elections there. This responsibility has been assigned to 22 leaders of the state. Madhya Pradesh ministers and responsible officials of the organization will go to Telangana for campaigning. Ministers - Narottam Mishra, Vishwas Sarang, Arvind Bhadauria, Minister Mohan Yadav Yashpal Singh Sisodia, Minister Kamal Patel, Minister Bhupendra Singh Thakur, Rajendra Shukla would be visiting Telangana for campaigning.

Preeti writes to Mayor regarding blackout in libraries

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AP councillor and secretary of the Hardayal Municipal Heritage Public Library Preeti has written to mayor Shelly Oberoi, the ex-officio chairperson of the library, over the blackout at the library due to non-payment of electricity bills for the past 32 months. Lala Hardayal library is a 161-year-old heritage library in Delhi's Chandni Chowk area. The library has been functioning without basic amenities such as electricity, water, and washroom facilities amid alleged financial irregularities in the funds allocated for its operations. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has ordered the competent authorities to look into the matter and take necessary action at the earliest, according to its response dated November 16. Apart from this, the library complex's four toilets don't function. There is no drinking water. And the 95 staffers haven't been paid since February 2021. Caught in a political slugfest between the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP), one of Delhi's oldest public libraries - home to over 170,000 books - is in a state of sorry disrepair. The students and the staff members rely on paid toilets at the Chandni Chowk Metro station, around 200 metres away, and for drinking water, they head to the Kotwali police station, located behind the library.

In a letter to the mayor, Preeti requested to release the pending grant for the Hardayal library to clear the pending bills as early as possible. Electricity bills amounting to Rs 5 lakh have not been paid by the library, Preeti said. The newly elected secretary also requested to release the salary of the employees which has allegedly been pending for long. "On taking charge as secretary of HMHPL, it has come to my notice that electricity connection of the library has been discontinued due to non-payment of electricity bill and salary of employees has not been released for the past 32 months... It is requested that the pending grant of HMHPL by MCD may kindly be released as early as possible... For the smooth functioning of the library," the letter read. MCD had announced to clear the pending salaries of the employees before Diwali, however, the process got delayed due to the holidays in between, Preeti said. "I had visited the library at the time of my appointment and I was despaired to see its condition. The staff and students are facing a lot of problems due to the electricity cut and lack of other amenities. I have written to the chairperson and hope that a solution will be found soon," she said. "We wanted to release the pending salaries of employees before Diwali but due to holidays it could not happen," she added.

35-member delegation from Japan calls on Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A 35-member delegation from Japan's Fukuoka Prefectural Government on Monday met Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the twinning agreement between the Delhi government and the Fukuoka Prefectural Government (FPG). This agreement, first signed on March 5, 2007, and still ongoing, was extended until March 31, 2026. During this 15th-anniversary ceremony, Kejriwal and Fukuoka's Vice Governor Akie Omagari signed the twinning agreement. During this meeting, the Delhi Government's

Cabinet Ministers were also present. The collaboration between the Fukuoka Prefectural Government and the Delhi Government has focused on various areas of mutual cooperation, primarily encompassing the environment, culture, tourism, heritage, education, and youth exchange. Over the past 15 years, both cities have engaged in various activities in art and cultural exchanges, environmental technology, and student/youth exchange programs. The agreement also aims to explore possibilities in the areas of environment-related major issues today. Consequently, there's a possibility of involvement not only with school students but also with cultural



groups as a result of this agreement. Chief Minister Kejriwal stated "Greetings to all from the bottom of my heart, as I stand before you representing the extraordinary bond between Delhi and Fukuoka as sister cities, a connection deeply woven with the threads of developed and shared cooperation since 2007. Delhi and Fukuoka have had a Friendship Agreement since March 5, 2007, and I am extremely delighted that the same is now being extended for a further period of 03 years till 31 March 2026." He also said "Our friendship isn't a mere agreement between two cities; it's a profound con-

nection rooted in spiritual affinity and cultural ties that have weathered the sands of time. The influence of Indian Culture, particularly through Buddhism, has left an indelible mark on Japanese society, fostering a genuine sense of closeness among the Japanese people toward India in general and the people of Delhi in particular. Our friendship agreement of the last 15 years, in particular, has brought both cities closer by way of mutual cooperation and exchanges and benefits, especially in the fields of Environment, Art and Culture, Archaeology and recently in the field of Education." Vice Governor Fukuoka Prefectural Government Akie Omagari stated, "Today, Our delegates have been warmly

welcomed by you, and my heartfelt thanks for the warm welcome that you have extended. And I'm delighted to meet CM Arvind Kejriwal Ji and also the Delhi Government for arranging such a warm gathering today. My Sincere thanks for the initiative that has happened after the friendship agreement that's been extended between the Fukuoka Prefectural Government and the Government of Delhi, since March 2007. And since then cooperation between both the cities has been happening in the fields of Environment, Art and Culture and recently in the field of education. And I'm also very thankful that it's been further expanded for another three years."

LG clears recruitment of more than 10,285 new home guards personnel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing protest by the civil defence volunteers posted as bus marshals, Delhi Lieutenant Governor (L-G) Vinai Kumar Saxena on Monday cleared the enrolment of more than 10,285 new Home Guard personnel to be appointed as bus marshals in all DTC and cluster bus services. Saxena has also issued directions to give preference by way of 10 extra marks to experienced CDVs during the selection process as they already have worked as bus marshals in public transport. Stressing the need for an open, fair and transparent selection process, he also gave the nod for an emolument of Rs 25,000 every month for the Home Guards. Giving details, officials said here, Saxena also okayed the proposal for giving 10 bonus points to ex-Civil Defence Volunteers(CDVs). Saxena also directed that the age limit for enrolment into Home Guards be brought down to 45 years from the existing 60 years, in line with the maximum age limit in other States and to ensure that the personnel enrolled served the purpose of acting as auxiliary to the regular police force. Moreover, the minimum qualification has also been raised from Class-X to Class-XII in line with the required minimum qualification for appointment of constables in Delhi Police. Nearly 15 teams comprising a senior officer each of the district administration, Delhi Police and Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) will serve as the Board to assess the physical efficiency of the candidates, who have applied at 10 locations. This will ensure that

the selection and screening process is completed with speed. To ensure transparency, this entire process will be videographed through CCTV cameras installed at all the locations. Once the candidates clear the physical efficiency test, they will become eligible for the Computer-based Entrance Test (CBT). The enrolment process is expected to begin soon with the issuance of advertisement and the Physical Measurement and Efficiency Test (PMET) will begin in the first week of February, 2024. The CBT, following the PMET will be completed thereafter and the final results will be out by March, 2024. The discontinuing the services of CDV have become a major issue between the AAP Delhi government and the Lieutenant Governor's office. While the AAP government claimed this arrangement was Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's idea, Raj Niwas claimed that L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena had mooted it after receiving a proposal to discontinue the CDV service from November 1. Delhi government sources said it would take the discontinuance of the services of CDVs to the Supreme Court; L-G House sources responded saying that this would essentially entail the AAP government dragging the CM himself into litigation. The government stated that the CM had sought prompt formulation of plans in this regard and separately proposed to the L-G to appoint them as Home Guards - which L-G House officials contended. According to the latter, it was the CM who had proposed the termination of the services of CDVs with effect from November 1 this year.



Children hold posters during Children's Rights week celebrations organised by Child Rights Observatory, on World Children's Day at Ankur School in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

DU launches MA Hindu Studies calendar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi University has launched the academic calendar for MA in Hindu Studies, the newly started course of the varsity and its classes began on Monday. The newly established Centre for Hindu Studies was inaugurated with a traditional 'havan' by Vice Chancellor Yogesh Singh in the presence of other dignitaries. "The research carried out at the Centre for Hindu Studies should set an example for the rest of the universities of the countries," the VC said.

The subjects that will be taught at the centre include a Major in Hindu Studies, with a Minor in Political Science, Computer Science, and Commerce as well as skill-based subjects like Manuscriptology and Data Analytics in the first semester. Prof Prakash Singh who attended to the students' concerns in a Question and Answer Session and addressed "how this Centre is inherently interdisciplinary in nature." "The focus would be on teaching the essence of Hindu Dharma and Darshan, along with helping

them in building a career in other domains of the chosen Minor discipline," Prerna Malhotra, joint director, of the Centre for Hindu Studies, said. The objective of an MA in Hindu Studies is to impart training to the students besides making them think critically about the essence of Hindu Dharma, she added. The inauguration was attended by Prakash Singh, director of South Campus, Amitava Chakraborty, dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Om Nath Bimali, joint director of the Centre for Hindu Studies.

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
Tender No.: JHS-M-DSL-WC-T-04-2023-24
Date: 16.11.2023

TENDER NOTICE

For and on behalf of President of India, The Sr. Divisional Mechanical Engineer (Diesel) North Central Railway, Jhansi invites open tenders through online (E-Tendering) for the following work:

Tender No.	Description	Tender value	Earnest money
JHS-M-DSL-WC-T-04-2023-24	Provision of Rain Water Testing Plant for AC Loco maintenance at Diesel Loco Shed, Jhansi.	Rs. 16,65,925.33/-	Rs. 33,300/-

Cost of Tender Document: Rs. 0.00/-. Closing date of tender: 15.12.2023. Completion Period: 06 Months. Tenderers will submit the tender online upto 15.12.2023 (15:00 Hrs.) Complete details & for submission of tenders can be seen in Indian Railway website <http://www.treps.gov.in>. 1872/23 (P)

North central railways @www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @northcentralrailway @CPRONCR

ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES BHOPAL
Saket Nagar, Bhopal (M.P.) 462020

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)
NIT No.AIIIMSBHOPAL/E-Tender/NIT72-23/033 Dated: 20.11.2023
AIIMS Bhopal invites e-Tender from registered manufactures/dealers/distributors/Contractors for below mentioned items:

E-Tender ID No.	Required Items/Services at AIIMS Bhopal	Est. Cost (Rs. in Lakh)
AIIMS/BPL/MC/MESS/2023-24/211	Selection of catering service agency for providing and running mess facilities	245.00
AIIMS/BPL/HOSP/2022-23/212	Rate contract for procurement of parenteral preparations at AIIMS Bhopal	4,308.39
AIIMS/BPL/HOSP/2023-24/213	Rate Contract for Procurement of common pharmacy medical consumables at AIIMS Bhopal	1,742.32
AIIMS/BPL/HOSP/2023-24/214	Rate Contract for procurement of medical consumables (Sutures) at AIIMS Bhopal	187.98

For further details of the above e-Tenders, the prospective bidders may please visit website: www.aiimsbhopal.edu.in Email: spso@aiimsbhopal.edu.in. Tenders may be downloaded from the e-procurement portal <http://tenderwizard.com/AIIMSBHOPAL>, www.aiimsbhopal.edu.in, CPP Portal www.eprocure.gov.in. Any corrigendum/amendments related to this NIT shall be published in the same websites only.

I/c. Senior Procurement Cum Store officer
For & On behalf of Executive Director, AIIMS Bhopal

यूको बैंक
(भारत सरकार का उपक्रम)

UCO BANK
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)

UCO BANK, 110, Malviya Nagar, Bhopal- 462003 Tel. 0755-4330021, e-mail-malviya@ucobank.co.in

POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property) RULE 8 (1)

Whereas, The undersigned being the authorized officer of the UCO Bank (name of the Institution) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (Act, 2002 (54 of 2002)) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with (Rule 3) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002 issued demand notice dated 05.07.2023 (Demand notice publication Date 15.09.2023) calling upon the borrower & Co-borrower to repay the amount mentioned in the notice below plus interest and Bank charges within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower and Co-Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of power conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002 on this 16th day of November of the year 2023.

The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with the property will be subject to the charge of the UCO Bank (name of the Institution) for an amount mentioned below and interest thereon.

The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Name & Address of Borrower	Description of Property & Property Owner	Amount Outstanding
Borrower : Shri Lakshmi Kumar Sumat & Mrs. Sangeeta Kumari W/o Lakshmi Kumar Sumat Flat No. 304, 3rd floor, "Vinayak Boost" Apartment, Ghenhukheda, Kolar Road, Bhopal-462042	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of : Flat No. 304, 3rd floor, "Vinayak Boost" Apartment, Situated at plot no J-6, KH No Part of 28/1/2,28/2,2,38,39/1,43/2/1, Rajharsh Housing Co. Society Ghenhukheda, Kolar Road, Bhopal-462042 Bounded by: East: Plot no J-5, West: Flat no-305, North:Stair & Corridor, South:Plot no H-10	₹ 14,67,164.13 + Interest & other charges

Date & Place : Bhopal, 16.11.2023
Authorised Officer, UCO Bank

Indian team gets words of solace from Modi after heartbreak

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Crestfallen after losing the World Cup trophy match on Sunday night, the Indian cricket team had the country's Prime Minister Narendra Modi to offer his commiserations. The heartbreaking defeat left a few Indian cricketers in tears while others just went into a shell.

Modi visited the Indian dressing room where he hugged pacer Mohammed Shami, the highest wicket-taker in the tournament, and also spoke with Ravindra Jadeja.

The cricketers took to social media to reveal about their meeting.

"We had a great tournament but we ended up short yesterday. We are all heartbroken but the support of our people is keeping us going. PM @narendramodi's visit to the dressing room yesterday was special and very motivating," Jadeja posted on X along with a picture with Modi.

Shami also posted his picture with Modi with a message.

"Unfortunately yesterday was not our day. I would like to thank all Indians for supporting our team and me throughout the tournament. Thankful to PM @narendramodi for



specially coming to the dressing room and raising our spirits. We will bounce back!" Shami wrote on his X, formerly twitter, page.

Modi had also posted a message for the Indian team on social media.

"Dear Team India, Your talent and determination through the World Cup was noteworthy. You've played with great spirit and brought immense pride to the nation. We stand with you today and always," he wrote on X on Sunday night.

Shubman Gill was hurting, Shreyas Iyer also found it difficult to let the reality sink in while veteran spinner Ravichandran Ashwin also

endured a mighty heartbreak as they opened up about their poignant experiences following the World Cup final loss to Australia.

"We're heartbroken, it still hasn't sunk in and it won't for a while," wrote Iyer on X. "My first World Cup was an experience that has taught me so much and made me grateful for everything that's come my way.

Thank you to the @BCCI, team management, support staff, my teammates and you the fans for backing us from the beginning right up until the end. And congratulations to the entire Australian team on a marvelous campaign," Iyer

wrote. Gill took to Instagram to share his side of the story.

"Been almost 16 hours but still hurts like it did last night. Sometimes giving your everything isn't enough. We fell short of our ultimate goal but every step in this journey has been a testament to our team's spirit and dedication. "To our incredible fans, your unwavering support in our highs and lows means the world to us. This isn't the end, it's not over until we win. Jai Hind."

Another post from Shami read, "You win some, you lose some. Tough pill to swallow for us but we have our heads held high.

Ashwin, who was a member of India's 2011 World Cup winning side wrote: "Mighty mighty heartbreak last night. Everyone in the team had several days to remember during this campaign and special mentions to Kohli, Shami, Rohit and Bumrah."

The ace offspinner further congratulated Australia

"However I can't help but applaud the giants of modern day cricket 'Australia'. What they did on the field yesterday was just unbelievable. Congrats on their 6th World Cup win."

Over ₹1,760 crore drugs, cash, liquor seized in five poll-going States: EC

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Total seizures of unaccounted cash, liquor, drugs, freebies etc in the ongoing polls to five State/UT Assemblies have crossed ₹ 1,760 crore surpassing the figure recorded in all past assembly electoral processes. According to the Election Commission (EC), the amount is more than seven times, seizures made in the previous electoral processes in these states in 2018 which was just Rs 239.15 crore. This is an increase of 636 per cent as compared to seizure figures during previous elections in the five States.

With Rs 659.2 crore seizures, Telangana is top in the list, followed by Rs 650.7 crore in Rajasthan; Rs 323.7 in Madhya Pradesh; Rs 76.9 crore in Chhattisgarh and Rs 49.6 crore in Mizoram. While assembly polls have already been held in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Mizoram, voting will take place in Rajasthan and Telangana on November 25 and November 30 respectively. The EC said the seizures included cash, liquor, drugs, precious metals, all worth of crores, freebies and other items.

In a statement, the EC said, "Seizures over Rs 1760 crores have been reported in the five poll-going states since the announcement of the elections, which is more than 7 times (Rs 239.15 crore) the seizures made in previous Assembly Elections in these states in 2018". This is an increase of 636 per cent as compared to seizure figures during the 2018 Assembly Elections in these five states.



"It may be recalled that seizures of over Rs 1400 crores were done in the past six state Assembly elections held in Gujarat, HP, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura and Karnataka which is 11 times the previous assembly elections in these states," added the statement.

Data showed, of total seizures of Rs 1760 crore, the law enforcement authorities and flying squad have seized Rs 372.9 crore as cash; liquor worth Rs 214.8 crore; drugs worth Rs 245.3 crore; precious metals worth Rs 371.2 crore and freebies and other items worth Rs 556.02 crore. In Telangana, the EC has seized cash amount of Rs 225.23 crore; liquor worth Rs 86.82 crore; drugs worth Rs 103.74 crore; precious metals worth Rs 191.02 crore and freebies worth Rs 52.41 crore.

The agencies have seized cash amount of Rs 93.17 crore; liquor worth Rs 51.29 crores; drugs worth Rs 91.71 crore; precious metals/gold worth Rs 73.36 crore and freebies worth Rs 341.24 crore from Rajasthan. Cash amount of Rs 33.72 crore; liquor worth Rs 69.85 crore; drugs worth Rs 15.53 crore; precious metals worth Rs 84.01 and freebies valued Rs 120.53 crore have been seized in Madhya Pradesh.

According to EC data, it has seized cash amount of Rs 20.77 crore; liquor valued Rs 2.16 crore; drugs worth Rs 4.55 crore; precious metals worth Rs 22.76 crore and freebies worth Rs 26.68 crore from Chhattisgarh while

liquor worth Rs 4.67 crore; drugs valued Rs 29.82 crore and freebies of Rs 15.16 crore seized in Mizoram.

"This time the Commission has also embedded technology into the monitoring process through the Election Expenditure Monitoring System (ESMS) which is proving to be a catalyst, as it brought a wide array of Central and State enforcement agencies together for better coordination and intelligence sharing," the EC said. "As many as 228 experienced officers from IRS, IC&CES, IRAS, IDAS and other Central Government Services have been deployed as Expenditure Observers. For close monitoring, 194 Assembly Constituencies have been marked as Expenditure Sensitive Constituencies. It is also ensured that there is adequate availability of field level teams in the monitoring process and regular follow-ups with DEOs/SPs and enforcement agencies is done to deal with menace of money-power. The efforts on close monitoring will further continue in the poll-going States till completion of the ongoing elections and the figures of seizure are expected to rise further," it added.

US Ambassador for 'deeper conversations' on AI regulatory framework

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Given the growing role of artificial intelligence, US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti on Monday made a strong pitch for "deeper conversations" between New Delhi and Washington on a regulatory framework on artificial intelligence (AI), saying it could be an example of "multiplicative relationship" between the two democracies. In an interactive session organised here by Observer Research Foundation, Garcetti

stressed on the need to "get in front" of artificial intelligence (AI) to avoid facing catastrophic consequences.

He made it clear that while there had been deep conversations on the issue with India, there was no formal proposal yet from either side.

Garcetti noted that US President Joe Biden had spoken strongly on the issue. Last month, Biden issued an executive order that required AI manufacturers to provide the federal government with an assessment of their applications' vulnerability to cyber-



attacks, the data used to train and test the AI and its performance measurements.

"If we don't get in front of AI, the consequences, even if it is a small percentage of likelihood, of something catastrophic happening with our official intelligence could be sooner than we believe," Garcetti said.

On the India-US 2+2 dialogue last week, Garcetti said the two sides took important steps towards strengthening the major defence partnership which continues to grow and increasing the acceleration

seen through initiatives such as the US-India roadmap in industrial cooperation and defence.

He stressed that New Delhi and Washington should deepen their Artificial Intelligence (AI) conversation. He pitched for India-US collaboration and cooperation in emerging domains.

"...We sometimes just focus on weapons and what is being sold, or potentially co-developed, but the operational level of our militaries...Is as critical as any equipment," he said.

The US envoy also said the countries should "discuss ways to deepen our science and our technology partnerships to harness technology for the global good instead of technology that harms us and divides us."

Garcetti said the joint statement issued after the 2+2 Dialogue reflected the resolve of the US and India to promote resilient rules-based international order to safeguard a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific through the QUAD and other metrics, global issues.

Climate change to reduce Himalayan ungulate population by 2070



ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

By 2050 to 2070, four main wild ungulates blue sheep, Tibetan argali, Tibetan gazelle and Kiang found in India's Himalayan Changthang region of Ladakh may witness their home range shrinking by half due to climate-change induced surging temperatures.

While some may be forced to move uphill, others like Tibetan gazelle which are already on endangered list might become extinct if adequate and timely conservation steps are not taken, a team of wildlife experts has warned.

"The maximum predicted range loss will be for the Tibetan gazelle with an average of 90 percent loss, which might make it locally endangered with a prediction that only 9.5% of their present habitat might be suitable for them in 2070 in the context of climate change," they said. An estimated 100 individuals of Tibetan gazelles are known to be in Ladakh with a patchy distribution in the southern part of the study area.

Changthang is a high altitude area supporting wild ungulates and is susceptible to climate change impacts including receding glaciers and decrease in water supply and storage, which could negatively impact wildlife habitat. In addition, environmental and social changes have been taking place in Changthang

that have resulted in fragmentation of critical wildlife habitats.

Experts Anchal Bhasin and Upamanyu Hore from Noida-based Amity Institute of Forestry and Wildlife, Amity University and Pankaj Raina and Sunetro Ghosal from Department of Wildlife Protection, Leh, Ladakh had used using Species Distribution Modelling (SDM) to estimate the current and future distribution of the four ungulates.

The results suggest that these ungulates may lose 57% to 61% of their current range, depending on the algorithm used and dispersal scenarios with a northward shift in their ranges, said Raina in the study 'Climate change impacts on high altitude wildlife distribution: Predicting range shifts for four ungulates in Changthang, eastern Ladakh'. The study is published in the ScienceDirect.

Raina said that the Tibetan gazelle in Ladakh requires urgent conservation efforts to enable it to adapt to future climate change scenarios in the region.

"We recommend restoration and conservation of grassland ecosystems that were historically and currently occupied by ungulates with additional attention given to potential suitable habitats outside protected areas by regulation of human activities," added Bhasin. Climate change is already a

threat to the future suitability of habitats for mountain ungulates such as Marco Polo sheep, Siberian ibex, Tibetan antelope, Wild yak besides Tibetan gazelle and Kiang in other countries too. The experts flagged that many of these species are classified as Critically Endangered according to the IUCN and species that are now classified as Least Concern may also experience habitat shifts and population decline due to climate change.

In fact, climate change can have variable impacts including reduction of suitable habitat and redistribution of range to higher latitudes along with an elevation shift. Climate change can also reduce the abundance of species and intensify competition between sympatric species due to increased spatial overlap. Habitat change is not the only challenge associated with climate change as mountain ungulates are also extremely sensitive to increase in temperatures as mammals have lower tolerance to deviations in core body temperatures.

The authors explored future projections for the ungulate species by combining four GCMs and one greenhouse gas trajectory for two future time periods i.e., 2050 and 2070.

Ungulate occurrence points were obtained from field surveys conducted between 2018 and 2021.

India, Australia reviews defence ties 2+2 dialogue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Australia on Monday here reviewed the entire gamut of their bilateral defence and strategic ties during the 2+2 Ministerial level dialogue. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar represented India while their counterparts Richard Marles and Penny Wong respectively led their delegation.

The two sides also reviewed the situation in the Indo-Pacific in the backdrop of China flexing its muscle there. India and Australia are part of the Quad combine including the US and Japan.

Giving details of the bilateral meeting between Rajnath and Marles besides the 2+2 dialogue, defence ministry officials said, both the ministers reaffirmed their commitment towards further strengthening the bilateral defence relations. They expressed satisfaction at the increasing military-to-military cooperation between the two countries, including joint exercises, exchanges and institutional dialogue. Rajnath congratulated Marles on the maiden and successful conduct of multilateral exercise 'Malabar' by Australia in August this year.

Both ministers underscored the importance to further enhance cooperation in information exchange and maritime domain awareness between the two countries. The two sides are also in an advanced stage of discussion to conclude implementing arrangements on Hydrography Cooperation and cooperation for air-to-air refuelling.

Rajnath emphasised that the forces of the two countries should also look at cooperating in niche training areas like Artificial Intelligence, anti-submarine and anti-drone warfare and cyber domain. The two ministers agreed that deepening cooperation in defence industry and research would give a fillip to the already

strong relationship. Rajnath suggested that ship-building, ship repair and maintenance and aircraft Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) could be the potential areas of collaboration. The two ministers also discussed cooperation for joint research in underwater technologies.

Collaboration between the defence start-ups of both the countries, including that for solving challenges jointly, was discussed by the ministers. They concurred that a strong India-Australia defence partnership will augur well not just for the mutual benefit of the two countries but also for the overall security of the Indo-Pacific.

External Affairs Minister Jaishankar and Foreign Minister Wong will hold the 14th Foreign Ministerial Framework Dialogue (FMFD) on Tuesday to take stock of cooperation under the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and exchange views on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

The inaugural "2+2" ministerial dialogue between India and Australia had taken place in September 2021.

India has such a framework for talks with a very few countries including the US and Japan. The latest edition of India-US foreign and defence ministerial dialogue took place in New Delhi on November 10.

The bilateral defence and strategic ties between India and Australia are on an upward trajectory in the last few years. In June 2020, India and Australia elevated their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership and signed a landmark deal for reciprocal access to military bases for logistics support.

The Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) allows the militaries of the two countries to use each other's bases for repair and replenishment of supplies, besides facilitating scaling up of overall defence cooperation.

Centre proposes register with details of all pharmacy professionals



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has proposed a National Pharmacy Register with details of all pharmacy professionals as part of a draft Bill that seeks to repeal the nearly 75-year-old Pharmacy Act and replace the Pharmacy Council of India with a national commission.

The Union Health Ministry uploaded a draft National Pharmacy Commission Bill, 2023, on its website on November 10, seeking comments from the public. The draft Bill aims to provide for a pharmacy education system that improves access to quality and affordable pharmaceutical education, ensures availability of adequate and high-quality professionals in all parts of the country, promotes equitable and universal health care and makes services of pharmacy professionals accessible to all citizens. It also calls for periodic and transparent assessment of pharmacy institutions, facilitating maintenance of a pharmacy register for India and enforcing high ethical standards in all aspects of pharmacy services.

According to the draft Bill, the Pharmacy Ethics and Registration Board will maintain a National Pharmacy Register, which will contain details of pharmacy professionals to ensure transparen-

cy. "The Pharmacy Ethics and Registration Board shall maintain an online and live National Pharmacy Register (NPR) containing the name, address, all recognised qualifications possessed by a pharmacy professional and such other particulars as may be specified by regulations," according to the draft document.

The board shall make available the National Pharmacy Register to the public in the form of a digital portal accessible on the website of the Pharmacy Ethics and Registration Board/Commission in such manner and form as may be specified by regulations. The Bill also proposes that every state chapter shall maintain and regularly update, in digital form, the State Pharmacy Professional Register and the State Pharmacy Register in the specified digital format and supply a digital and physical copy to the Pharmacy Ethics and Registration Board/Commission within three months of the commencement of the act.

The draft Bill also encourages pharmacy professionals to adopt the latest research in their work and to contribute to research. It proposes flexibility to adapt to changing needs and seeks to set up an effective grievance redress mechanism.

NIA files case against Khalistani terrorist Pannun

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA has registered a case against designated terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun and his banned organisation Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) for issuing video messages threatening people flying Air India, a spokesperson of the agency said on Monday.

The case has been filed under the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, the official said.

Pannun, the self-proclaimed general counsel of "unlawful association" SFJ, released the video messages on social media platforms on November 4.

In these, he asked Sikhs not to fly on Air India planes on and after November 19, claiming that there was a threat to their lives if they flew on the airline's aircraft. The listed terrorist also threatened that Air India would not be allowed to operate globally.

Following this, a high alert was issued and investigations started by security forces in Canada, India and certain other countries where Air India flies.

In his video messages, Pannun also issued a warning to the Indian government that the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) in Delhi, one of the world's busiest airports, would remain closed on November 19.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) spokesperson said Pannun has been under the NIA's lens since 2019, when the anti-terror agency registered its first case against him.

In September, the NIA had confiscated his share of a house and land in Amritsar in Punjab and Chandigarh, the spokesperson said, adding that non-bailable arrest warrants were issued against Pannun by a NIA Special Court on February 3, 2021.

He was also declared a 'Proclaimed Offender' on November 29 last year, the official said.

Chhath Puja comes to an end with arghya at sunrise

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Thousands of devotees thronged various ghats of rivers Ganga and Varuna apart from leading ponds including Surya Sarovar in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) here on Monday morning to offer 'arghya' to Surya Bhagwan (Sun God) at the time of sunrise and with this, the four-day Surya Shasthi festival, popularly known as Dala Chhath Puja, came to an end. Elaborate security arrangements were made at various ghats and ponds. Several traffic restrictions were imposed especially in the central city area of Dashashwamedh, southern part of Assi and Bhaissasur in the northern part near Rajghat.

Right from wee hours the devotees started thronging various ghats of rivers Ganga and Varuna to secure space at the stairs.

The ghats like Dashashwamedh, Rajendra Prasad, Ahliyabai, Man Mandir, Assi, Sheetha, Scindia, Panchganga, Nagwa, Bhainsasur, Rajghat, Narad, Kedar, Hanuman, Ravidas and Tulsi Ghat witnessed gathering of huge number of devotees. Rush was also seen at different ghats of Ramnagar including Shastri and Balua ghats.



Rush of devotees near Rajghat to offer arghya at sunrise in Varanasi on Monday.

Besides, a rush of devotees was seen at Shastri and other ghats of river Varuna apart from various kundas and ponds.

Even after 5 am the vrati women started taking baths and standing in the water, carrying 'dauras' (baskets made of bamboo sticks) of 'prasada' in their hands.

They stood for almost an hour to wait for sunrise. As soon as the sunrise was seen, the women started offering arghya. The family members

also did the same and sought the blessings of the vratis. At that time, the ghats were echoed with traditional songs of Chhathi Maiya. Thousands of vratis in view of heavy rush at ghats and ponds preferred to celebrate the festivals at their homes.

Earlier, at Surya Sarovar in BLW General Manager (GM) Basudev Panda offered the first arghya to the setting sun after performing ritual puja. On the occasion, Principal Chief

Electrical Engineer SK Srivastava, Vice Chairperson of Women Welfare Organisation Gauri Srivastava, Principal Chief Engineer Vinod Bampal, Principal Chief Security Commissioner Ranveer Singh Chauhan, Chief Quality Assurance Manager Praveen Kumar, Senior Deputy General Manager Vijay, Chief Mechanical Engineer, SQM Ramjanm Choubey, Public Relations Officer Rajesh Kumar were also present.

Gopashtami celebrated at Dharmasangh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The premises of Dharmasangh (Mani Mandir), the holy place of Dharmasamrat Swami Karpatri Ji Maharaj, remained abuzz with various events throughout the day on the occasion of Gopashtami on Monday. Dharmasangh general secretary Pandit Jagjitan Pandey started the ritual worship at Swami Karpatri Adarsh Gaushala established on the campus in the morning hours. The rituals were performed by 11 Vedic Brahmins and 111 Batukas under the leadership of Acharya Ramanand Pandey in the Shodashopachara method while chanting the mantras of Shukla Yajurveda. First of all, Gauri-Ganesh and Aditya Surya worship were done. After offering prayers to Lord Vishnu, cow worship was done.

On the occasion of Gopashtami, hundreds of desi (indigenous cattle breeds) like Gangatiri, Gir, Sahiwal etc living in the cow shed, were given Panchagavya and Panchamrit bath in the morn-



Gopashtami being celebrated in Varanasi on Monday.

ing, after which the cows were adorned with silk clothes, crown ornaments etc.

After the puja, all the cows were fed green fodder like cucumber, gourd, beans, greens, carrots, green peas etc along with gur, fruits and sweets. At the end, aarti was performed.

Speaking on the occasion, Pt Jagjitan Pandey said that we serve cow like our mother. "Cow is the provider of all happiness, the incarnation of cow has happened for the welfare of

all. Serving cows not only brings happiness and prosperity but also opens the doors to salvation," he said, adding that the cow is the nurturer of the entire world and in this form she has incarnated on earth. "Cow is the simplest, easiest and most beneficial to people," he said.

The distinguished guests including Cantt MLA Saurabh Srivastava, Dr Ramnarayan Dwivedi, Dr Udayan Mishra, Abhishek Mishra, Pramod Mishra etc participated in the

Gau Pujan (cow worship). Rajmangal Pandey welcomed the guests. Dharmasangh also felicitated the Gausevaks who are continuously active in the field of cow service.

Earlier, a pledge was taken to serve cows by donating lamps in 21 Akashadeeps (sky lamps) in the temple premises. On the occasion, the temple courtyard was decorated with colourful electric lighting arrangements. Entrance gate was decorated with flowers attractively.

Aadharshila-2023 held at SMS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

School of Management Sciences (SMS) completed 29 glorious years of its establishment in the city. The inaugural function of Foundation Day 'Aadharshila-2023' was organised by the institute on Monday in which UP Minister of State for AYUSH (Independent Charge) Dr Daya Shankar Mishra 'Dayalu' was the chief guest. Describing SMS Varanasi as a leading institute in the field of providing employment-oriented education to the students of North India including Purvanchal, Dr Mishra said that since its inception, this institute has given maximum emphasis on skill development and employment-oriented education among the students. Dr Mishra said that today in this era of technology, the nature of education has changed. The needs of the students have also changed, hence it is important that the educational institutions keep their curriculum updated. While presiding over the programme, former Vice-Chancellor of APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University Prof Durg Singh Chauhan said that this educational institution is a leader in the field of management and technology.

Welcoming the dignitaries, Director of the institute, Prof PN Jha said that this moment of completion of 29 glorious years of the institute is historic. While thanking all the partners associated with the institute, he said that due to their good wishes and blessings, SMS has created a distinct identity for itself on the national and inter-



UP Minister Dayashankar Mishra inaugurating foundation day function at SMS in Varanasi on Monday.

national stage. Prof Jha remembered the founder director of the institute. Paying homage to Prof Mukund Lal, he said that Prof Mukund's vision and strong self-confidence have given a distinct identity to this institute. Started in 1995, this institute has never looked back in the last 29 years and has left an indelible mark in the world of management education by continuously scaling new heights. He said that this institute is dedicated to the overall development of students along with education. In the year 2017, NAAC awarded SMS, Varanasi with 'A' grade in its evaluation, which is also a matter of pride for the city of Varanasi. The award of autonomous status to the institute by the University Grants Commission is also a seal of its

excellence. After the inaugural session, various cultural programmes and competitions were also organised in which competitive events - solo singing, solo dance, business quiz, antyakshari, rangoli, ad and poster making were organised. In the various inter-college competitions, participants from more than a dozen educational institutions of Purvanchal (eastern UP) including Varanasi displayed their talent. The main attraction of the programme was the fashion show in which the undergraduate and post-graduate students of SMS showcased their magic in the ramp walk fashion show.

Demonstrating the significance of India's message of 'Unity in Diversity', various costumes of India were displayed

by the students in the fashion show. Like every year, this year also SMS Management Committee decided to honour its employees who have provided continuous services to the institute for 25, 20, 15 and 10 years in which, Prof Kamalshel Mishra, Pradeep Kumar, General Manager, IT, for providing continuous service for 25 years, Shambhu Sharan Srivastava, Associate Professor, Sushil Kumar Singh, Senior Programmer, for 20 years and Atish Khadse, Associate Professor for 15 years. The inaugural session was conducted by Prof Pallavi Pathak, coordinator of Aadharshila. Executive Secretary of the institute Dr MP Singh, Sanjay Gupta and the teachers and employees were also present.

Bride elopes with lover after 'nikah'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A 'barat' returned home without the bride in Mauima here on Sunday. After the nikah the bride eloped with her boyfriend and sent a message that that there was no meaning of that 'nikah' for her.

The angry 'baratis' returned but were helpless as the police intervened and stressed on a compromise.

The 'barat' departed from a small village of Mauima to Sultanpur with the groom. They were given a grand reception there and the 'nikah' was performed. Things were normal for about half an hour, but suddenly the members of the bride's family started running from one place to another with pale faces. The bride was missing.

After about an hour a relative received the message of the bride that the 'nikah' was meaningless for her and she was happy with her boyfriend.

Somehow information reached the groom's side and a heated argument took place between the two sides. In the

meantime someone informed the police and they reached the spot.

The police asked both the parties to sit together with a cool mind and reach a compromise. The 'baratis' returned home without the bride.

POLICE PREPARING TO GET B WARRANT: The Puramufi police are preparing to get a B warrant from the court to take Saddam, brother-in-law of Ashraf, brother of mafia don Atiq Ahmad, in connection with the 'illegal' sale of waqf land worth Rs 50 crore. Saddam is at present in Bareilly jail. The main accused in this 'illegal' land deal, mutavalli Asiyam and wife Jinnat are absconding. Saddam was arrested by the STF from Delhi and was lodged in Bareilly jail. Wife of Ashraf Zainab Fatima and her elder brother Zaid Master are also named in the FIR lodged a day earlier for grabbing Waqf land and selling the same. Both Zainab and Zaid Master have been absconding for quite some time. Four other accused in this case are also untraceable. Four teams have been con-

stituted to trace the culprits, and they will soon be sent to jail, said DCP City Deepak Bhukar.

Zainab and Shaista Parveen, wife of Atique went underground immediately after the murder of Umesh Pal. Saddam had been providing all possible facilities to Ashraf in Bareilly jail.

PRACTICAL EXAM: The practical examination of Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad Uttar Pradesh (UP Board of Secondary Education) Intermediate 2024 will be held in two phases. The first phase practical examinations will be held from January 25 to February 1, while the second phase practical examinations will be conducted between February 2 and February 9. Agra, Saharanpur, Bareilly, Lucknow, Jhansi, Chitrakut, Faizabad, Azamgarh, Devipatan and Basti divisions will be covered under phase one, while the second phase will include Aligarh, Meerut, Moradabad, Kanpur, Prayagraj, Mirzapur Varanasi and Gorakhpur divisions. The regional offices of the Board

will be apprised of the detailed schedule and the list of examiners well in advance. CCTV camera will monitor the practical examinations also. The principals will have to preserve the recording of the CCTV footage and will have to make the same available to the regional office on demand.

Practical examinations will be held, as usual, on internal basis and the project work will be evaluated. The High School students have been advised to get themselves enrolled for the practical examinations with the principal. It will be based on internal evaluation on moral sports and physical education.

For Intermediate students their sports and physical education marks will be uploaded on the Board website by the principals concerned. Principals have been advised to conduct pre-board examinations of High School and Intermediate between January 13 to 22 along with the annual examination of classes IX and XI. This has been informed by Board secretary Divya Kant Shukla.

Senior Judge Gupta appointed as officiating CJ of Aild HC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Senior Judge Manoj Kumar Gupta has been appointed as the officiating Chief Justice (CJ) of the Allahabad High Court. Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court Pritinker Diwakar, who is retiring on November 21, will hand over charge to Justice Manoj Kumar Gupta. Justice Gupta will be the officiating CJ till the appointment of a regular chief justice.

EMPHASIS ON SAFE RAIL TRAVEL: The Railway Protection Force (RPF) North Central Railway (NCR) is doing everything possible to ensure safe rail travel for women passengers. Train are being escorted by women RPF team 'Meri Saheli' for ensuring

security of women travelling alone, helping women in case of any problem and rescuing children. As part of its continuous efforts in this direction to spread the message of women's security among the public, under the guidance of IG-cum- Principal Chief Security Commissioner (PCSC) AN Sinha a team of 24 RPF officers and staff took part in the 38th Indraa Marathon organised by the Sports department of Uttar Pradesh in Prayagraj on Sunday. This RPF Team comprised one assistant commander, three inspectors, five sub-inspectors and 15 staff, including three women RPF staff.

During the run the RPF carried the messages "Let us come together to ensure safe rail travel for women," "Our

aim making rail travel safer for women" etc. The participation in the marathon is aimed at promoting the cause of safe and secured travel on trains for women.

It is for creating public awareness about various initiatives of RPF aimed at promoting women's safety and security. In particular attention was focused on the 'Meri Saheli' initiative. In 2023 RPF NCR displayed remarkable performance by rescuing 17 passengers from perilous situations near moving trains. Under operation Nanhe Farishte RPF NCR rescued 738 unaccompanied children at risk in stations and trains, preventing them from becoming victims of child abuse. RPF/North Central Railway marathon team also

carried the message of the railway helpline number 139. Passengers can call on the helpline number while on travel if they encounter any security-related issues. On receiving such complaints on the helpline, RPF will immediately attend the train at the nearest station and address the issue.

Under the guidance of AN Sinha, IG-cum-PCSC all three divisions of NCR are doing everything possible to ensure security of the travelling public in general and women's security in particular. Women RPF personnel deployed across NCR are attending to women passengers, elderly women, and children addressing their security-related issues to ensure safe rail travel for them.

Water chestnut exported to Dubai

VARANASI (PNS): Water chestnut (singhaara) from the ponds of Kashi will now make its presence in the Arab markets. Its first consignment from this holy city was exported to Dubai (United Arab Emirates) on Monday.

With the efforts of the government, the farmers and entrepreneurs are turning to become exporters. Due to the hard work of farmers and efforts of Agricultural and

Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) and the strategy of the government, farmers are getting fair prices for their produce. Vegetables, flowers and fruits are being exported continuously from Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport, Babatpur and due to which farmers are getting proper results of their hard work. Deputy General Manager of APEDA's regional office in

Varanasi, Dr CB Singh said that a consignment of water chestnuts was sent to the UAE. The DGM said that farmers are being continuously trained through APEDA and Horticulture department experts so that farmers can present their produce as per export standards.

"Our produce is getting a fair price in the international market. Varanasi is gradually becoming a major centre of

agricultural export and food processing for the entire Purvanchal (eastern UP)," he said, adding that to make the region as a major agri export hub, a pack house (perishable cold storage) with a capacity of five tonnes has been built in the industrial area near LBSI Airport.

The PM has also given the gift of perishable cold storage in Rajatalab of his parliamentary constituency.

Mishap claims man's life

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

An aged man died in a road mishap in an area under Jigna police station on Sunday. Reports said that Bainath Bind (70), a resident of Bhairapur village under Manda police station in Prayagraj, was going on foot when he was hit by an Innova near Rannopatti village under Jigna police station. On information the police reached there and found the victim dead on the spot. The police took the body into possession and impounded the vehicle.

PONTOON BRIDGE TO BE ERECTED: Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Anupriya Patel while addressing a public gathering at the village secretariat of Sindhora village under Pahadi block on Sunday informed that the pontoon bridge at Sindhora Ghat on Ganga river will be erected soon for the convenience of people. She appealed to the people to ensure maximum presence of old and Divyang persons at block headquarters on the date fixed to examine the requirement of calipers for the needy. Giving details about examination camps in each block of the district she said calipers were not required only for the Divyangs but for the aged persons too who were facing physical abnormality due to age factor. She said in the camp the doctors will examine the requirement and on their recommendation calipers will be prepared and will be handed over to the needy. But prior registration and examination was necessary to avail such



Devotees performing rituals of Chhath Puja on the bank of Ganga in Mirzapur on Monday. PTI

facility, she added.

During her visit the minister became aware of the problems related to Ganga by doing spot inspection by boat. During her tour she was accompanied by BJP leader Harishankar Singh, chairman cooperative bank Dr Jagdish Singh Patel, block pramukh Pahadi Indra Bahadur Pandey and local people's representatives of Seekhar and Pahadi blocks.

CONDOLED: District Magistrate Priyanka Niranjani condoled the demise of veteran journalist Ravindra Nath Jaiswal alias Lalloo Bhaiya. His last rites were performed at Ganga Ghat on Sunday. Speaking at a condolence meeting held at the Information and Public Relations Office, District Information Officer OP Upadhyay described him as a person who lived for values. Prominent among those who also spoke on the occasion were

Manoj Shukla, Santosh Srivastava and Vishwajeet Dubey. The meeting concluded with two minute silence in respect of the departed soul.

COUPLES REUNITE: Under Project Milan programme five couples who were living separately due to petty issues got reunited on Sunday in the family counselling centre (FCC) located at Police Lines. After several sittings the centre was successful in getting five couples to agree to live together. The entire process was carried out by woman inspector and incharge of FCC Seema Singh who was assisted by sub-inspector Shashi Tiwari, constable Pinki Jaiswal, counsellors Dr Krishna Singh and S Devi.

ARRESTED: The Vindhychal police on Sunday arrested an accused of raping a minor girl. A woman had

lodged a named FIR on September 13 alleging that the accused had enticed her minor daughter away. After registering the case the police started the investigation. SHO Arvind Mishra nabbed the accused. The police sent the accused of Pakari village under Jigna police station to jail.

CAUGHT: The Padari police on Sunday caught two accused of motorcycle theft, including a juvenile offender, and recovered three stolen motorcycles.

Arun Kumar Dubey of Keshavpatti on November 17 and Manoj Bind of Sikari on November 18 had lodged a complaint about the theft of their motorcycles. The police nabbed Karan Bind of Garayi Nala along with a stolen motorcycle and on his identification a juvenile offender was caught and two more stolen motorcycles were recovered.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Lasting ordeal

Despite the ongoing multi-pronged rescue approach, the trapped workers are still fighting for life

For nine long days and nights, the 41 construction workers trapped inside the Uttarkashi tunnel have been bereft of sunlight, a cool breeze and normal life where they can move around at will. Best efforts using the best machinery by several Government agencies notwithstanding, these men await evacuation from what used to be their workplace after the Silkyara-Barkot underconstruction tunnel suddenly collapsed on November 12. The ill-fated workers – mostly natives of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand – face the ordeal of their way out being blocked by rubble and debris. This incident has not only tested the resilience of these workers but also triggered a massive, coordinated effort to rescue them. The location of the tunnel – part of the Narendra Modi Government's 'Char Dham' all-weather accessibility project – in a remote mountainous area presents a logistical nightmare for the rescue teams. The authorities swiftly mobilised a multi-



agency response to evacuate the trapped workers. Specialised teams from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), local police and experts from abroad have been deployed at the accident site. The rescue operation is going on for nine days now but to no avail. The initial rescue operation was suspended on November 17 when a loud cracking sound was heard from inside the tunnel during the positioning of a new pipe for the workers to walk out bypassing the rubble. The pipes were also being used to supply the workers with food, water and medicines.

Ironically, the use of heavier machinery to move the earth only aggravated the problem and led to more debris falling and clogging the planned way out. Now, in the first place, this incident should not have occurred. Though it is not the time to delve into the larger question of whether such mega projects in a fragile ecosystem should be allowed or whether the safety and security procedures were adequate, it appears certain that the lives of poor workers do not amount for much in our system. This crisis comes barely three months after 20 workers and engineers lost their lives on the Nagpur-Mumbai Samruddhi Expressway, a similar mega project, in Thane district. However, the most uplifting and positive development in this incident has been that the innate helpful nature of people came to the fore. As news of the trapped workers spread, the local community rallied together, offering support to the rescuers and workers' families. Local volunteers played a crucial role in assisting on-ground operations and providing food, shelter and moral support to those involved in rescue efforts. But the happy ending is not here yet; there are prayers in bated breath for the hapless trapped workers who are paying the price for someone else's callousness and greed.

PICTALK



Spectators attend the inauguration of the Champs Elysee Avenue for the upcoming Christmas, in Paris

Cricket World Cup: A spectacle of excellence

The World Cup was a rare display of talent and grit showcasing the best cricket has to offer. It would linger for long in the memory of cricket lovers

With almost 1,30,000 fans in attendance and numerous high-profile personalities from all over the world, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, Sunday, November 19, however, belonged to an indefatigable Australia. In the heart of Ahmedabad, at the magnificent Narendra Modi Stadium, history was etched, as, Australia emerged victorious in the Cricket World Cup. It was India's first defeat of the tournament after they had, in a brilliant display of finesse, won all 10 of their previous matches. Without any exaggeration, it can be said that it was one of the finest tournaments India had ever played under the captaincy of Rohit Sharma. Once again, it was Australia's cricketing legacy that continued to shine brightly in the 2023 World Cup. The leadership of the Australian captain, Pat Cummins, and the team spirit led the team through challenging encounters. Cummins' strategic acumen and strategic captaincy style proved instrumental in setting the tone for Australia's



success. The team's batting lineup, featuring seasoned players like David Warner and Steven Smith, consistently delivered impactful performances, ensuring substantial totals in crucial matches. While the outcome may not have favoured the Indian cricket team, their journey in the 2023 World Cup was marked by moments of brilliance and a never-say-die attitude. Captained by Rohit Sharma and the dynamism of the charismatic Virat Kohli, the Indian team displayed determination and captivating fans around the world. India's batting lineup boasted formidable talents, with Rohit Sharma and K L Rahul providing solid support in most matches. Sharma's elegant stroke play and Rahul's aggressive approach set the stage for the middle order to capitalise on favourable situations. Even Virat Kohli, the linchpin of the Indian batting

order, played several crucial innings, showcasing his class and composure under pressure. Further, several key moments and individual performances defined the narrative of the 2023 World Cup. In a crucial group-stage encounter, India faced Australia in a high-scoring thriller. David Warner's breathtaking century and Mitchell Starc's were other moments of the match. After restricting the South Africans to 212, Australia eked its way to 215-7 to win by three wickets with 16 balls to spare in a tense atmosphere inside Eden Gardens. It was the lowest margin of victory (by wickets) at the World Cup knockout stage. Further, India showcased a batting masterclass led by Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul in their undefeated run into the knockouts, delivering a stunning hammer blow to the Netherlands. The hosts enforced a 160-run defeat, leaving the Dutch team to conclude their World Cup journey on a disappointing note. The foundation for India's commanding total of 410 for 4 was laid by the opening pair of Rohit Sharma

and Shubman Gill, who put together a solid 100-run partnership. One cannot also forget Afghanistan's remarkable journey in the World Cup that unfolded as an enthralling cricketing saga. The team's outstanding performances astounded the global cricketing community, clinching victories against formidable opponents such as Pakistan, England, and Sri Lanka. These successes carved out a historic chapter in Afghanistan's cricketing narrative, highlighting their resilience and skill on the grand stage. Afghanistan concluded their World Cup campaign with an impressive record of four victories in nine matches, marking a historic achievement for a team that had previously secured only one win in World Cup history. The eyes are now set on the 2027 World Cup scheduled to take place in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. Till then, the gentleman's game continues to keep us engaged. (The writer is a programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, views are personal)



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Is artificial intelligence taking over the control?

Artificial intelligence has found scope for its intervention in almost all walks of life. Are we losing control and handing over our destiny to computers?

AI technology has been widely used in the current Assembly poll campaign. It includes creating songs featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi in languages such as Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu. These songs have gone viral on the internet. Additionally, AI-powered voice cloning tools have been utilised to send personalised messages to voters and party workers. Modi's digitally rendered songs in Telugu have gained over 2 million views. In comparison, a Tamil-language song featuring his voice has gone viral with over 2.7 million views. Additionally, a Punjabi song that features Modi's voice has gained over 17 million views. Further, Falu, an Indian-American singer, has received a Grammy nomination for her song "Abundance in Millets", featuring PM Modi. Congress and the BJP have used AI-powered voice cloning tools. Ashok Gehlot, the Chief Minister of Rajasthan, is notable for this. Some Television channels have introduced AI TV anchors in Odiya, Kannada and Hindi. Artificial Intelligence has transformed healthcare in India significantly. Advanced diagnosis, treatment, and patient care tools have improved medical services. A recent World Economic Forum report says that India's expenditure on AI is expected to reach \$11.78 billion by 2025. It will contribute to an addition of \$1 trillion to India's economy by 2035. Prime Minister Modi is keen on fostering further AI development in India.

All these bring us to the question of whether AI is gradually gripping the world. At the first AI Safety Summit hosted by the UK at the historic Bletchley Park on November 1, political and industry leaders discussed the risks around artificial intelligence. The focus was also on how to develop the technology safely. About 28 countries participated, including the United Nations and the European Union. US Vice President Kamala Harris represented the US. India, represented by Minister of State Rajeev Chandrashekar, said, "We want AI and tech to represent goodness, safety and trust": Rapid progress in AI is arousing fear as well as excitement. The participants ranged from doom-sayers to hopeful participants who hoped AI would save humanity. They addressed the global nature of the issue. They stressed the need for international cooperation and healthy competition. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has said he's worried about humanity losing control to computers. The role of artificial intelligence (AI) in cyberattacks was also discussed. AI can impersonate at a scale and speed never known. These could make the global financial system go haywire and threaten democracy. "We want AI and tech to represent goodness, safety and trust," said Minister of State Rajeev Chandrasekhar, who represented India. The conference was undoubtedly a good start. India is planning to host another meeting in December. As the host nation, the UK was the first to announce the formation of an official AI Safety Institute to examine the safety of emerging forms of AI. At the end of the conference, the declaration said: "The Bletchley Declaration stresses safe, responsible AI development, urges international cooperation to mitigate risks, and promotes global benefits." Google CEO Sunder Pichai



SUPPORTERS CLAIM AI IMPROVES EFFICIENCY BY AUTOMATING TASKS, ANALYSING DATA, MAKING DECISIONS, OPERATING 24/7, REDUCING ERRORS, AND ENSURING SAFETY

admitted, "Knowledge workers, writers, accountants, architects and, ironically, software engineers would face a threat to their jobs. The concern of terrorist groups using generative AI tools and the fear that AI could become uncontrollable by humans are additional worries. AI concerns will include real-time cybersecurity, supply chain efficiency, software development acceleration, and customer service automation in the coming year. AI has disadvantages, such as potential job displacement and ethical concerns, the possibility of losing human qualities like creativity and empathy, high cost and complexity, reliability issues, and dependency on technology. It cannot engage in negative thoughts or understand cause and effect. It also cannot comprehend time. On the other hand, supporters claim AI improves efficiency by automating tasks, analysing data, making decisions, operating 24/7, reducing errors, and ensuring safety. AI can be used for voter registration and verification. Politicians would benefit from using AI for predictive analysis of voter behaviours. AI can analyse social media to gauge sentiment and identify critical issues for political campaigns to tailor their messages.

Moreover, AI is crucial in maintaining election security by detecting and preventing fraud, hacking attempts, and other irregularities. It can use historical data and current events to predict election outcomes. AI-powered chatbots can inform voters about polling locations, candidate profiles, and additional crucial election-related information. This first summit successfully brought these people together on the table and discussed AI, its benefits and dangers. This summit successfully brought these world leaders together on a platform. There has yet to be an international regulatory body. Ultimately, we have to find the answer to questions like should we automate away all the jobs, including the fulfilling ones? Should we develop non-human minds that might eventually outnumber, outsmart and replace us? Is AI a dangerous or a welcome technology? Still, moving to AI will take time to happen. That is the crux of the AI issue. It is still in the nascent stage. World leaders and industry leaders must apply their minds to a regulatory system. Rogue nations must be controlled. All countries must accept the rules and regulations. (The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

World Television Day



In 1996, a German delegation boldly declared at the United Nations (UN) that "television is a rich man's medium," opposing the observance of 'World Television Day' on November 21. They remained unimpressed by television's ability to captivate imaginations as effectively as radio. From JJ Thomson's

eight weeks. While the sale is banned, it's clarified that it is not permitted under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and the Pharmacy Act of 1948. However, questions persist about the online sale of medicines. The Union Health Ministry needs to devise a stringent policy to prevent the sale of counterfeit medicines. Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Mumbai

HEARTBREAKING FINAL Sir—The final for Team India cricket fans was undeniably heart-wrenching. Had at least one of the so-called 'super batsmen,' known for creating miracles and records, recognised it as a 'mega final' and demonstrated the patience not to lose their wickets carelessly, the scorecard would undoubtedly have shown a different story. Cricket is a mind game, and the more patience players exhibit, the greater the

cathode ray experiments in 1887 to its primitive form in the 1920s, to its present state, television's evolution—from black and white beauty to colored marvel—is both surprising and inspiring. Surpassing radio and newspapers, the pivotal communication mediums, wasn't an easy feat. The vivid narratives of winners and losers, the distressed and saviors, politicians and governments, celebrities, and the ordinary, make television a unique medium. It encapsulates education, news, and entertainment—a compact three-in-one package. Cultural exchange, family bonding, issue resolution, and creative documentaries are its evident benefits. A cynical scholar once remarked, "I find television to be very educational. Every time somebody turns it on, I go to the other room and read a book," a sentiment that may not resonate with avid television lovers. The question they must ask themselves is, "How much is too much?" Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

team benefits and resilience. This was evident in the resolve of Australian batsmen, who, despite losing three quick wickets, chose to stay and fight with full of fervor. Unfortunately, for the men in blue, the leader and experienced senior players couldn't lead the team effectively, resulting in a heartbreaking loss in the final, shattering the hearts of millions of Team India cricket lovers. Nevertheless, cricket enthusiasts will always cherish beautiful memories and records of their favourite team and players. At the end of the day it is not about winning or losing but being part of a Cricket carnival, which was magnificent to watch and some of the best memories we will cherish for long time were made during the world cup 2023. M Pradyu | Kannur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

OVERCOMING GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT

Accept the truth that nothing is permanent and live in the present to overcome grief



RAVI VALLURI

He was a nonagenarian who lived a life peppered by vicissitudes. There had been high noons and some cathartic moments too. But he remained a contented person as his children and grandchildren were 'settled' in their respective fields. However, impermanence is a fact of life and he succumbed to multiple organ failure. Ill health prevented him from meeting his older brother, (a centurion himself), who had departed for his heavenly abode sometime earlier. This had rankled him considerably and he never quite recovered.

Vital prana or the subtle life force which provides human existence and energy was drained away by the mandarins of death. It is said that parents are our first teachers. Parents act as cicerone for their children, encouraging them to take baby steps into the world and to eventually make decisions and face various challenges in life.

What does one do when a dear one ceases to exist?

"Time will take care of it. If someone you love crosses over, grief overtakes you. But see it from a broader angle — we all must go one day; someone has taken an earlier flight and we must take a later flight. When you see the impermanence of everything, you will gain the strength to overcome the grief. Again, and again, you must put your attention on the impermanence of everything," says Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

Mindfulness and grief

At the core of Buddhism is the concept of mindfulness, and it is inexplicably connected with impermanence. Impermanence is a Buddhist concept that has brought comfort to several people once they lose close ones. When humans value permanence they focus towards the future rather than dwell on the present. The mind needs to be convinced about impermanence to live in the present moment.



Sages from ancient times – with enormous perspicacity- have developed palliative techniques to overcome cataclysmic situations. These include chanting mantras, listening to religious texts, meditation, pranayama, Vipassana and the rhythmic breathing technique of Sudarshan Kriya. Mindfulness can act as a centrifugal force in life; a state in which one becomes aware of the present; thoughts and feelings, various physical experiences, and the world around us. We need to accept the cardinal truth that nothing is permanent, be it a chutzpah moment or a woe-begone situation. Change is constant.

How do mindfulness and acceptance of impermanence act as a sword to combat a sense of bereavement?

There are two common ways many of us cope with grief – either one is completely subsumed by the thought and feels entrapped like a bird in a cage. Or the mind is channelled by the techniques mentioned to become robust and grapple with ill-disposed thoughts. It is aware of an alternative paradigm to move on with life despite adversity.

A question plagues the mind as to whether humans can conquer the devastation of grief in its entirety. The truth is perhaps that that does not occur. But it does help in altering the trajectory, intensity, shape, and form of the aftermath. Mindfulness and acceptance of impermanence assist in arresting the trend of obfuscation of the mind by demons of gloom. This sets in motion the acceptance of the reality of bereavement. It is said that time is a great healer to overcome grief and bereavement. Perhaps a few notches above that are performing seva (service to the society) and surrendering to the vast universe and the Almighty to combat grief.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

BJP banking heavily on Modi guarantee



KS TOMAR

It is now crystal clear that BJP's high command and RSS have completely relied on Prime Minister, Modi's 'Charisma' to win five state polls



It is quite evident from a personal appeal made by the PM to the voters of Madhya Pradesh and the decision not to project any leader as the chief ministerial face is aimed at focusing on Modi's popularity that the BJP is relying heavily on PM's popularity to win the state elections. Opinions are divided about the impact of victory and losses in these state polls in Nov next month. One school of thought says that if BJP is victorious in these elections then the outcome will have no impact on 2024 polls as voters' preference may not be different when it comes to electing central government. BJP lost assembly polls in the Hindi heartland in 2018 but it swept Lok Sabha polls by winning 61 out of 65 seats which included 24(25) in Rajasthan, 28(29) MP and 9(11) in Chhattisgarh and primarily owing to Modi wave and nationalistic agenda.

Modi's popularity has gone very high at the international level and he commands maximum acceptance in the eyes of electorates in India. Experts say that BJP will be armed with Hindutva which is bound to be strengthened after the inauguration of Ram Temple in January and it will be exploited to the hilt. BJP has got vast resources and RSS will use its 'well-oiled' machinery to ensure the success of the party candidates in Lok Sabha polls. BJP will try to convince about the spectacular performance of the NDA Government and the strong leadership of Modi which made it possible to abrogate Article 370 and adopt 33 per cent women reservation bill in parliament besides

On the contrary, critics believe that if the BJP loses state polls, then it is bound to



THE BJP HIGH COMMAND SURPRISED ITS MINISTERS LIKE NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR, PRAHLAD SINGH PATEL AND FAGGAN SINGH KULASTE WHO FIGURED IN THE FIRST LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR MP POLLS

(The writer is a political analyst and senior journalist, views are personal)

give back to saffron in parliamentary polls. They say that there are predominant factors that will upset BJP's calculations. First, there will be no Pulwama and surgical strikes to create nationwide feelings of Nationalism. Second, the popularity of Congress and opposition parties were at its lowest ebb hence voters did not have an alternative to BJP. Third, Modi's 'Charisma' may not be sufficient to neutralise the nine-year Anti-incumbency of the NDA Government. Fourth, common people are facing the worst type of skyrocketing prices of essential commodities which has made their survival difficult. Fifth, youths had voted in large numbers in the country for BJP but now the unemployment problem is at its zenith which has angered this dominant section of society. The sixth, the middle class seems to be affected and responses vary from 2019. Seventh, the BJP's downward journey has been stalled by the Congress in Karnataka and AIADMK's decision to sever ties with the BJP has given a jolt in Tamil Nadu. BJP cannot ride to power without having significant seats from southern states. Finally, the opposition parties have come under the umbrella of I.N.D.I.A. This which can be attributed to their compulsion of alleged misuse of investigating agencies against them and their leaders. The chances of declaring a PM candidate seem extremely difficult but even if they

broadly agree to share seats and decide not to field candidates against each other than arithmetic of votes may make a difference in the outcome in all states in the country in 2024.

To checkmate sitting CM, Shivraj Chouhan, the BJP high command surprised its ministers like Narendra Singh Tomar, Prahlad Singh Patel and Faggan Singh Kulaste who figured in the first list of candidates for MP polls. As per party calculations, union ministers may have their influence across the state though they have yet to prove their statewide appeal amongst the people.

Experts say that the ministers or MPs hardly do micro-level management of particular constituencies which should worry them in MP. They may not have the state-level stature when compared with Chouhan who may be sulking as he has not been declared as CM candidate despite being at the helm of affairs. BJP high command and the top brass of RSS have taken a big risk by making Prime Minister, Narendra Modi as face of the party and refrained from naming chief ministerial candidates in poll-bound states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram.

Based on a different analogy, BJP has experimented with a new strategy of fielding 24 MPs and 4 union ministers in three poll-bound states including MP, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh

which reflects the saffron party's 'desperate move and resolve' to ensure victory in these states to create a better narrative for 2024 parliamentary polls. 2nd, it may be aimed at neutralising the anguish of the voters who may have to rethink when new faces (MPs and ministers) are fielded from such constituencies.

As per the outcome of Karnataka and Himachal assembly elections, Modi's all-out aggressive campaign and Hindutva did not work hence if BJP fails to oust Congress in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh and C.S. Rao's 'Bharat Rashtira Sanithi' (BRS) in Telangana besides losing MP then it may have direct bearing on 2024 parliamentary elections in 2024. But if the results go in favour of the BJP then it may have a double impact to ensure the victory of Modi for a third successive time.

Experts say that BJP's think tank might have assessed the possible impact of the Modi government's nine-year performance and welfare measures which may give weightage to the party's nominees in the elections in the state polls. BJP's 'Gujrat Model' of replacing older generation leaders yielded positive results in Uttarakhand, Goa and Tripura but it miserably failed to deliver in Karnataka. Now it will be interesting to see whether a new strategy to push union ministers and MPs into the electoral fray will work to the advantage of the party or it will backfire.

Geopolitical implications of energy transition

The transition of energy is happening at a rapid pace which will cause a paradigm shift in geopolitical power structure



ISHOO RATNA SRIVASTAV



SAIRAM

(Sairam is an international development advisor and a Chevening scholar, & Srivastav is an Indian Railway Service Officer and a Commonwealth scholar; views are personal)

to global power equations including (1) capital losses from fossil fuel reserves being stranded, (2) losses to treasury reaped from the fossil fuel rents and most importantly (3) loss of the geopolitical power advantages due to the shift to more diffused zero-carbon energy sources such as the solar, wind and hydropower.

Also, an aspect that can't be ignored is that an energy transition entails a technology transition. The eternal zeal towards maximising power from fossil-fueled internal combustion-based systems would shift to electrification in novel ways. Take the case of the global automotive industry which has an almost 3.5% share of global GDP; its technological shift towards



EVs is bound to have a deep impact across its value chain. Also, as the R&D in the conventional energy systems slows down, the locked-in investments would starve for upgrades, particularly in countries having a dependency on technology transfer. These large-scale industry-wide shifts would put pressure

on the geopolitical equilibrium. Also, emissions-linked tariffs in global trade regimes, like the one proposed by the EU are already concerning its trade partners.

The theatre of energy-critical materials like lithium, nickel, cobalt, copper and rare earth elements is already abuzz with action as nations scramble

to secure the reserves worldwide. Since the essential resources for energy transition are not necessarily a consequence of inherited natural advantage, new fault lines are emerging, pushing the global giants to reposition their competitive advantages and undermine the geo-political strengths of others to maintain their position of power in the era of Green Industrialisation. The war in Ukraine, resulting in uncertainty in gas supplies has served as a wakeup call for Europe to hasten its renewable energy transition. Japan, another developed and technologically advanced nation, has announced its intention to be a part of the power play by announcing its Hydrogen strategy that targets an annual

supply of 12 million tonnes by 2040. India too, is leading the global solar effort by playing a leadership role in the International Solar Alliance and through its recently unveiled Hydrogen strategy, it aspires to become a global electrolyser production hub.

The issues of energy security, energy poverty and climate change are central to the concept of energy transition and provide an opportunity towards the creation of a more equitable and sustainable world. For a smooth transition to a new geo-political world order the following may be the critical elements:

Equitable & Fair Transition – Mitigation of socio-economic dislocation through compensation for stranded

carbon assets and creating opportunities for job mobility

Revival of Multilateralism – Global institutions need to collaborate more than ever to break the vested interest nexus and create incentives for rapid action

Technological Leapfrogging – Open-source technological breakthroughs can prevent the creation of newer pockets of power based on energy capabilities and create a new world order

Diffusion of power to emerging nations – Considering the future centres of global economic growth and therefore consumption of energy to be anchored in the emerging nations, their voice needs to find a central space in global power equations.

Fighting breaks out near another Gaza hospital

AP ■ KHAN YOUNIS (GAZA STRIP) / BEIJING

Heavy fighting erupted Monday around a hospital in northern Gaza where thousands of patients and displaced people have been sheltering for weeks, as Israel pressed an offensive it says is aimed at eradicating Hamas and uprooting their militant infrastructure. A shell struck the second floor of the Indonesian Hospital, killing at least 12 people, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza and a medical worker inside the facility. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

The advance came a day after the World Health Organisation evacuated 31 premature babies from Shifa Hospital. At least 28 were transported to Egypt on Monday. More than 250 critically ill or wounded patients remain stranded at the compound, which Israeli forces stormed days ago. The plight of Gaza's hospitals is at the focus of a battle of narratives over the war's brutal toll on Palestinian civilians, thousands of whom have been killed or buried in rubble since the conflict was sparked by Hamas' Oct 7 rampage into southern Israel.

Israel says Hamas uses civilians as human shields and operated a major command hub inside and beneath Shifa, while critics say Israel's siege and relentless aerial bombardment amount to collective punishment of the territory's 2.3 million Palestinians.

Marwan Abdallah, the medical worker at the Indonesian Hospital, said Israeli tanks were operating less than 200 metres (yards) from the hospital, and that Israeli snipers could be seen on the roofs of nearby buildings. As he spoke over the phone, the sound of gunfire could be heard in the background.

Abdallah said the hospital had received dozens of dead and wounded in airstrikes and shelling overnight.

Health Ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra, who is now based in southern Gaza, said some 600 patients, 200 health care workers and 2,000 displaced people are sheltering there. In a separate development that could relieve some

Houthi rebels hijack Israeli-linked India-bound ship in Red Sea

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Yemen's Houthi rebels have seized an Israeli-linked cargo ship, bound to India, in a crucial Red Sea shipping route and took its 25 crew members hostage, officials said, raising fears that regional tensions heightened over the Israel-Hamas war were playing out on a new maritime front.

The Iran-backed Houthi rebels said they hijacked the ship Sunday over its connection to Israel and would continue to target ships in international waters that were linked to or owned by Israelis until the end of Israel's campaign against Gaza's Hamas rulers. "All ships belonging to the Israeli enemy or that deal with it will become legitimate targets," the Houthis said. Mohammed Abdul-Salam, the Houthis' chief negotiator and spokesman, later added in an online statement that the Israelis only understand "the language of force". "The detention of the Israeli ship is a practical step that proves the seriousness of the Yemeni armed forces in waging the sea battle, regardless of its costs and costs," he added. "This is the begin-

ing of the pressure on Gaza's collapsing health system, dozens of trucks entered the territory from Egypt on Monday with equipment from Jordan to set up a field hospital. Jordan's state-run media said the hospital in the southern town of Khan Younis would be up and running within 48 hours.

CHINA WELCOMES MINS FOR TALKS

China's top diplomat welcomed four Arab foreign ministers and the Indonesian one to Beijing on Monday, saying his country would work with "our brothers and sisters" in the Arab and Islamic world to try to end the war in Gaza as soon as possible. The ministers from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and Indonesia chose to start a tour of world capitals in Beijing, a testament to both China's growing geopolitical

influence and its longstanding support for the Palestinians. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told the foreign diplomats that their decision to start in Beijing shows their high level of trust in his nation.

"China is a good friend and brother of Arab and Islamic countries," Wang said in opening remarks at a state guest house before their talks began. "We have always firmly safeguarded the legitimate rights and interests of Arab (and) Islamic countries and have always firmly supported the just cause of the Palestinian people." China has long backed the Palestinians and been quick to denounce Israel over its settlements in the occupied territories. It has not criticised the initial Hamas attack on October 7 — which killed about 1,200 people — while the United States and others have called it an act of terrorism.

However, China does have growing economic ties with Israel.

The Saudi foreign minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, called for an immediate cease-fire and the entry of humanitarian aid and relief to the Gaza Strip. "There are still dangerous developments ahead of us and an urgent humanitarian crisis that requires an international mobilization to deal with and counter it," he said. He added they appreciated the resolution issued by the United Nations Security Council, calling for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses in Gaza, "but we still need more efforts and cooperation." China — the world's second-largest economy after the US — has become increasingly outspoken on international affairs and even gotten directly involved in some recently, albeit cautiously.

global consequence".

Israeli officials insisted the ship was British-owned and Japanese-operated. However, ownership details in public shipping databases associated the ship's owners with Ray Car Carriers, founded by Abraham "Rami" Ungar, who is known as one of the richest men in Israel.

Ungar told The Associated Press he was aware of the incident but couldn't comment as he awaited details. A ship linked to him experienced an explosion in 2021 in the Gulf of Oman. Israeli media blamed it on Iran at the time. Authorities confirmed Monday that the captain and the first mate on the Galaxy Leader were Bulgarians.

Bulgaria's top police officer, Zhiyko Kotsev, told reporters that they were in touch with their families. "Nobody has sought contact with us up to this moment," he said.

International shipping often involves a series of management companies, flags and owners stretching across the globe in a single vessel. Two US defence officials confirmed that Houthi rebels seized the Galaxy Leader in the Red Sea on Sunday afternoon local time.

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Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, foreground center, poses a group photo with his counterparts from left, Palestine Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Hissein Brahim Taha and their delegations prior to their meeting at the Diaoyutai state guesthouse in Beijing, Monday. China's foreign minister welcomed five Arab and Islamic counterparts to Beijing on Monday, saying his country would work with "our brothers and sisters" in the Arab and Islamic world to try to end the fighting in Gaza as soon as possible.

AP/PTI

OpenAI's new CEO launching probe into Altman's firing

AP ■ LONDON

The new head of ChatGPT maker OpenAI said Monday that he would launch an investigation into the firing of co-founder Sam Altman and work to reform the company's management following a corporate shakeup that shocked the artificial intelligence world. The developments come after a weekend of drama and speculation about how the power dynamics would shake out at OpenAI, whose chatbot kicked off the generative AI craze by producing human-like text, images, video and music.

It ended with former Twitch leader Emmett Shear taking over as OpenAI's interim chief executive and Microsoft announcing it was hiring Altman and OpenAI co-founder and former President Greg Brockman to lead a new advanced AI research team.

Despite the rift between the key players behind ChatGPT and the company they helped build, both Shear and Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella tweeted that they are committed to their partnership.

Microsoft invested bil-



lions of dollars in the startup and helped provide the computing power to run its AI systems. Nadella wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter, that he was "extremely excited" to bring on the former executives of OpenAI and looked "forward to getting to know" Shear and the rest of the management team.

In reply on X, Altman said "the mission continues," while Brockman posted, "We are going to build something new & it will be incredible."

OpenAI said Friday that Altman was pushed out after a review found he was "not consistently candid in his communications" with the board of directors, which had lost confidence in his ability to lead the

company. In a post Monday on X, Shear said he would hire an independent investigator to look into what led up to Altman's ouster and write a report within 30 days.

"It's clear that the process and communications around Sam's removal has been handled very badly, which has seriously damaged our trust," wrote Shear, who co-founded Twitch, an Amazon-owned livestreaming service popular with video gamers.

He said he also plans in the next month to "reform the management and leadership team in light of recent departures into an effective force" and speak with employees, investors and customers.

After that, Shear said he would "drive changes in the organisation," including "significant governance changes if necessary". He noted that the reason behind the board removing Altman was not a "specific disagreement on safety".

OpenAI last week declined to answer questions on what Altman's alleged lack of candour was about. Its statement said his behaviour was hindering the board's ability to exercise its responsibilities.

Women make up more than half of 22 mins in new Cabinet of Spanish PM

AP ■ MADRID

Women will hold 12 of the 22 posts in the new government named Monday by Spain's recently reelected Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. "The new government is going to have a marked feminist accent with four women deputy prime ministers and more female ministers than male ministers," Sánchez said.

The Cabinet will include nine new ministers while key posts remain unchanged. Nadia Calviño keeps the economy portfolio, José Manuel Albarés remains in charge of foreign affairs and Margarita Robles stays at defense.

Sánchez's Socialist party will hold 17 ministries and its

leftist Sumar (Joining Forces) coalition partner will have five portfolios.

The outgoing government's former far-left coalition partner, Unidas Podemos (Unite We Can) will have no ministries and the party's former star Equality Minister Irene Montero will be replaced by Ana Redondo of the Socialist party.

Sánchez was reelected prime minister on Thursday with the support of 179 lawmakers in the 350-seat Parliament. His election was opposed by 171 deputies from the right of center Popular Party and the far-right Vox.

The socialist prime minister's new term has gotten off

to a stormy start after he clinched the support in parliament of two Catalan separatist parties in exchange for a controversial amnesty proposal for hundreds of people in legal trouble over the Catalonia region's failed secession attempt in 2017.

The proposal has triggered massive protests called by the Popular Party and Vox.

Several held by extreme right-wing groups close to the Socialist party's headquarters in Madrid have ended in clashes with police.

Speaking Monday, Sánchez promised to "prioritise dialogue and negotiation in a legislature that will be key for the social and territorial cohesion of Spain".

Javier Milei wins Argentina's presidency

AP ■ BUENOS AIRES (ARGENTINA)

Javier Milei resoundingly won Argentina's presidential election on Sunday, swinging the country to the right following a fiercely polarised campaign in which he promised a dramatic shake-up to the state to deal with soaring inflation and rising poverty. With 99.4 per cent of votes tallied in the presidential runoff, Milei had 55.7 per cent and Economy Minister Sergio Massa 44.3 per cent, according to Argentina's electoral authority.

It is the widest victory margin in a presidential race since the South American country's return to democracy in 1983. In the streets of Buenos Aires, drivers honked their horns and many took to the streets to celebrate in several neighbourhoods. Outside



Presidential candidate of the Liberty Advances coalition Javier Milei waves during his victory speech after winning the presidential runoff election in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Sunday.

AP/PTI

Milei's party headquarters, a hotel in downtown Buenos Aires, a full-on party kicked off with supporters singing, buying beers from vendors and setting off coloured smoke bombs. They waved Argentine flags and the yellow Gadsden flag,

emblazoned with the words "Don't Tread On Me", which Milei's movement has adopted.

Inside, the self-described anarcho-capitalist who has been compared to former US President Donald Trump, delivered his victory speech,

saying the "reconstruction of Argentina begins today".

Argentina's situation is critical. The changes our country needs are drastic. There is no room for gradualism, no room for lukewarm measures," Milei told supporters, who chanted "Liberty, liberty!" and "Let them all leave" in a reference to the country's political class.

Massa of the ruling Peronist party had already conceded defeat, saying Argentines "chose another path".

"Starting tomorrow ... guaranteeing the political, social and economic functions is the responsibility of the new president. I hope he does," Massa said.

With a Milei victory, the country will take an abrupt shift rightward and a freshman lawmaker who got his start as a television talking head blast-

ing what he called the "political caste" will assume the presidency. Inflation has soared above 140 per cent and poverty has worsened while Massa has held his post. Milei has said he would slash the size of the government, dollarise the economy and eliminate the Central Bank as a way to tackle galloping inflation that he blames on successive governments printing money indiscriminately in order to fund public spending. He also espouses several conservative social policies, including an opposition to sex education in schools and abortion, which Argentina's Congress legalised in 2020.

"This is a triumph that is less due to Milei and his peculiarities and particularities and more to the demand for change," said Lucas Romero, the head of Synopsis, a local political consulting firm.

Teachers rape 15 minor male students in Pak

Lahore (PTI): At least 15 minor male students at a seminary were allegedly raped by two teachers in Pakistan's Punjab province, police said on Monday, days after the suspects were arrested.

The incident took place in Chakwal district, some 275 km from Lahore, Punjab Inspector General Police (IGP) Usman Anwar told reporters here. Both the teachers, identified as Zeeshan and Anis, have been arrested and are being interrogated, he said. "The two teachers of a seminary in Chakwal district sexually assaulted at least 15 male students, aged between 10 and 12. The number may increase during the course of the investigation," the IGP said.

London Deputy Mayor Rajesh Agarwal eyes Parliament seat from Leicester

AP ■ LONDON

Indian-born entrepreneur and London's Deputy Mayor for Business, Rajesh Agarwal, has been selected by the Opposition Labour Party as its parliamentary candidate to contest from the constituency of Leicester East in the next general election.

Agarwal, 46, took to social media on Sunday to announce his selection and pledged to deliver as a member of Parliament for all residents of a constituency that represents one of the largest South Asian origin populations in the UK.

In a local parliamentary contest, he beat another Indian-origin prospective candidate Councillor Rishi Madhani to be



named Labour's choice for the next polls — expected in 2024.

"I'm honoured to be selected as the Labour Party's Parliamentary candidate for Leicester East," Agarwal posted on X.

"It's time to use this auspicious moment to reset Leicester East, with a Labour MP who'll deliver for everyone who lives

here. Together, let's get Britain's future back," he said.

The Labour politician, who has the backing of London Mayor Sadiq Khan among others, pledged to continue to champion the ideals he has been committed to as London's Deputy Mayor.

"As London's Deputy Mayor for Business, I've flown the British flag and championed our ideals around the world, attracting hundreds of millions in international investment; creating hundreds of thousands more jobs and giving over 255,000 people better employment conditions. I'll bring similar successes to Leicester East and make sure it gets its fair share," reads his mission statement. He reflects on his migrant journey 22

years ago when he arrived in the UK from India with little in his pocket and went on to set up a successful fintech business.

"As a fintech entrepreneur, I built a team that challenged the status quo by lowering the cost of moving money for migrant workers and businesses alike. I'm passionate about entrepreneurship and opportunity. It's why I'm standing to become your next Labour MP for Leicester East because I believe there's a Labour way to grow our economy; one that's pro-worker and pro-employer too," states Agarwal.

He lists championing Leicester's economy, helping residents with the cost-of-living crisis and creating affordable homes among his top priorities.

PNG volcano erupts, Japan says it's assessing tsunami risk to its islands

AP ■ TOKYO

A volcano in Papua New Guinea erupted on Monday, and the Japan Meteorological Agency said it was assessing a possible risk of a tsunami for Japanese coasts.

Mount Ulawun on the island of New Britain in Papua New Guinea erupted at around 3:30 pm (0630 GMT) Monday, spewing volcanic smoke as high as 15,000 meters (50,000 feet), the agency said, quoting the Volcanic Ash Advisory Center in Darwin, Australia.

The agency said it was assessing a possible impact, including the risk of a tsunami approaching Japan later

Monday.

First tsunami waves could reach Izu and Ogasawara islands about three hours after the shaking caused by the eruption, JMA said.

The agency has not issued any tsunami advisory or warning. It said that no notable change to sea levels has been detected at observation sites in and outside Japan. Papua New Guinea's Geohazards Management Division said Ulawun's volcanic activity started Monday afternoon.

The eruption is expected to continue indefinitely, it said, and raised the volcano's risk level to the highest stage of four. Ulawun is one of the most active volcanoes in

Papua New Guinea, which sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," the arc of seismic faults around the Pacific Ocean where much of the world's earthquake and volcanic activity occurs. Ulawun has repeatedly erupted since 1700s, and had a last major eruption in 2019.

Geoscience Australia, a government agency, said there was no tsunami warning for Australian waters.

The Hawaii-based Pacific Tsunami Warning Center did not issue any warning.

JMA, however, urged coastal residents to stay cautious in case of a delayed tsunami. It said it could not immediately predict a possible size of the waves.

US defence secy meets Zelenskyy in Kyiv

AP ■ KYIV

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin made an unannounced visit to Kyiv on Monday in a high-profile push to keep money and weapons flowing to Ukraine even as US and international resources are stretched by the new global risks raised by the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Austin, who travelled to Kyiv by train from Poland, met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and was scheduled to meet with Defence Minister Rustem Umerov and Chief of Staff Gen Valerii Zaluzhnyi.

US officials said Austin intended to tell Ukrainian officials that American support for efforts to defeat Russia's invasion is steadfast and will continue, even as the world's attention is drawn to the Middle East and signs of fatigue set in with the almost 21-month war.

"I'm here today to deliver an important message — the United States will continue to stand with Ukraine in their fight for freedom against Russia's aggression, both now and into the future," Austin posted on X, formerly known as Twitter.

This is Austin's second trip to Kyiv, but he's making it under far different circumstances. His first visit occurred in April 2022, just two months after the start of the war. At the time, Ukraine was riding a wave of global rage at Moscow's invasion, and Austin launched an international effort that now sees 50 countries meet monthly to coordinate on what weapons, training and other support could be pushed to Kyiv.

But the conflict in Gaza could pull attention and resources from the Ukraine



fight. The US has worked feverishly since the Oct 7 attacks by Hamas on Israel, and the weeks of devastating bombardment on Gaza by Israel that has followed, killing more than 10,000 civilians, to keep those attacks from turning into a regional war. The US has already committed two carrier strike groups, scores of fighter jets and thousands of US personnel to the Middle East, and has had to shift its force posture and conduct airstrikes against Iranian-backed militant groups that are now hitting US bases in Iraq and Syria on a regular basis. To date, Ukraine has received more than \$44 billion from the US and more than \$35 billion from other allies in weapons, ranging from millions of bullets to air defence systems, advanced European and US battle tanks and, finally,

pledges for F-16 fighter jets.

But Ukraine still needs more, and after almost 20 months of shipping arms to Ukraine, cracks are beginning to show. Some European countries such as Poland have scaled back support, noting their need to maintain adequate fighting ability to defend themselves.

Ukrainian officials have strongly pushed back on suggestions they are in a stalemate with Russia after a long-awaited counteroffensive over the summer did not radically change the battle lines on the ground.

In a visit to Washington last week, Andriy Yermak, head of the president's office, provided no details but confirmed that Ukrainian forces had finally pushed through to the east bank of the Dnieper River, which has essentially served as

the immovable front line between Ukrainian and Russian forces for months.

However, as winter sets in it will become more difficult for either side to make large gains due to ground conditions. That could further work against Ukraine if US lawmakers perceive there's time to wait before more funds are needed. A senior defence official travelling with Austin told reporters on the trip that the US expects that this winter Russia will go after Ukraine's infrastructure again, like the power grid, making air defences critical.

Fred Kagan, a senior resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, said it would be a mistake to think there is time to wait.

"If we stop providing aid to Ukraine, it's not that the stalemate continues. The aid is

actually essential to preventing the Russians from beginning to maneuver again in ways that can allow them to defeat Ukraine," Kagan said. "So the cost of cutting off aid is that Russia wins and Ukraine loses and NATO loses." Further complicating the support is that the Pentagon has only a dwindling amount of money left in this year's budget to keep sending weapons to Ukraine, and Congress is months late on getting a new budget passed and has not taken up a supplemental spending package that would include Ukraine aid.

Since the war began in February 2022, the US has provided more than \$44.2 billion in weapons to Ukraine, but the funding is nearly gone. The Pentagon can send about \$5 billion more in weapons and equipment from its own stocks. But it only has about \$1 billion in funding to replace those stocks. As a result, recent announcements of weapons support have been of much smaller dollar amounts than in months past. "You have seen smaller packages, because we need to parse these out," Pentagon deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh said Thursday. "Because we don't know when Congress is going to pass our supplemental package."

Officials have been urging Congress to provide additional money, but a growing number of Senate Republicans have opposed additional Ukraine aid without securing support for other unrelated provisions, such as stricter immigration laws and additional funding for border control. A stopgap spending bill passed last week to avoid a government shutdown during the holidays did not include any money for Ukraine.

Hsiao Bi-khim picked as vice presidential candidate in Taiwan

Taipei (AP) The front-runner in Taiwan's presidential race has picked the long-term de facto ambassador to the United States as his vice presidential candidate. Vice President William Lai announced Monday on his Facebook page the nomination of Hsiao Bi-khim — who was born in Japan to a Taiwanese father and an American mother — as his running mate in January's elections. His choice would likely bolster support among backers of his ruling Democratic Progressive Party, which has long defied Beijing's demands to return the island under the rule of the authoritarian Communist Party.

Lai and Hsiao face a divided opposition, led by the Nationalist Party, also known as the Kuomintang or KMT, that has sought to draw independent candidates to their ticket. Polls show Lai is ahead, but China is believed to be seeking to influence business groups and media. Lai currently serves as vice president to President Tsai Ing-wen, who is restricted from running for a third four-year term. In his Facebook post, Tsai said Hsiao had been crucial to cooperation with the US, Taiwan's chief ally.

"This team, following President Tsai's eight years in power, is completely prepared to withstand all challenges, both domestically and from China," Lai's post said.

Hsiao later told a news conference that she had been prepared well to deal with a range of challenges by her upbringing, her years as a legislator representing eastern Taiwan and her eight years as Taiwan's representative in Washington.

TOSHAKHANA CORRUPTION CASE

Anti-graft body ordered to record Nawaz Sharif statement by Nov 30

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

An accountability court here on Monday ordered Pakistan's anti-graft body to record former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's statement by November 30 in the Toshakhana corruption case.

Judge Muhammad Bashir of the accountability court in Islamabad heard the Toshakhana corruption case against the 73-year-old Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo who returned to Pakistan on October 21 after about four years of self-imposed exile in London.

Sharif's lawyer, Qazi Misbah, urged the court to issue directions to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on recording the three-time prime minister's statements in the case. "A supplementary reference needs to be filed ... a reference was filed in the absence of Nawaz," he was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper. "We want the NAB to record Nawaz's position," he added. The NAB prosecutor sought time to go through the petition. However, Judge Bashir ordered the accountability bureau to record Sharif's statements in the case by November 30 and adjourned the proceedings till then. "What is the problem? Call Nawaz Sharif and record his statement," Judge Bashir was quoted as saying.

In June 2020, an accountability court issued non-bailable arrest warrants against Sharif when he was in London

and, in September, declared him a proclaimed offender in the Toshakhana vehicles case.

Former president Asif Ali Zardari, 68, and ex-prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, 71, are also accused in the same case.

In the case, the NAB accused Sharif and Zardari of illegally retaining expensive vehicles gifted to them by various foreign countries and dignitaries instead of depositing them in the Toshakhana, the state depository.

According to the country's top anti-corruption body, Zardari and Sharif got cars in 2008 by paying just 15 per cent of their price and Gilani, during his tenure as prime minister, facilitated the two in retaining the vehicles.

According to the rules, gifts given to officials should be deposited in the Toshakhana, established in 1974. Officials can, however, keep the gifts by paying a certain percentage of the price assessed by the Toshakhana evaluation committee.

Last month, ahead of Sharif's homecoming after an exile of four years, the accountability court granted the former premier bail and also suspended the perpetual arrest warrants after he surrendered before the court. The court confirmed his bail against surety bonds of Rs 1 million. Earlier this month, the court ordered authorities to release all properties and assets seized from Sharif in 2020 during a hearing of the Toshakhana case.

Seoul warns N Korea not to launch spy satellite

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea's military warned North Korea not to go ahead with its planned spy satellite launch, suggesting on Monday that Seoul could suspend an inter-Korean peace deal and resume frontline aerial surveillance in retaliation for a launch. North Korea failed in its first two attempts to put a military spy satellite into orbit earlier this year and didn't follow through with a vow to make a third attempt in October. South Korean officials said the delay was likely because North Korea is receiving Russian technological assistance and that the North could conduct a launch in coming days.

Senior South Korean military officer Kang Hopil urged North Korea to cancel its third launch attempt immediately.

"Our military will come up with necessary measures to protect the lives and safety of the people, if North Korea pushes ahead with a military spy satellite launch despite our warning," Kang said in a televised statement.

South Korean Defence Minister Shin Wonsik said in an interview with public broadcast-

er KBS on Sunday the launch was expected later this month and that South Korean and US authorities were monitoring North Korea's moves.

The UN Security Council bans any satellite launches by North Korea because it views them as a disguised test of its missile technology. Kang said while North Korea needs a spy satellite to improve its monitoring of South Korea, its launch is also aimed at bolstering its long-range missile programme.

South Korea has accused North Korea of receiving Russian technologies to enhance its nuclear and other military capabilities in return for supplying conventional arms to support Russia's war in Ukraine. Both Moscow and Pyongyang have dismissed as groundless the alleged arms transfer deal, but both nations — locked in separate, protracted security tensions with the United States — have been openly pushing to expand bilateral cooperation.

In September, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un travelled to Russia and met President Vladimir Putin in Cosmodrome, Russia's most important domestic launch centre. When Putin was asked by

Russia's state media whether his country would help the North build satellites, he said that "that's why we have come here. The (North Korean) leader shows keen interest in rocket technology."

Kang, the South Korean officer, didn't explicitly say what retaliatory steps South Korea could take if North Korea makes a third launch. But he strongly hinted the steps could include a suspension of 2018 inter-Korean military agreements requiring both Koreas to halt aerial surveillance activities and live-firing drills along their tense border.

Kang asserted that North Korea has already violated the 2018 agreement numerous times. He cited the North's destruction of an unoccupied inter-Korean liaison office in North Korea, flying drones into South Korean territory and staging firing drills along the maritime border.

"Despite the North's repeated violations of the agreement, our military has been patiently abiding by clauses in the military agreement, but that has caused considerable problems in our military's readiness," Kang said.

Nearly 1,000 Rohingya refugees arrive in Aceh region in one week

Lhokseumawe (AP) Almost 1,000 Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar have arrived by boat in Indonesia's northernmost province of Aceh in the last six days, officials said Monday.

They included five groups with women and children who were afloat for days. One batch of more than 240 people was twice denied landing by residents in Aceh Utara district, sparking concerns from human rights organisations. The group finally disembarked in Bireuen district on Sunday morning.

"We thank the authorities and local communities who have received and granted landing permits for them and in the future we hope that this spirit of solidarity and humanity will continue to be extended to refugees who need assistance and protection," the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said in a statement. The refugees arriving in Aceh had endured a difficult sea journey.

Most of them left refugee camps in Bangladesh, where more than 700,000 had fled following a crackdown by Myanmar's army in August 2017. Myanmar security forces have been accused of mass rape, killings and the burning of thousands of Rohingya homes. Most of the refugees have attempted to reach Malaysia, but many have ended up in Indonesia along the way. "The thwarted landing of hundreds of Rohingya refugees is a big step back for Indonesia, where communities have previously shown generosity and humanity towards those seeking safety after perilous boat journeys," said Usman Hamid, executive director for Amnesty International Indonesia. Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that it is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and does not have the obligation or capacity to accommodate refugees.

"Accommodation has been provided solely for humanitarian reasons. Ironically, many countries party to the convention actually closed their doors and even implemented a pushback policy toward the refugees," Lalu Muhammad Iqbal, the ministry's spokesperson, said in a statement. He said Indonesia's kindness in providing a temporary shelter has been widely exploited by people-smugglers who seek financial gain without caring about the risks faced by refugees, especially vulnerable groups such as women and children.



Democratic lawmakers throw flares during a parliament session in Tirana, Albania, on Monday. Albanian opposition lawmakers disrupted the Parliament's session again on Monday to protest against what they say is increasingly authoritarian rule by the governing Socialists

AP/PTI

More than 400,000 Afghans return home from Pakistan

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

More than 400,000 Afghans returned to their home country following the ongoing crackdown on illegal foreigners in the country, Pakistani authorities said Monday. Zabihullah Mujahid, chief spokesperson of the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan, confirmed the number and told The Associated Press that the majority have been using the border crossings of Torkham and Spin Boldak to return home.

An estimated 1.7 million Afghans had been living in Pakistan when authorities announced its nationwide crackdown, saying that anyone without proper documents had to leave the country by October 31 or else get arrested. However, Pakistani officials said the other 1.4 million Afghans registered as refugees need not worry as only people without proper documentation were sought after. In the 1980s, millions of Afghans fled to neighboring Pakistan during the Soviet occupation of their country. The numbers witnessed a spike after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021.

Pakistan also introduced plans under which hundreds of thousands of residents in the southwestern border town of Chaman would need visas to cross between the two countries. They previously had special permits.

On Monday, hundreds briefly blocked a key road

leading to the Chaman border, disrupting traffic and the repatriation of some of the Afghans.

Residents in Chaman have been protesting repeatedly, asking Pakistan to allow them to continue using the special permits for business purposes and to meet with relatives who live in the Afghan border city of Spin Boldak.

Since November 1, police in Pakistan have been going door-to-door to check migrants' documentation. Pakistani officials had said before that the crackdown involves all foreigners in

the country, but most of those affected are Afghan nationals.

The latest development comes days after the World Health Organization warned that about 1.3 million Afghans were expected to return to their country of origin from Pakistan despite the onset of cold weather. Such expulsions have drawn widespread criticism from international and domestic human rights groups.

The Taliban-led administration in Afghanistan said it was providing shelter and food to returnees.

Weeklong negotiations for landmark treaty to end plastic pollution close, marred in disagreements

AP ■ NAIROBI

The latest round of negotiations to craft a treaty to end global plastic pollution closed late on Sunday after strained talks in Nairobi, Kenya, where delegates failed to reach a consensus on how to advance a draft of the treaty after a week of negotiations.

Environmental advocates criticised the outcome of the weeklong United Nations-led meeting on plastic pollution, saying oil-producing countries successfully employed stalling tactics designed to weaken the treaty.

Delegates were expected to discuss a draft published in September that represented the views from the first two meetings.

The International Negotiating Committee for Plastics is mandated with creating the first international, legally binding treaty on plastic pollution in five rounds of negotiations. Member states decided to move forward with a revision of the draft, which has become longer during

this third round of negotiations and will be even more difficult to advance, participants said. States also failed to reach a consensus on intersectoral work to discuss crucial parts of the draft to be done ahead of the fourth round of negotiations.

"These negotiations have so far failed to deliver on their promise," said Ana Lê Rocha, the director of the global plastics program at the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives. "The bullies of the negotiations pushed their way through, despite the majority countries, with leadership from the African Bloc and other nations in the Global South, in support of an ambitious treaty." Throughout the week, delegates suggested options to strengthen proposed global rules across the entire lifecycle of plastic from production to disposal.

A coalition of "high-ambition" governments led by Rwanda and Norway hope to eradicate plastic pollution by 2040 by having a treaty that guarantees interventions throughout the whole life

cycle of plastics, including reducing output and restricting some chemicals used in the plastics industry.

But some oil-producing countries advocated for shifting previously agreed mandates of the treaty, like changing the focus from the full lifecycle of plastic to waste management, and having voluntary measures at national levels to fight plastic pollution, instead of global measures.

Environmentalists disagree. "The science is very clear, the data is very clear, and the moral imperative is very clear," said Graham Forbes, global plastics campaign lead at Greenpeace. "You cannot solve the plastic pollution crisis if you do not massively cut plastic production."

But Stewart Harris, a spokesperson of the International Council of Chemical Associations, sees an opportunity for the treaty to accelerate circularity, or the reuse of plastics. He hoped the agreement will set up "something like a requirement for governments to

establish circularity targets as part of their national action plans".

The world produces more than 430 million tons of plastic annually, and two thirds of that are products that are disposed of soon after use, becoming waste and, often getting into the human food chain, according to the United Nations. Global plastic waste is expected to nearly triple by 2060, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Plastics are often made from oil, or other planet-warming fossil fuels.

More than 1,900 participants from 161 countries, including government officials, representatives of intergovernmental organisations, and civil society members, took part in the talks. A total of 143 lobbyists registered for the negotiations, according to an analysis by the Centre for International Environmental Law.

Tadesse Amara, co-chair of the International Pollutants Elimination Network, worried that lobbyists could

"divert science from independent science to industry-based science" and "prevent the treaty from protecting human health in the environment". This week's negotiations were the third of five rounds. The next talks will take place in Ottawa, Canada in April 2024. Delegates have until the end of 2024 to produce a final draft. Jacob Kean-Hammerson, an ocean campaigner at the Environmental Investigation Agency, described the journey remaining to create the treaty as "treacherous".

"These negotiations ended with more questions than answers about how we can bridge the political divide and craft a treaty that stimulates positive change," he said.

Forbes, who led Greenpeace's delegation at the talks, said the stakes will be higher in the coming rounds of negotiations. "We are charging towards catastrophe," he said. "We have one year to turn this around, and to ensure that we are celebrating our collective success instead of doom-ing ourselves to a dark and dangerous future."

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given on behalf of my client, **Shri Likhin Gera S/o Shri Manohar Lal Gera R/o 163 Sandringham Drive, Leeds, LS17 8DQ, UK.** That the order granted on **13/09/2023** by **HM Courts & Tribunals Service, U.K.** in Case No. **1679-6580-0735-6946** certifies that the marriage of **Likhin Gera & Priyanka Gera** which was solemnized on **17/10/2012** and duly registered with **DC(S)/ADM/2012/9012** on **18/10/2012**, at New Delhi, India has legally ended. This marriage legally dissolved through mutual consent without any blame being attributed to either party or their respective families. Anyone engaging in any kind of business, financial, or social dealing with **Ms. Priyanka** would be doing so at his/her own risk and cost.

G.S.SINGH (Advocate)
B-825, FF, Sec-15, Rohini, Delhi-89. ☎ 9811297679

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Website www.pspcl.in (Contact Number 9646123323)

Tender Inquiry No. PPR – 26/2023 Dated: 20-11-2023
Chief Engineer/PP&R Organization, Shed No. D-3, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala invites E-tender under three part bid system for supply of electrical equipment from interstate/intrastate sources viz, Generators, Traders having valid Inter State Trading License issued by CERC for interstate trading of energy, intrastate trading license issued by PSERC for interstate trading of energy, State Electricity Boards, State Electricity Utilities, States, IPPs & CPPs from 1st Dec 2023 to 29th Feb 2024. The link for the e-Bidding portal is www.mstcecommerce.com and is also available on the website of Ministry of Power (www.Powermin.nic.in) and PFC Consultancy Limited (www.pfcindia.com). For detailed NIT & tender specifications please refer to www.mstcecommerce.com from 16.11.2023 onwards.
Note:- Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at www.mstcecommerce.com

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76155/12/2415/2023/29896 Dated CHD :- 11/20/2023

Blue Dart, India Post ink pact for parcel locker

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Express logistics provider Blue Dart on Monday said it has set up digital parcel locker service at post offices under a partnership with India Post. This service allows consignees to retrieve their shipments from digital parcel lockers at post offices, doing away with the need for personal receipts or signing for a package, Blue Dart said in a statement. “Blue Dart and India Post forge strategic partnership for enhanced services. Under the collaboration, Blue Dart has introduced automated digital parcel lockers at selected post offices, offering customers an additional delivery method,” the statement said. These parcel lockers keep their contents secure and are easily accessible. When the recipient needs to retrieve a package from the locker, they can simply enter the assigned code and open the locker, the company said. Additionally, the deliveries can be collected at any time, and only authorised personnel can access the packages. Blue Dart Managing Director Balfour Manuel said this transformative partnership under-

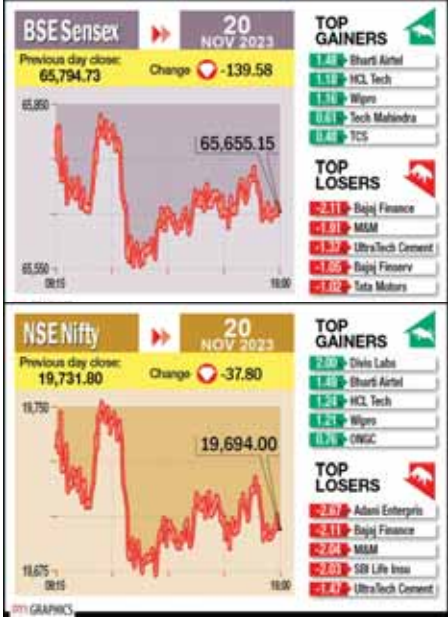


scores unwavering commitment to exceptional customer service, providing customers the option to collect packages at their convenience. This initiative demonstrates the company's commitment to revolutionise hyper-connected city logistics, enhancing last-mile delivery efficiency while ensuring a reliable and secure experience for our customers in an increasingly digital and on-demand world. Blue Dart Express Ltd is South Asia's premier express air and integrated transportation and distribution company, offering delivery of consignments to over 56,000 locations in India.

Sensex, Nifty fall for 2nd day

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty stayed on the back foot for the second straight session on Monday due to selling in auto, utility and commodity shares amid high valuation concerns and fresh foreign fund outflows. In a volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 139.58 points or 0.21 per cent to settle at 65,655.15. During the day, it fell 246.93 points or 0.37 per cent to 65,547.80. The Nifty dropped by 37.80 points or 0.19 per cent to 19,694 as 27 of its components closed in the red, 21 in the green and two unchanged. Among the Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finserv, Asian Paints, Hindustan Unilever, Tata Motors and JSW Steel were the major laggards. Bharti Airtel, Wipro, HCL Technologies, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services and Maruti were among the gainers. “Elevated long-term interest rate trends and a weakening global economy continue to hurt inflows and market movement. While the recent softening of inflation in the US & India and the negative trend of crude are expected to help the view on global equity and India in the short term. “In that context, the ease in FII selling is helping the domestic markets but continues to consolidate primarily due to India's premium valuation relative to global peers,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. In this scenario, the IT sector is benefitting; however, valuation continues to be on the higher side compared to long-term history, suggesting a cautious approach in the sector in the medium term, he added. A mixed trend was witnessed on the sectoral front wherein IT posted decent gains while auto and metal ended in the red. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.39 per cent and midcap index dipped 0.06 per cent. Among the indices, auto fell 0.69 per cent, com-

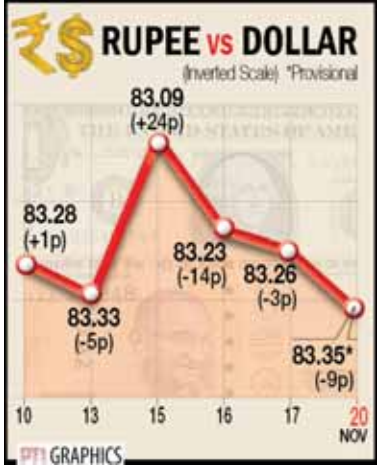


modities declined 0.66 per cent, capital goods (0.43 per cent), realty (0.33 per cent) and consumer discretionary (0.30 per cent). Energy, healthcare, IT and tech were the gainers. In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the green, while Tokyo ended lower. European markets were trading on a mixed note. The US markets ended with marginal gains on Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.74 per cent to USD 81.21 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 477.76 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. The BSE benchmark declined 187.75 points or 0.28 per cent to settle at 65,794.73 on Friday. The Nifty slipped 33.40 points or 0.17 per cent to 19,731.80.

Rupee falls 9 paise to close at all-time low

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee declined by 9 paise to settle at its all-time low of 83.35 against the US dollar on Monday, tracking a negative trend in domestic equities. Foreign fund outflows also weighed on the local unit, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.25 and settled at its lifetime low level of 83.35 against the dollar, registering a fall of 9 paise from its previous close. On Friday, the rupee settled at 83.26 against the American currency. Earlier, the rupee closed at its lowest level of 83.33 against the dollar on November 13, this year. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.42 per cent lower at 103.48. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.66 per cent to USD 81.14 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex fell 139.58 points or 0.21 per cent to settle at



65,655.15 points. The Nifty declined 37.80 points or 0.19 per cent to 19,694.00 points. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Friday as they sold shares worth Rs 477.76 crore, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, India's forex kitty decreased by USD 462 million to USD 590.321 billion for the week ended November 10, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. In the previous week, the overall reserves had increased by USD 4.672 billion to USD 590.783 billion.



GDP growth to dip a bit in 2024: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's real GDP growth will decline marginally to 6.3 per cent in 2024 from the 6.4 per cent estimated for 2023, an American brokerage firm said on Monday. The next calendar year will be of two halves, wherein the government spending before the upcoming General Elections will be the key driver for growth, while after the elections, it will be the re-acceleration in investment growth, especially from the private sector, Goldman Sachs said in a report. From a fiscal year perspective, the brokerage said it expects growth to accelerate to 6.5 per cent for FY25 from the 6.2 per cent it has projected for the ongoing FY24, it added. “India has the best structural growth prospects in the region. We believe GDP growth is likely to stay robust at 6.3 per cent y-o-y (year-on-year) in 2024,” the brokerage said, adding the country is less sensitive to potential external shocks like longer rates globally, persistent dollar strength and geopolitical uncertainties. The brokerage said risks around

the growth outlook are evenly balanced but added that “the main domestic risk” is emanating from political uncertainty, with elections approaching in the April-June quarter of 2024. The election season is already underway with Assembly polls in five states, which will be followed by the General Elections later, it said, adding that outcomes of these elections will be “keenly watched” by investors from the standpoint of economic reforms and/or policy continuity. It expects headline consumer price inflation to come at 5.1 per cent for 2024, against 4.7 per cent estimated by the Reserve Bank. This will, however, be lower than the 5.7 per cent expected in 2023, it added. “We expect the government to intervene through subsidies or other measures to keep a lid on food prices in an election year,” it said. The “somewhat elevated” inflation relative to the target will limit the room for monetary easing, and the RBI will cut rates by only 0.50 per cent to 6 per cent by early 2025, the brokerage said, adding that there will be a cut of 0.25 per cent each in Q4 2024 and Q1 2025.

Domestic flier traffic record high on Nov 19

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The domestic air traffic touched a new high on Sunday as airlines carried 4,56,910 passengers, marking two “consecutive days of historic numbers”. On Saturday also, the air traffic number reached a new high of 4,56,748 passengers, according to official data. “Post-Covid, India's domestic aviation's turn-around story has not just been overwhelming but inspiring as well. Positive attitude, progressive policies, and deep trust among passengers are taking it to new heights with every flight, every day,” the civil aviation ministry said in a post on X on Monday. There were 4,56,910 domestic air passengers and 5,958 flight movements on Sunday (November 19). The count was much higher than the 3,93,391 passengers and 5,506 flight movements recorded on November 19 last year. Sharing the record numbers, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Monday said there is no stopping the country from becoming



the world's largest aviation market. “The josh is high-est sir! India's air passenger traffic breaks the previous day's record, thus marking two consecutive days of historic numbers. More than a feat for the aviation industry, it is a collective achievement for the people of India. “With this, there is no stopping us from becoming the world's largest aviation market!,” he said in a post on X. It was also the highest post-Covid air traffic for two consecutive days. India is one of the fastest-growing civil aviation markets in the world and domestic air passenger traffic registered an annual growth of nearly 11 per cent to 1.26 crore in October.

‘Future of coal is bright in India’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The future of coal in India is bright as there are technologies available which can help the country extract, use and combust the dry fuel far more sustainably, FutureCoal on Monday said. Coal is considered to be the biggest contributor to climate change with thermal electricity being responsible for nearly 30 per cent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. “The future of coal in India is bright.....We believe that there are technologies that are available which can help India extract coal far more sustainably, use it far more sustainably, combust it far more sustainably, and post combustion treatment to coal can reduce Co2 emissions by as much as 99 per cent,” FutureCoal Board member Sunil Chaturvedi said.



The FutreCoal Global Alliance is an organisation representing the entire value chain and is dedicated to raising awareness on the contribution of the fossil fuel. He further said 70 per cent of electricity generation comes from coal. India has moved from last 15 years to supercritical and ultrasuper critical technologies. That means India as a country, is combusting coal far better, efficiently and in a less polluting manner. “This will continue because coal is not only for electricity generation....A lot of improvement has happened but things are still evolving,” Chaturvedi explained.

He said that by 2030 when the thermal power share will come down to 30-35 per cent or so, India will still need 1.5 billion tonne of coal. Therefore, production of the fossil fuel in India has to go up. FutureCoal Chief Executive Michelle Manook was of the view that the future of coal in India is exciting. “The total contribution made by the coal value chain in sectors, including power, steel, cement, aluminium, chemicals and renewable infrastructure is in the order of hundred of billion and is an interconnected global supply chain,” she explained.

EPFO adds 17.2L members in Sept

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retirement fund body EPFO recorded a net addition of 17.21 lakh members in September, according to payroll data released on Monday. Month-on-month comparison of payroll data shows an increase of 21,475 net members over August 2023, a labour ministry statement said. Year-on-year comparison of payroll data reflects an increase of 38,262 net members over September 2022. Around 8.92 lakh new members enrolled during September 2023, the ministry said. Among these newly joined members, the age group of 18-25 years constitutes 58.92 per cent of total new members added during the month. This demonstrates that a majority of the members joining the

organised sector workforce of the country are youth, who are mostly first-time job seekers, it explained. Payroll data shows that approximately 11.93 lakh members exited but rejoined EPFO, it stated. These members switched their jobs and re-joined the establishments covered under the ambit of EPFO and opted to transfer their accumulations instead of applying for final settlement thus, extending their social security protection, it explained. As compared to the previous month, the number of exits decreased by 12.17 per cent with 3.64 lakh exits in September 2023. The data indicated that the



number of members exiting the EPFO has been declining since June 2023. The ministry stated that out of a total of 8.92 lakh new members added during the month, around 2.26 lakh are female

members, joining EPFO for the first time. Also, the net female member addition during the month stood at around 3.30 lakh. State-wise analysis of payroll data denotes that net member

addition is the highest in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat and Haryana. These states constitute around 57.42 per cent of net member addition, adding a total of 9.88 lakh members during the month. Of all the states, Maharashtra is leading by adding 20.42 per cent of net members during the month. Month-on-month comparison of industry-wise data displays significant growth in the members working in establishments engaged in the sugar industry, courier services, iron and steel, hospitals, travel agencies etc. Of the total net membership, around 41.46 per cent addition is from expert services (consist-

ing of manpower suppliers, normal contractors, security services, miscellaneous activities etc.) The above payroll data is provisional since the data generation is a continuous exercise, as updating employee record is a continuous process. The previous data hence gets updated every month. From April 2018, EPFO has been releasing payroll data covering the period from September 2017 onwards. In monthly payroll data, the count of members joining EPFO for the first time through an validated Universal Account Number (UAN), existing members exiting from coverage of EPFO and those who exited but re-joining as members, is taken to arrive at net monthly payroll, it stated.

Project cost doubled under Bharatmala: ICRA



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The project cost under the Bharatmala Pariyojana (BMP) programme has more than doubled to Rs 10.64 lakh crore owing to the steep rise in input costs and an increase in land acquisition costs, rating agency ICRA said on Monday. Bharatmala Pariyojana is the largest highway infrastructure programme in India which aims at the development of

34,800 kilometres of national highway corridors at an investment of Rs 5.35 lakh crore. “Pending the cabinet approval for the revised cost of Bharatmala Phase-I, project awarding activity in the recent quarters took a beating, declining by 48 per cent YoY to 2,595 km during 7mFY2024 compared to 5,007 km during 7mFY2023,” it said. The figures are for the first seven months of this fiscal

compared to the year-ago period. ICRA said it expects the awarding activity to contract over 30 per cent YoY (Year-on-Year) in FY2024. Giving more insights, ICRA VP & Co-Group Head Ashish Modani said almost 95 per cent of the road awards by the Ministry of Roads and Transport and Highways (MoRTH) in the last five years were awarded through the hybrid annuity mode (HAM) and the engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) route, wherein the entire funding burden lay on the ministry. “The burden on MoRTH in case of BOT (Toll) projects is much lower, given the substantial cost escalation in the BMP and consequent increase in funding requirement,” he said, adding that the MoRTH has thus shifted its focus on to BOT (Toll) projects. ICRA said while the average number of bidders for the EPC and the HAM projects stood at 15 and 8, respectively, in the case of BOT (Toll), it remained below 5.

DMRC roped in as consultant for Bhubaneswar Metro

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) was roped in as a turn-key consultant for the construction of the Bhubaneswar Metro's first phase, from the airport to Trishulia Square in Cuttack, officials said on Monday. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Bhubaneswar Metro Rail Corporation and the DMRC for the project, which will be completed in four years, they said. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik

said the agreement signals the emergence of a new epoch in the transportation history of Odisha. “We are now poised to transform the transportation landscape in the state's capital region. This is a flagship programme under the 5T (teamwork, technology, transparency, timely completion leading to transformation) initiative of the government that will also symbolise the emergence of a new Odisha,” he said. The first phase of the project will be built at a cost of Rs 6,255 crore, Patnaik said, adding that this is the single largest investment made for any infrastructure project in the state. The entire cost of the project will be borne by the state government, he added. “I am happy that my government is delivering yet another promise that was made in our 2019 manifesto” the chief minister said. Patnaik said DMRC is a pioneer in the field of construction and operation of metro rail in the country. He expressed confidence that the Bhubaneswar Metro will be of world-class standard, and will be completed in time.

Housing & Urban Development Minister Usha Devi, Science & Technology Minister Ashok Panda and Chief Secretary PK Jena were among those present at the function, which the CM addressed virtually. DMRC MD Vikas Kumar said that it was an apt time to start transit-oriented development in Odisha. “It will spruce up the economy, and push growth and development in the region,” he said. The first phase of Bhubaneswar will be 26 km long, and have 20 stations. The whole stretch will be elevated.



Commercial vehicle segment set for growth: VECV MD

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic commercial vehicle industry is expected to touch the peak sales volume of 2018-19 this fiscal and grow briskly over the next few years coinciding with the growth of the overall economy, VE Commercial Vehicles MD and CEO Vinod Aggarwal said on Monday. He noted in the first seven months (April-October), the heavy duty truck segment has grown by 15 per cent.

“We are expecting that this year the industry should either be very near to the peak or it may even cross earlier peak of 2018-19,” Aggarwal told PTI here in an interaction. The industry is expected to grow over the next few years with the economy slated to cross the USD 5 trillion mark, he noted. “There are fundamental reasons for this growth in the next few years. If we look at the economy, we are now at around USD 4 trillion mark and this economy is going to

reach the USD 5-7 trillion mark the way it is growing,” Aggarwal said. And if the economy grows, the commercial vehicle industry also grows because when more goods are produced more commercial vehicles are required to move them from one place to another, he noted.

Institutionalised elderly care need of hour: Secy Social Justice Ministry

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Secretary, Dr Saurabh Garg, on Friday said the institutionalised care of elderly people is the need of the hour and cannot be avoided. “It is old concept in mind and also suitable to cultural traditions that aging at home is commonly accepted and encouraged. But at the same time the institutionalised care is somewhat which is needed and required and as time goes by it would be needed in a much greater way,” the secretary said at 4th ASLI Ageing fest. The Association of Senior Living India (ASLI) is a premier national voluntary membership association that addresses the needs of ageing population by establishing communication platforms that educate seniors about the diverse models of structured care available and the essential principles of quality care.

SARITA BAGS BRONZE; SHEETAL, RAKESH IN LINE FOR GOLD



PTI ■ BANGKOK

Sarita Devi won a bronze, while India is also assured of at least two silver medals with Rakesh Kumar and Sheetal Devi entering the finals of their events in the Para Asian Archery Championship here on Monday. Sarita got the better of Jyoti

Baliyan 139-135 in an all-Indian bronze playoff in the women's compound open section. Fresh from winning the Para Asian Games gold, Sheetal overcame Sarita 143-138 in an all-Indian semifinal to make the gold medal clash in the women's compound open category. Sheetal will take on Singapore's

Nur Syahidah Alim who defeated Jyoti 150-138 in the other semifinal. Rakesh assured India of another silver advancing into the men's compound open final. Rakesh pipped Yuya Oe of Japan 143-142 in the last four match. India will also be looking to add to their six quotas (four com-

pound and two recurve) for Paris Paralympics from the qualifying event that will begin here from November 23. India, however, failed to win any medal in recurve section with Tokyo Paralympic bronze medalist Harvinder Singh making a pre-quarterfinal exit. Harvinder went down 5-6 in a

shoot-off finish against Tomohiro Ueyama of Japan in the men's recurve section. Vivek Chikara lost 2-6 to second-seeded Chinese player Jun Gan in the last-eight round. In women's recurve, second-seeded Pooja made a last-eight exit, enduring a 0-6 loss to Selenge Demberel of Mongolia.



Prannoy, Sen to lead Indian charge at China Masters Super 750

PTI ■ SHENZHEN

Indian shuttlers, including comeback man HS Prannoy, will eye a good show at the China Masters — the season's last BWF Super 750 event — beginning here on Tuesday, in pursuit of valuable ranking points in the race to the Paris Olympics. Prannoy, who lost in the second round at the Japan Open Super 500 after returning to action following a back injury, will once again be the top Indian name in men's singles in the competition. He will face Taiwan's Chou Tien Chen, who had defeated him in the last meeting in Japan. The world No. 17 Lakshya Sen and world No. 23 Kidambi

Srikanth, who are fighting to be inside the top 16 by April 28 next year to qualify for the Olympics, will also be in action. Following his first-round exit last week after a loss to Japan's world championships silver medalist Kodai Naroaka, Sen will hope for a better outing when he faces seventh seed Shi Yuqi of China. With just four quarterfinal finishes in the season, Srikanth has not exactly looked the part and has often been guilty of falling in a pool of error. The former world No.1 skipped the Japan Masters last week and will face fourth seed Thai Kunlavut Vitidsarn, the reigning world champion. Priyanshu Rajawat, on the other hand, will meet Japan's

Kenta Nishimoto in his opener. The top seeded men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, who are riding high on the success of an unprecedented year which saw them bagging gold medal at the Asian Games, will also aim a fruitful outing. Satwik and Chirag will hope last week's first-round exit was just a blip as they take on English pair Ben Lane and Sean Vendy in their opener. In women's doubles, Gayatri Gopichand and Treasa Jolly withdrew while Panda sisters — Rutaparna and Swetaparna — will be in the fray. Aakarshi Kashyap is the only Indian competing in women's singles, taking on China's Zhang Yi Man.



Mbappé reaches 300 career goals faster than Messi or Ronaldo

AP ■ PARIS

Kylian Mbappé has scored 300 career goals faster than Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi. Former France great Thierry Henry has nothing but admiration. Mbappé achieved the feat over the weekend in a 14-0 rout of Gibraltar at the age of 24 years and 333 days. Both Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, the game's two biggest stars in the 21st century, were older when they reached the milestone. "What this kid is doing is really out of this world," said Henry, who is now in charge of leading the new generation of France's players as coach of the Under-21 team. "It's just unbelievable." Mbappé was often compared to Henry earlier in his career. Both attended France's Clairefontaine academy before playing as left wingers at Monaco, where each won the French league titles as a teenager. Mbappé then replicated another of Henry's accomplishments when he won the 2018 World Cup in his first major tournament with France. Henry won the 1998 tournament. Mbappé has also been compared with Brazil great Pelé for his precocity. But in terms of style, with his devastating speed

and skills, he is closer to Henry. "He's a goalscorer, he delivers assists, he knows how to do everything," Henry said. "Of course, there's room for improvement, but that's not the point." With his 17th career hat-trick, Mbappé brought his season tally to 21 goals in 19 matches. It was the PSG star's 46th goal in 74 international appearances. He is now just five goals behind Henry on France's all-time scoring list and 10 off teammate Olivier Giroud's national record total. The exact number of goals in Pelé's career will forever be a topic for debate. He often said one of the reasons he should be considered the greatest player of all time was because of his feat of scoring more than 1,000 goals. But many dispute his count because Pelé included goals scored in friendlies or matches against semi-professional or even amateur teams. When asked how many goals Mbappé could reach, Henry jokingly hinted at the 1,000 mark, then said "it's up for him to decide." "He's a guy who breathes soccer, who prepares himself well, who doesn't do everything and anything, his professionalism and desire to play are always there," Henry said.

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

India will take inspiration from their famous goal-less draw against Asian champions Qatar four years ago when they face the same opponents in a 2026 FIFA World Cup second round qualifiers match here on Tuesday. Their confidence boosted after the 1-0 away win against Kuwait on November 16, India will hope to give a tough fight to Qatar, though the fancied visiting side will start as firm favourites. India had surprised the football fraternity when they soaked up waves of attacks to hold Qatar 0-0 on September 10, 2019 in their 2022 World Cup second round qualifiers in Doha. Qatar were then in red-hot form, having won the Asia Cup title in early 2019. Talismanic India captain Sunil Chhetri was absent in that match as he was indisposed and

he would be eager to show his class at the Kalinga Stadium on Tuesday, though scoring chances for the hosts are expected to be far less than the visitors. Goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, who had captained the team that night in Doha in front of a partisan expatriate crowd, will have to be at his best again on Tuesday to thwart the marauding Qataris as he had done four years ago. Ranked 61 in the world, Qatar are coming off a 8-1 thrashing of Afghanistan in their earlier match in Doha on November 16, and they would be looking to make the record of the drawn game in 2019 straight with a dominating win against the 102nd-ranked India. Qatar were 1-0 victors in the reverse fixture of the two teams in the 2022 World Cup qualifiers. Star striker Almoez Ali, who struck four times against



Afghanistan the other day and was the top-scorer for Qatar at the 2019 Asian Cup with nine goals, would be the man to watch out for as he can create trouble at the Indian defence, which looked weak in the absence of Anwar Ali. Sandhu would remember that he and India were lucky in Doha in 2019 as Ali was denied by the upright and the Indian custodian will have to marshal

the defence, along with veteran Sandesh Jhinghan. Head coach Igor Stimac could not use the services of both Ali and defensive midfielder Jeakson Singh in the Kuwait match due to injuries, and it was a blow to the plans of the Croatian tactician though India won the match. Ali had suffered an ankle injury in Mohun Bagan's AFC Cup match against Bashundhara

Kings of Bangladesh last month. Kerala Blasters player Jeakson suffered a shoulder injury in an Indian Super League match against Mumbai City FC and he had undergone a successful surgery early this month. Midfielder mainstay Sahal Abdul Samad and Manvir Singh, who scored the lone goal for India against Kuwait, were there in Doha four years ago and they would look to make life difficult for the Qataris, more so after the duo's good outing in Kuwait City. Stimac was just a few months into India head coach's job in the 2019 match, and after four years, he feels a positive result against Qatar is "not unfeasible." "We have analysed Qatar from every angle and position and know very well what they are capable of in terms of speed and strength. Their defensive and offensive positions are immaculate, which they demonstrated against Afghanistan by scoring

eight goals," Stimac said. "It is going to be very difficult, Qatar are one of the pre-tournament favourites from the group. We do not have high expectations but we know we have a chance and we have to grab that with both hands. "The first and bigger part was accomplished by winning against Kuwait, now I want the boys to show their quality against Qatar," he said. India are placed in Group A alongside Qatar, Kuwait and Afghanistan with the top two from the group progressing to the third round of the FIFA World Cup qualifiers. The top two teams from each group will also secure qualification to the 2027 AFC Asian Cup. The Blue Tigers have never advanced to the third round of AFC's FIFA World Cup qualifiers but they now have a high chance of doing so after their 1-0 win over Kuwait.

India captain Savita eyeing hat-trick of Goalkeeper-of-the-Year titles

PTI ■ BENGALURU

India captain Savita Punia remained in contention for securing a hat-trick of Goalkeeper-of-the-Year Award after she was nominated for the recognition for a third time in a row at this year's FIH Hockey Star Awards. "I never thought I would win this award for two straight years, and get nominated yet again," said Savita who had won the prestigious titles in 2021 and 2022. "I feel really great, and it's a proud moment for me, my family and my teammates as well." Savita has led the country to var-

ious important wins in recent years, including the title triumph at the inaugural FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup 2022 in Spain that helped India earn promotion to the FIH Pro League 2023-24. "When I started playing, I never thought I would come this far, and it is all due to the support of my family and my teammates. "In team sport, no achievement is based on individual efforts but is an outcome of teamwork. It's great to be recognised for your hard work, and it motivates the entire team," she added. She also led the team to the bronze medal at this year's Hangzhou Asian Games fol-



lowed by the title win at the Women's Asian Champions Trophy in Ranchi. Under her captaincy, India also achieved their highest-ever world ranking, reaching No. 6. "It has been an amazing season for us. I'm just proud of how we overcame the obstacles that were thrown our way. We've gotten better with each game. Even the younger players have shown

great tenacity; they have worked hard and given their all," Savita said. With the focus firmly on the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi from January 13-19, the Indian women's team will be aiming for a top-three finish to secure their Paris Olympics ticket. India are placed in Pool B alongside New Zealand, the United States, and Italy. Pool A consists of Germany, Japan, Chile, and the Czech Republic. The top two teams from each group will then progress to the semi-finals, and the top three finishing teams will secure their qualification for the Paris Olympics.



Gavi's knee injury overshadows Spain's 3-1 win against Georgia

AP ■ VALLADOLID (SPAIN)

Ferran Torres scored and had an assist for Spain in its 3-1 home win against Georgia in a European Championship qualifying game that was overshadowed by a potentially serious knee injury for midfielder Gavi. Gavi was in tears when he limped off in the 24th minute in Valladolid on Sunday. Gavi's goal for Spain in a 1-0 win at Norway in October had already secured spots for both Spain and Scotland at next year's tournament in Germany. The 19-year-old Barcelona player took a hard hit to the side of his right knee when he collided with an opponent. He kept playing for a few minutes and appeared to hurt the same leg while trying to control the ball. After that he immediately signaled to the team that he could not continue. Spain coach Luis de la Fuente embraced his young player before Gavi was taken into the locker room with team doctors. Robin Le Normand gave Spain

the lead four minutes into the game when Torres curled a cross to the second post for the Real Sociedad central defender to head home. Georgia's Khvicha Kvaratskhelia equalized on a counterattack in the 10th after some hesitant defending by Le Normand and Dani Carvajal. Giorgi Mamardashvili kept the score level at halftime after the Georgia goalkeeper, who plays for Spanish club Valencia, made a reflex save to parry Álvaro Morata's point-blank shot. Torres scored from José Gaya's cross in the 55th with his header bouncing off the turf and beyond the reach of Mamardashvili. Torres ran to the dugout and held up Gavi's jersey during his celebrations to dedicate the goal to his club teammate. "We don't know the extent of the injury, but given that we know what a warrior Gavi is and how he left the field, we think it could be serious," Torres said. "We hope he can recover as soon as possible."

Amy captures her first American LPGA title

AP ■ NAPLES (US)

Amy Yang picked a lucrative time for her first LPGA title on American soil. Yang birdied her last two holes for a 6-under 66 to win the CME Group Tour Championship and claim the USD 2 million prize, matching the largest in women's golf. The victory was her fifth on the LPGA Tour, the previous four coming in Asia. Yang holed out for eagle on the 13th fairway to overcome an early three-shot deficit, and then she let Nasa Hataoka make the mistakes in crucial moments down the stretch. All 60 players who qualified for the season finale only had to win to become the Race to CME Globe champion. Yang finished in style, making a 10-foot birdie putt. The 34-year-old from South Korea dropped her putter and cupped both hands over her face as a half-dozen players charged onto the

green and soaked her with so much bubbly she wrapped a towel on her shoulders as she went to sign her card. Hataoka closed with a 69 and Alison Lee had a 66 to tie for second. Lee was never closer than two shots along the back nine at Tiburon Golf Club. Lee, still winless on the LPGA Tour, closed out her season with three runner-up finishes on the LPGA and a victory in Saudi Arabia on the Ladies European Tour. Yang trailed by three shots through six holes of the final round when she charged back into the mix with three birdies over a four-hole stretch. The pivotal shot was holing out her approach on the par-4 13th, the ball landing near the pin and then spinning back about 6 feet into the cup. Hataoka answered with a 10-foot birdie putt, and they were tied going to the final three holes. That's when Hataoka, a 24-year-old



from Japan, blinked first. Her birdie putt from the fringe ran some 6 feet by the hole, and the par putt caught the lip. That ended 35 straight holes without a bogey, and left her one shot behind. On the par-5 17th, Hataoka missed left down a steep ridge, with the pin cut to the left. She bumped her chip to 8 feet and missed the birdie chance. Yang, who also was left but short enough to hit a lofted pitch, nearly holed it and had a 3-foot birdie putt that gave her a two-shot lead going to the 18th. She never looked anything but calm, splitting the soft fairway, and not even watching the full flight of her approach that rolled out to 10 feet below the hole. Lee had four birdies over her last eight holes. Lilia Vu, a two-time major champion this year and No. 1 in the women's world ranking, closed with a 65 to finish alone in fourth and picked up a valuable prize of her own.

‘NOT EPIC CHOKE, JUST A BAD DAY’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The murmurs around India’s inability to land the knockout punch in a global event have grown since the ill-fated Sunday night but did the team, which looked invincible heading into the World Cup final, actually crack under pressure or was it just a bad day in the office?

Fears of a billion plus came true as Australia stitched together a perfect game to deny a rampant India who had not put a foot wrong during their stormy march to the final.

After 10 wins in a row, India’s unstoppable run came to a crashing halt in yet another trophy clash. Since winning the Champions Trophy in 2013, India have lost five ICC finals and three semifinals.

Considering India’s dominance heading into the final, the dejected look on faces of skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli after the six-wicket defeat was understandable.

The two greats of the game perhaps knew deep down that they might not get another shot at the crowning glory. The dust has not yet settled but India’s repeated failures on the world stage does warrant the question: did they choke or was it just an off day in an otherwise near perfect campaign? Speaking to PTI, sports psychologist Gayatri Vartak, who works with elite Indian athletes, felt it was not a case of buckling under pressure and Australia were just tactically superior on the day.

“I don’t think there was any pure evidence of the team cracking mentally.

I don’t think they choked or could not perform under pressure.

“All of them came into the tournament positively and had great build up to the final. As a player your reference point (over your mindset) becomes your last game and not what happened in a final three years ago. The last game was the semifinal which they won,” said Vartak.

Diya Jain, a sports psychologist at Fortis Hospital, said the big match pressure can take a toll on elite athletes but India’s performance should be celebrated. “Any team can have a bad day, it’s important to accept it and learn from it. Australia had a plan and they stuck to it, believed in themselves and were zoned-in. The pressure of big matches can take a toll, and mental preparation is key.

“That said, this is not the time for analysis, it’s time to celebrate. Being a World Cup finalist and winning 10 matches on the trot is a remarkable feat,” said Jain.

LIFE OF AN INDIAN CRICKETER MAKES WINNING A TAD HARDER: India’s larger than life cricketers often talk about shutting the “outside noise” to focus on the job at hand. Having said that, it is only human to get distracted when they are reminded of winning the coveted trophy in their fleeting public appearances at airports, hotels and stadiums, which is something they experienced over the course of the World Cup at home even with the “head phones” plugged at all times.

On the other hand, the feisty bunch of Australian cricketers, who excel at



the art of winning, are not treated as demigods back home. The fans undoubtedly make Indian cricket special and provide unconditional support to the players but their non-stop attention does add to the pressure. Matthew Hayden, a member of the all-conquering Australian team and someone who is well versed with Indian cricket, spoke about the added pressure created by fans ahead of the World Test Championship final in June, another high-stake contest that India lost.

“It’s certainly not a question of skill. So, it has to be a question of just the

opportunity and the mindset going in. I mean, cricket is life here, it is the DNA of sport and has no other competitors.

“In Australia I could walk down the street and largely be unrecognised, here in India it’s very insular and there’s a lot of pressure,” Hayden had told PTI back then.

Vartak too agrees with Hayden that performing amid a constant frenzy does make winning a tad harder.

“For athletes, the Indian fan acts as a big fuel, they come from an emotional space, they can be very critical but they are also very, very supportive.

“I don’t think it is specific to India but fan behaviour tells us that typically they tend to worship their athletes (which is not the case with cricketers in Australia).

“With that in mind, the fan following of cricket is so high here and it is a religion for all of us. I would agree that it is harder for an Indian cricketer (to be insulated from pressure),” said Vartak.

NOT FAIR TO COMPARE THIS INDIAN TEAM WITH TEAMS OF THE PAST: The series of knockout defeats over the last 10 years tells a compelling story but Vartak also

believes that it is not fair to compare Indian teams of the past with the current lot.

“I am sure the composition of the Indian team was different over those games in the last 10 years. There is a tendency to talk about mental block when there is a defeat but when the team is winning no one talks about the mindset. It is a little unfair on the cricketers.

“Technically you can also fail at times and that was the case with India yesterday. Australia were the superior team technically and tactically, but it doesn’t become a mental issue.

“They did very well under pressure through the tournament and even won a knockout game. It was a just a bad day I would say,” she added.

‘INDIA WERE JUST UNFORTUNATE’: Former chief selector MSK Prasad, whose tenure saw India falling short in the 2017 Champions Trophy and 2019 ODI World Cup semifinal, acknowledged that the team has been losing knock-out games consistently but it is not down to crumbling under pressure. “The result last night was really unfortunate. I know India have not performed in finals consistently (over last decade) but this team was head and shoulders above others in the tournament. It is their sheer hard luck that they could not go all the way. “Credit must be given to Australia. They played excellent cricket and I feel India were 40-50 runs short. Then the evening dew made it much easier for the Aussie batters,” said Prasad.



Cummins boards Sabarmati river cruise boat, poses with WC trophy

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

A day after winning the ICC Men’s Cricket World Cup, Australian captain Pat Cummins on Monday posed for photos with the trophy on a Sabarmati river cruise vessel housing a restaurant in Ahmedabad.

Australia defeated hosts India by 6 wickets on Sunday in the final match at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Motera in Ahmedabad to lift the ODI World Cup for the sixth time — the most by any team in the world. Cummins, along with International Cricket Council (ICC) officials, reached the iconic Sabarmati Riverfront in the morning and boarded a floating restaurant named ‘Akshar River Cruise’ in the river for a photoshoot with the trophy.

“It is a matter of great pride for all of us that the ICC selected the Sabarmati Riverfront, an iconic place, for its official photoshoot. Cummins gave various poses with the trophy on the upper deck of the cruise. He was also served a variety of food items,” said Suhag Modi, director of Akshar Travels Pvt Ltd, which operates the cruise restaurant.

In some of the photos clicked by the ICC’s official photographer, the 30-year-old fast bowler could be seen standing with the World Cup trophy on the deck with the iconic Atal Bridge in the background. Modi said Cummins also gave an interview on-board the cruise vessel.

World Cup final: Australia’s grunt work trumps India’s flair

PTI ■ BENGALURU

In a grainy YouTube video, football legend Gerd Muller describes how Germany defeated a great Netherlands side in the 1974 World Cup final. The whole conversation is brutally simple.

“A German team is not easy to bring down. We fought more than ever in that final, our best came on the last day,” Muller says in a feeble voice.

Those words are eerily similar to Pat Cummins’ “best for the last” comment after Australia plotted a marauding India’s downfall in the title clash of the 2023 cricket World Cup.

In fact, the champion sides think alike. Their disciplines might differ, but methods to success remain comparable. And Australia is an iron-willed champion side, more so in the knockout stages of a global event. A look back to their last two matches in the showpiece will reveal that facet of their game. Both India and South Africa, their opponents in the semifinals, were perceived to be far superior despite the Aussies winning seven matches in a row to reach the knockouts.

The Australian pacers struggled to make an impact of desired levels during the entirety of the league stage but they returned to the best in the first available opportunity. The Kolkata weather and the Eden pitch helped them purchase some swing and bounce, and the triumvirate of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Cummins blew away the Proteas, sharing eight wickets among them.

On a progressively slowing down surface, the Aussies found

batting saviours in Josh Inglis, Starc and Cummins after South Africa’s bowlers reduced them to a shaky 137 for five.

However, Australia’s grunt work was pushed under the table as the focus was more on South Africa’s inclination to choke on these big moments.

But Australia’s real challenge was against India in the summit clash. This was not just another Indian team as under Rohit Sharma they had assembled one of the finest ODI outfits in their entire history.

They did not merely beat their opponents but lorded over them imperiously in 10 successive matches, something no other Indian team was able to achieve in the marquee event dating back to 1975.

Strangely, Rohit’s band was a mirror image of the dominant Australians at the turn of the century, an era when they went undefeated in 29 matches across three editions in 1999, 2003 and 2007. In a way, Cummins’ side had to beat India who was playing the Australian way. Australia were the underdogs, or so thought several of us.

So, what did Australia do? As Muller said in that interview, they found a way to fight even more than ever. Cummins believed in the big match temperament of his bowlers and elected to bowl against an Indian batting unit that had been firing on all cylinders. There has been this common observation that a certain softness has seeped into the Aussies post the ‘Sandpaper Gate’. Perhaps, India’s two Test series win Down Under too might have added to that perception.

Cummins’ captaincy in World Cup final was brilliant: Paine

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia’s former Test skipper Tim Paine has praised Pat Cummins for his exemplary leadership and performance with the ball after their triumphant World Cup campaign in India.

Cummins led from the front and finished with impressive figures of 2/34 from his 10 overs, picking up the crucial wickets of Virat Kohli and Shreyas Iyer to restrict India to a modest 240. His bold decision to bowl first after winning the toss was hailed by many.

Australia then rode on Travis Head (137) and Marnus



Labuschagne (58 not out)’s 192-run fourth-wicket stand to beat India by six wickets and lift the coveted trophy for a record-extending sixth time.

“When we won the toss I think Pat Cummins shocked everyone

a bit with the call to bowl first,” Paine told SEN Radio.

“They obviously had some terrific mail - and they all have a lot of IPL experience and have been there - the mail on that ground is that the dew comes in

and it is extremely hard to bowl in the second innings, and I think we saw that.

“The concern was, I think, that being an Indian pitch and potentially being a bit drier that it would spin and slow right up and it didn’t do that, if anything it actually got slightly better,” he said.

Paine said Cummins did not put a foot wrong in the big finale on Sunday.

“I don’t think there was a thing last night that Pat Cummins got wrong. He was outstanding and he deserves a lot of credit for that. Andrew McDonald and his coaching staff deserve a lot of credit for that,” he said.

Rohit named skipper of ICC’s Team of World Cup featuring six Indians

when he recorded his 50th ton in the semifinal.

With more than half of the ICC’s Team of the Tournament comprising Indian players, it was yet another indication of the fact that despite not winning the title, the hosts were the best side in the competition having registered a record 10 wins on the trot.

Wicketkeeper-batter and vice-captain KL Rahul, who made 452 runs at 75.33 with one century and two fifties, finished as the eighth-highest run-scorer in the World Cup and was named in the Team of the Tournament.

Despite missing four matches of the league stage initially, Mohammed Shami finished as the best bowler with 24 wickets in only seven matches at 12.20. “Only four players in the history of the men’s game have taken



more Cricket World Cup wickets than Shami’s 55 - Lasith Malinga (56) Mitchell Starc (65), Muttiah Muralitharan (68) and Glenn McGrath (71) - with Shami’s returns coming in ten fewer matches than any of those above him in the list,” the ICC said on its website.

India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who was the fourth

most successful bowler in the World Cup with 20 wickets in 11 matches at 18.65, also features in the ICC XI.

“No bowler to have played more than a single game in the tournament was able to return a better economy rate than Bumrah’s 4.06 - an even more remarkable stat considering he was so often in action when the fielding

restrictions were in place,” the ICC said.

Ravindra Jadeja featured in the team alongside Australia veteran Glenn Maxwell for his all-round exploits in the competition.

“India’s spin-bowling all-rounder played a crucial role for his team, taking key wickets throughout the middle overs and consistently turning the screw,” the ICC said.

South Africa’s wicketkeeper-batter Quinton de Kock, who is now retired from the ODI format given the World Cup is over, was named as one of the two openers in the competition having scored four centuries for the Proteas during their excellent run in the league stage.

The coveted No 4 slot went to New Zealand’s Daryl Mitchell, who was the only batter to have

dominated the Indian bowlers when they were on song during their two meetings - one at the league stage and the other at the semifinals.

With 552 runs in 10 matches, Mitchell finished as the fifth highest run-getter with two tons and as many fifties.

Sri Lanka’s young Dilshan Madushanka was a standout performance in an otherwise forgettable World Cup campaign. His 21 wickets in nine matches saw him finish as the third highest wicket-taker. Winners Australia’s sole specialist spinner Adam Zampa, who finished as the second-best bowler with 23 wickets in 11 matches, featured at the last spot while South Africa’s Gerald Coetzee was named the 12th man.

ICC’s Team of the Tournament: Rohit Sharma (c), Quinton de Kock, Virat Kohli, Daryl Mitchell, KL Rahul (wk), Glenn Maxwell, Ravindra Jadeja, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Adam Zampa, Dilshan Madushanka. 12th man: Gerald Coetzee.

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The deafening silence at the Narendra Modi Stadium, packed with over 90,000 fans, when Pat Cummins snuffed out the peerless Virat Kohli in the World Cup final was perhaps the “sweetest moment” the Australian skipper had ever experienced on a cricket field. After becoming the fifth Australian captain to secure his country’s sixth ODI World Cup here on Sunday, Cummins admitted that he has “fallen in love with 50-over format all over again.”

He got Kohli, who was well-set on 54, with a delivery that had an extra bounce and the premier India batter played on trying to jab it towards the covers. “Yeah, I think so,” Cummins nodded in affirmative when asked if the silence was his sweetest experience on a cricket field.

In fact, going against their custom, the Aussies had a second huddle to just acknowledge how big the moment in the game it was.

“We did take a second in the huddle just to acknowledge the silence that was going around

Silence in stadium when Virat got out was most satisfying: Cummins

the crowd. It just felt like it was one of those days where it was all made for him to score another hundred like he normally does and that was satisfying,” Cummins said. He believes that ODI World Cup is here to stay as it has got its own legacy and also players have their stories to tell and perhaps, it is the bilateral series that become a problem.

“I must say, maybe because we won, I did fall in love with ODI again this World Cup. I think the scenario where every game really matters, it does mean a bit different to just a bilateral,” he acknowledged.

“I mean, the World Cup’s got such rich history, I’m sure it’s going to be around for a long time. Yeah, there’s so many wonderful games, so many wonderful stories within this last couple of months. So, I think there’s definitely a place.” He lost his mother in March,



during a tour of India, which he had to curtail.

He returned, leading the country to the World Test Championship title, secured the coveted Ashes, and now clinched what he termed the “pinnacle of this sport.”

Australia’s ‘Captain Marvel’ has accomplished it all. “Yeah, I mean at this moment just incredibly proud really of the year we’ve had. I have obviously had a really big year,” he said.

He spoke about the sacrifices made by everyone in the team and their families.

“I know my family at home is watching, just got a message from dad saying he’s had a lot of 4am wake ups, not going to bed until 4am, so he’s as pumped as anything. So yeah, you sacrifice a lot to play for Australia.”

But this was also about going through all of that in search of this day.

“Everyone in the team has and

we’ve spent a lot of this year away but we do it for these moments and my wife and two girls are probably asleep, but they’re all pumped, they do the journey with us.

“So, everyone’s got their own story, but there’s a lot of proud people out there in our team,” Cummins said.

From his hotel room, he saw Indian supporters, all clad in blue, walk towards the stadium. He felt a sense of nervous energy, pacing up and down in his hotel room.

“I always like to say I’m pretty relaxed but I was a little bit nervous this morning,” he admitted. “Just pacing around, waiting for it to start, seeing the sea of blue in the hotel getting closer to the ground. Observing the sea of blue, cars parked with selfie cameras out, you knew you were walking into something pretty special,” Cummins described his experience before the game.

Pakistan call up 3 uncapped players for Australia tour

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan on Monday called up uncapped players Saim Ayub, Aamir Jamal and Khurram Shehzad for the three-Test series in Australia, starting in December after fast bowler Naseem Shah couldn’t recover from a shoulder surgery for the tour.

Shan Masood will be leading the 18-member squad against Australia with new chief selector, Wahab Riaz also recalling left-arm pacer, Mir Hamza for the tour for which nine players from the World Cup squad have also been retained.

Pakistan plays three Tests before moving on to New Zealand for five T20 internationals but Wahab only named the Test squad on Monday.

While washbuckling opener, Saim Ayub has played 8 T20 internationals and Aamir Jamal four T20 matches, pace bowler Khurram Shehzad has been



called up for the first time by Pakistani selectors due to his impressive performances in domestic cricket.

Wahab said that Naseem, who was injured during the Asia Cup and later had a shoulder surgery in the UK, would begin bowling at 50-60 percent capacity in three weeks time so he was not available for the tour.

Mir Hamza last played a Test against New Zealand in Karachi last January but was then dropped for the Sri Lankan tour. Former captain, Babar Azam, Muhammad Rizwan, Saud

Shakeel, Agha Salman, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Hasan Ali, Imam ul Haq, Abdullah Shafique, Muhammad Wasim junior have been retained from the WC squad. The selectors have overlooked opener Fakhar Zaman, fast bowler Harris Rauf, leg spinner Usama Mir, allrounders Shadab Khan and Iftikhar Ahmed for the Test tour from the WC squad.

Former captain and keeper, Sarfaraz Ahmed, spinner, Abrar Ahmed, spinner Noman Ali all played in the Test series in Sri Lanka in June-July while all-rounder Faheem Ashraf’s last Test appearance was in December 2022 against England.

Wahab added that they had spoken to fast bowler Harris Rauf about the tour and he had initially given his consent to play Tests two days back but last night he called up and made himself unavailable for the tour. “He has concerns over workload and fitness issues,” he said.