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‘Use of Santali language has increased’

Says President Murmu

PNS ■ BARIK PADA

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday inaugurated the 36th Annual Conference and Literary Festival of All India Santali Writers' Association here. She praised the writers and researchers who are contributing to the Santali language and literature.

Murmu said the use of Santali language has been increased in government and non-government sectors following its inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution in 2003 during the tenure of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Recalling that most of the Santali



literature was available in the oral tradition, she said Pandit Raghunath Murmu has not only invented the Ol Chiki script but has also further enriched the Santali language by writing various plays.

She said it is a matter of pride

that Santalis Damayanti Besra and Kali Pada Saren, popularly known as Kherwal Saren, have been honoured with Padma Shri.

Murmu later inaugurated an Eklavya Model Residential School at Panijia, a remote village of Kuliana Block in the district.

Youth ends life as India lose WC

PNS ■ JAIPUR

While millions of Indians were shattered after the national cricket team lost to Australia in the World Cup final on Sunday, a young boy with a broken heart reportedly ended his life in Odisha over the defeat.

Unable to bear the trauma after India's loss at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 final match held at Ahmedabad, Debaranjan Das, a resident of Kula Sahi in Jari gram panchayat under the Binjharpur police limits in Jajpur district, died by committing suicide.

The youth hanged self with a rope at his residence following the tournament. Police recovered the body and initiated a probe into the incident.

Chit fund scam: Actor Naseer gets bail



PNS ■ CUTTACK

Bollywood actor Naseer Khan, who is behind bars in a chit fund scam in Odisha, was granted bail on Monday. The Orissa High Court granted conditional bail to the visually-impaired actor in the Fine India chit fund case.

Khan, the actor and co-producer

of the film 'Shadow', is accused of duping depositors invested in Fine India, a chit fund company in Baleswar district. He is currently lodged in the Jharpada Special Jail in Bhubaneswar following his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

Earlier, he was arrested by the Odisha Crime Branch from Cuttack in 2009 for his alleged involvement in the ponzi scam. Later, the CBI apprehended him in the multi-crore cheating case.

Sources said the Fine India had transferred chit fund money to Mumbai via a Kanpur-based firm. Later, the company closed its operation in Baleswar. Khan was associated with a firm that had allegedly used the funds in making of 'Shadow'.

‘Govt conspiring to make Adivasis landless’

Alleges BJP

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government has hatched a conspiracy to grab the lands of the Adivasis. The Government on November 14 took an undemocratic and anti-Adivasi decision in the State Cabinet meeting. Now, tribals' land can be sold to non-tribals. On whose interest this decision was taken, questioned the BJP on Monday.

The government is conspiring to hand over tribals' land to business-

men, land mafia and contractors. The government is repeatedly parroting that it works for Adivasis. But from the Cabinet decision it is clear that the government is anti-Adivasi and plans to make the Adivasis landless. The clarifications given in the social media regarding the Cabinet decision is also undemocratic, said BJP MLA Mohan Majhi.

Majhi demanded the Cabinet decision to be immediately withdrawn. Otherwise the BJP would oppose it in the State Assembly and outside, he warned.

Banaras-S'pur train extended to Vizag

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

The extension of Banaras-Sambalpur Biweekly Express to Visakhapatnam was flagged off by Railways Minister Ashiwni Vaishnav and Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan at the Sambalpur railway station on Monday.

Addressing a meeting at the station, Vaishnav said, "Sambalpur station will be converted into a

world-class station and Rs 300 crore will be spent for this purpose."

He further said, "The allocation of funds in railways for Odisha has increased. While earlier, it was Rs 800 crore per annum, it has been increased to Rs 10,000 crore now. While prior to 2014, around 50 km of railway track was being laid in Odisha, now 450 km is being laid. The pace will continue for the next 20 years."

BJD's Saluga to be Deputy Speaker

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

BJD tribal MLA Saluga Pradhan on Monday filed nomination for the post of Odisha Legislative Assembly's Deputy Speaker after the party announced him as its candidate for the poll.

"BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik has nominated me for the post of Deputy Speaker. I will try to conduct the proceedings of the Assembly smoothly by taking the advice of senior members of the House. I will respect the opinions of members of both ruling and opposition parties," Pradhan, the G Udayagiri MLA said.

As the Opposition parties haven't fielded any candidate and the ruling BJD enjoys a thumping major-



ity in the House, Pradhan is all set to be elected as the Deputy Speaker uncontested. The election will be held on Tuesday.

The position fell vacant after Rajanikant Singh resigned from the post on November 8. He stepped down from the post stating that he would undertake political activities in his Angul constituency.

Interview of the week

Ills eating into vitals of non-life insurance PSU firms



SUGYAN CHOUDHURY



RP SAMAL

RP Samal is the Chairman of General Insurance Pensioners' All India Federation. A think tank of the insurance industry of the country, a former General Manager of New India Assurance Company, an acclaimed Indo-Anglican poet, he thinks globally and acts locally. In an interview to *The Pioneer*, Samal spoke to *Sugyan Choudhury* on the ills eating into the vitals of the non-life insurance PSU companies, three of which are in ICUs with solvency margin reaching an all-time low.

What was fundamentally wrong which caused the downfall of the non-life insurance PSU companies?

At the time of nationalisation in 1971, General Insurance Employees' All India Association had suggested to the then government for making one corporation like LIC. It was a prudently thought-out proposal and had it been accepted, it could have prevented the present-day disaster. Instead, four companies were created. In the process, these companies spent all their energy in fiercely competing among themselves and finally had today's downfall. More than two decades back when private companies were allowed to operate, there was an opportunity for the government to merge these four companies. As the saying goes, "United we stand, divided we fall."

While some private companies are making underwriting profit, why PSU companies are in losses? Reasons are many, but those cannot be discussed in print. But the most important of them is that in case of very large claims, a team of private company officials visit the site of claim and insightfully coordinate the assessment process to prevent leakages and ensure quick and judicious assessment. While in PSU, it is mostly left to the surveyor.

For example, years back, there was a huge fire at Byculla in Mumbai. The concerned private insurance company was informed that the estimated loss would be about Rs 50 crore. Within hours,

the company's Claim head, Marketing Head and Head of the Risk Management along with a surveyor were at the site. Merely after their physical inspection, the estimate came down to Rs 10 lakh. Had it been a PSU claim, the assessment would have been many times more. For example, the engine room of an Indian ship was damaged by fire and was dry-docked in South Africa for repair. An estimate of Rs 18 crore was received by the PSU underwriters in India and an international Loss Adjuster was appointed. A fortnight later, a revised estimate of Rs 35 crore was received. Since neither a protest was lodged nor a visit to the site, accompanied by an expert, might have cost the company a few lakhs! There are more such instances which are equally deplorable. In a conference, the chief of a PSU company said, "Leakages in claims are to the tune of 20%". But he did nothing to prevent it. Visiting the accident site is the only way for the insurance officials to learn tricks of the trade.

To what extent GIPSA has contributed to the downfall?

The GIPSA conducts interviews for promotion from Chief Manager to DGM and from DGM to GM cadres for all four companies together. A collective accountability is nobody's accountability. In the name of GIPSA, some committee members mainly consisting of company heads choose their own candidates. Such candidates supersede 50-odd of their senior colleagues to be in the promoted list which causes immense damage to the emotional superstructure of the companies. Ten per cent officers get this undeserving benefit frustrating 90% of their senior colleagues who lose enthusiasm for work. It is like the captain making holes in his ship. Industry leaders should be inspired by great men like Warren Buffet and our beloved JRD Tata whose secret of success was to put the right man in the right place.

A company is not run by management books but by the attitude of its leader.

How has Claim Hub impacted Claim Settlement process?

Introducing Claim Hubs ended the age-old practice of BMs and DMs settling claims of their clients. Every insurance policy is a promise given to the customer to be fulfilled in future in case of an accidental loss. With the centralised Claim Hub, promises are made by the marketing officials and claims are settled elsewhere by other officials in other cities, thus providing not services but causing inconveniences to the clients.

It is embarrassing for marketing officials to approach such clients for renewal every year. In the process, both small and big businesses are lost. The senses of belongingness and accountability too are diluted.

Do you feel nostalgic about the working pattern in the olden days?

In the past, companies' relationships with customers were cordial and long-lasting. Companies were making profit. Government was getting its dividend. Agents were happy with their little bit of earning. Insurance business was respectfully transacted. Disputes were gracefully sorted out. With the introduction of reforms many of which do not fit into Indian business climate, there has been so much chaos, so much of cut-throat competition that there is no throat left to be cut.

Why the family pension of the employees could not be increased from 15% to 30% like that of the LIC and PSU banks?

It is unkind on the part of a popular government to punish a widow for the loss incurred by her dead husband's company for which both of them are not at all responsible. Pension and family pension are human rights under the Universal Social Security Scheme adopted as conventions by the International Labour Organisation. When pension for the employees is the same as that of the government staffs, banks and LIC, to give 15% to the widows of the pensioners as against 30% is a kind of discrimination and is not at all graceful on the part of a government which is globally known for its magnanimity and philanthropic activity. Moreover cost should not be cited as an impediment when it comes to the social security of the spouse of the deceased. Irony is that government is pumping capital to revive these companies which have failed while hurting the soul of a dead man who had not failed in his duty when he was alive. And to punish his bereaved and helpless family members is unethical. We are very optimistic that the government will revisit its decision.

In Nayagarh 2 leopard hides seized; Man held

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Special Task Force (STF) of the Crime Branch on Sunday seized two leopard hides in Nayagarh district and arrested a person in this connection.

The accused was identified as Baidyraj Mallik (40) of Baliberena in the district.

The STF team, acting on intelligence inputs regarding dealing and possession of wildlife products, conducted a raid near the Deer Park under the Daspalla police station.

In city Woman attacked in office by hubby

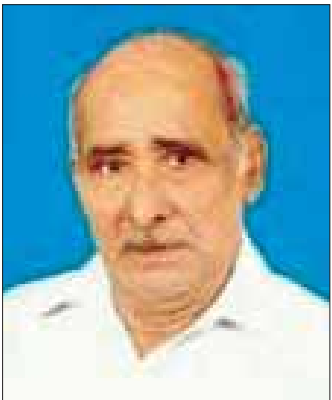
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A woman was allegedly attacked by her husband in an office in the Baramunda area under the Bharatpur police station in the city on Monday.

The incident took place at around 1 pm when the husband entered the office and attacked the woman with a sharp weapon.

The critically injured woman, who was identified as Madhumita Das, was shifted to a nearby hospital.

Noted scribe Patnaik felicitated



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Octogenarian noted journalist from Koraput Sudhakar Patnaik was felicitated by the Odisha Union of Working Journalists for his achievements during his journalis-

tic career.

Patnaik worked as a Special Correspondent for a national newspaper in southern Odisha and as a Roving Correspondent in Andhra Pradesh. He was associated with the AGA Publications, Hyderabad. He moved along the narrow crags and defiles in the Koraput and Andhra region and his reporting was appreciated.

As an intrepid reporter, he followed saints and sinners alike with a camera in his hand. He was accredited at both State and Central Government levels. His reporting on Naxal activities was highly impartial. The Government of Andhra Pradesh had accredited him and accorded him many encomiums and accolades.

Webinar

Birds, their habitats' conservation stressed

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Mo Gan Paribesh Parisad, a wing of Swami Vivekananda Loka Sansad, organised its 22nd monthly virtual conference titled "The Amazing Birds of Odisha" (Odishara Bismayakara Pakshi Samuha) on November 18.

Orissa Environmental Society and Mo Gan Environmental Council of SVLS president Professor Sundara Narayana Patro chaired the programme. Ganesh Prasad Tiadi initiated with the Vaidik Mantra Pathan followed by introduction of guests by the chairman.

Guest speaker Pramod Dhal, an



ornithologist and a wildlife photographer, who captured about 400 different species of birds of Odisha

including some of most interesting migratory birds, presented his talk, stressing on their immediate

conservation needs. He then made a comprehensive discussion especially on the habitat and protec-

tion of endangered bird species of Odisha.

The programme ended with a question-answer session followed by Shanti Patha.

It was participated by many bird watchers, nature lovers and wildlife enthusiasts. Among other prominent persons who attended were Prof Chittaranjan Nayak, Prof Pralay Kumar Nanda, Manindra Kumar Dikshit, Dr Dasarathi Mohapatra, Dr Bharat Panda, Dr Pratiba Nanda, Pratap Kumar Kar, Ramchandra Prusti and Rajballav Sahoo. Vote of thanks was proposed by Ganes Prasad Tiadi.

OPINION 6
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

BHUBANESWAR, TUESDAY NOVEMBER 21, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹4



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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 Dhama 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.

In Kendrapada Man fakes his death to evade debt payment

RAJESH BEHERA
■ KENDRAPADA

A man burdened with debt in Kendrapada district attempted an unusual scheme to escape from his financial troubles, but his plan went awry as police tracked him down within 24 hours.

Bikrant Mallick, a 47-year-old resident of Andara village under the Pattamundai police limits, left his belongings on the Brahmani riverbank on Saturday trying to make the onlookers believe that he had



fallen victim to a crocodile attack. His motive was to evade

debt repayment and secure a substantial compensation of Rs 6 lakh from the Forest Department.

Initially, villagers discovered his abandoned shoes, clothes and motorcycle near the riverbank on Saturday morning, leading them to believe he had succumbed to a crocodile attack.

However, Mallick's plan was exposed when he was located in Cuttack on Sunday. An investigation, aided by CCTV footage and mobile tracking, led to the discovery of his

whereabouts.

"We tracked him in Cuttack and asked him to come to the police station. Accordingly, he returned, and interrogation is on. We will take proper legal action after due inquiry," said Pattamundai police station IIC Ranjit Mohanty.

During preliminary investigations, Mallick reportedly admitted to orchestrating his own death.

Suspecting the involvement of his wife and other family members in the scheme, police questioned them as well.

2 more dist Cong committees formed in Ganjam

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

In a major breakthrough to restructure the Ganjam District Congress Committee, the AICC, on approval of the AICC president, has created two additional organizational committees each in Ganjam and Mayurbhanj.

The two newly created organizational district committees in Ganjam are Berhampur District Congress Committee (BDCC) and Ghumusar District Congress Committee (GDCC) and the Mayurbhanj

East Congress Committee and Mayurbhanj West Congress Committee in Mayurbhanj.

The step taken by the AICC will potentially strengthen the Congress at the grassroots as the country is in the threshold of the general elections after five months from now, said a Congress leader here on Wednesday.

While the Ghumusar organisational district will look after Bhanjanagar Assembly Constituency (AC) along with seven other ACs that come under the territorial and

political ambience of both Aska and Kandhamal Parliamentary Constituencies (PCs), the Brahmapur Congress District Committee, on the other hand, will look after the organisational aspects of the party in Mohana and Paralakhemundi ACs under Gajapati district along with Brahmapur PC and its five Acs.

Many Congress leaders of Ganjam have welcomed the move by AICC with great spirits and hope to perform better in the upcoming gen-

eral election. Meanwhile, a tough competition is now seen between the veteran Congress leader Pramod Kumar Dash and senior advocate and spokesperson of PCC Media Cell Pitabas Panda to lead Brahmapur District Congress Committee. Local Congress workers, however, are in favour of an experienced leader having a grip at the grassroots to head the district for effective organisation of the party ahead of the 2024 general election, sources said.

Sickle cell awareness drive in Rayagada



By Dist Admn, Utkal Alumina

PNS ■ RAYAGADA

In a significant step towards addressing the challenges posed by sickle cell disease in the district of Rayagada, the District Administration and Utkal Alumina International Limited have launched a comprehensive Sickle Cell Awareness Programme on November 3.

The programme was officially inaugurated by Collector, Rayagada Swadha Dev Singh in presence of Unit Head and President Utkal Alumina Mazhar Beig and CDMO

Rayagada Dr Lalmohan Routroy. Head CSR and CR Utkal Alumina Lopamudra Mishra and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The project would create awareness among the priority groups on the disease and motivate them for screening. In the first phase, the entire Kashipur block would be covered under the initiative where villagers will be sensitized about the disease, its preventive and curative measures through street plays, public announcement systems, wall painting and screening camps. Screening of the disease would be conducted for the high school boys and girls by the District Health Department.

Press Day in Talcher Serve for good of society, scribes told



PNS ■ TALCHER

The Talcher Working Journalists' Association (TWJA) observed the National Press Day and Award Ceremony here where local MLA Brajakishore Pradhan attended as chief guest, while senior journalist Rabi Das joined as chief speaker and director-cum-secretary of International Incency Prevention Movement, social activist and columnist Guru Maa Dr Arundhati Devi joined as speaker.

MLA Pradhan while speaking on the occasion advised the journalists to be cautious while presenting news and always be truthful to facts and unbiased. Arundhati Devi discussed the

social responsibility of the media, while Das told the journalists to serve for the good of society.

While the meeting was presided over by association president Zulfikar Hussain, among others, vice president Madan Mohan Sahu, treasurer Bapuji Samal, Durga Prasad Swain, Manil Maharana, Rautar Naik, Mantu Mohanty, Shishir Samal, Niranjan Samal, Ajay Kumar Nayak, Narottam Sahu and Rudra Mohan Gardnayak were present. The welcome speech and introduction of guests was given by the advisor of the association Dhiramohan Ray and the annual report was read out by general secretary Soubhagya Chandra Nayak.

Bus owners' demo before Assembly tomorrow

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Private Bus Owners' Association will hold a demonstration in front of the State Assembly during its Winter Session on November 22.

At least 100 bus owners will participate in the demonstration to press for their various demands.

They will protest against the Location Accessible Multimodal Initiative (LAccMI) of the State Government.

The association has urged the government to desist from launching bus service from

block headquarters to districts headquarters under the LAccMI scheme. It wants parity between the fares charged by the private buses and LAccMI buses.

Moreover, the private bus owners have urged the government to provide them tax and other concessions to replenish the losses inflicted on them due to implementation of the Mo Bus and LAccMI schemes.

The association had earlier threatened to launch an indefinite strike across the State from December 1 if the government does not take any step to fulfil their demands.

VIMSAR doc bags Academic Excellence Award

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

An Assistant Professor of Department Community Medicine of the Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR), Burla, has received the national academic excellence award from the Indian Medical Association (IMA) for his contribution in building the nation's future healthcare force.

Thirty-six years old medic, Dr Sanjeeb Mishra is among the 10 doctors of the country who received the honour. Mishra received the award at a grand function which was held at the IMA headquarters in New Delhi on Saturday evening.

"The support of family, teachers and friends has made it possible. It is an encouragement to work harder," said Mishra.

Dr Mishra, who is the



first doctor from Odisha to receive the National Academic Excellence Award, has 15 indexed publications in his name. He conducted a study on the Covid-19 vaccine, which found that Covishield booster shot was very effective in elevating the antibody levels against the disease. He also conducted a study on pre-ec-lampsia, which revealed

that women with AB blood group are at higher risk of developing disease. He conducted a study that found that the chances of developing stillbirths among the women, who are addicted to the use of tobacco and alcohol, is higher than those who do not consume. He is also the principal author of a study which found that

'O+' and 'B+' are more prone to Covid-19 infection compared to people with other blood groups even after two doses of vaccination. During Covid-19 crisis, Dr Mishra ran telemedicine service for the patients in home isolation on his own. Currently, he runs a free clinic to cater to the healthcare needs of the slum dwellers in Sambalpur city.

Audit Wk: Importance of AG Offices underlined

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Following the celebration of the annual Audit Diwas on November 16 at New Delhi by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, the AG Offices in Odisha are observing the annual Audit Week in the State, from November 20 to 24.

Chairman, Public Accounts Committee, and MLA Mohan Charan Majhi graced the inaugural function of the event as chief guest at the Office of PAG Audit I Odisha, Bhubaneswar.

Principal Accountant General (PAG) Raj Kumar and Accountant General Vishwanath Singh Jadon welcomed the chief guest, along with a gathering of more than 150 officials of the Indian Audit and Accounts Department.

The PAG, in his address, stated that a series of events



during the Audit Week were intended to both internally reflect on the role that the AG Offices play and the work done by them, as well as externally reach out to the main stakeholders to obtain feedback on the aspects.

The PAG also listed out major initiatives taken by the

IAAD, such as automation of the audit workflow, transitioning from use of paper-based to electronic documents, publication of Natural Resources Accounts and increased use of data analytics during the audit process.

Chairman PAC Majhi pro-

vided a brief overview of the functioning of the PAC over the last two years. He stated that the PAC Members were committed to fulfilling their responsibility of ensuring accountability of the Executive to the Legislature. Majhi also appreciated the quality and relevance of the CAG reports.

Balangir Gaja Sathi injured in elephant attack

PNS ■ BALANGIR

In an unexpected turn of event, a Gaja Sathi was injured by a jumbo on early morning of Monday near Budelguma village under Deogaon forest range.

The victim Rabi Majhi (30) along with others was tracking the movement of 12 jumbos near Luhernpali village on Sunday night. Later he went to his paddy field near a mountain.

The jumbo herd which was near a small hillock in Banji Reserve forest came out finding Rabi in the paddy field. One elephant chased him and pushed him away, following which Rabi's hand was broken.

Locals rescued him and sent him to Bhimabhoi Medical College and Hospital. He is stable now.

According to reports, the elephants have come from Subarnapur district and are camping in Upparhar forest near Athagon in Balangir forest range for last few months. 12 elephants have parted with their main herd and are roaming in Banji Reserve forest.

There is small hillock (dunguri) inside the Banji Reserve forest.

Around it, Raipali, Guchepali, Budelguma, Banjhipali, Salepali and Madanapali villages are there. Farmers of these villages have taken up paddy cultivation near the hillock.

As the paddy crop has ripened and farmers are all set to harvest, the elephant herd has created problem for them. The villagers want that their paddy crop be saved from the elephants.

In Jajpur Human skeletons found in overhead water tank



PNS ■ JAJPUR

Two human skeletons were found in a newly-built overhead water tank of a drinking water project on the outskirts of Nischinta village under Sadar block of Jajpur district on Monday.

The skeletons were recovered and sent to the District Headquarters Hospital for postmortem.

As per reports, the overhead tank is at a secluded place away from Nischinta village. The project has not been made functional yet. Two children,

who accidentally climbed up the tank on Monday while playing, spotted the skeletons. As the news spread, locals gathered at the place.

The Jajpur SP and the SDPO along with a police team visited the spot. The skeletons were recovered by the Fire Service and sent to hospital for postmortem.

According to locals, the place is away from the village, it is frequented by anti-social people, and hence, any foul play cannot be ruled out.

Police started an investigation into the matter.

Bargarh meet OBC quota on basis of popn in Odisha demanded

RAKESH JOSHI ■ BARGARH

The Odisha OBC Security Forum convened a meeting at Haldipali Ramchandi Mandir in Bargarh on Sunday, during which a fervent appeal was made for reservations for OBCs in various domains, including education, employment, and politics, based on caste-based census data.

Despite OBCs constituting over 52 percent of the population in Odisha, the forum asserted that they continue to face neglect in all spheres, stressing the need for proportional reservation in alignment with their population.

President Shadanan Bhoi stated that the Security Forum had submitted an 11-point charter of demands to the Odisha Governor, which has subsequently been forwarded to the Backward Classes Commissioner. The forum has also de-



cided to conduct a substantial youth conference in Bargarh in the near future, with the primary objective of raising awareness among OBCs, uniting them, advocating for the rights of the OBC community, and securing constitutional entitlements. Shankar Patra expressed concerns that individuals from backward castes are

marginalized across various fields, attributing this to a conspiracy that exploits the skills and labour of OBCs.

Notable figures present at the meeting included Bar Association president Bhisma Saraf, lawyer Harihar Pradhan, Shashi Pradhan, secretary Baishnab Charan Tyagi, Padma Lochan Sahu, Shrimant Barik,

Khageswar Barik, Birbal Mahakur, Rabindra Nath Pradhan, Paresh Bishi, among others. OBC leaders from neighbouring districts such as Sambalpur, Balangir and Subarnapur participated in the meeting, underscoring a collective effort to address the issues faced by the OBC community.

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 Dashaswamedh, 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 kund 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 Jagjit 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 Jagjit 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 AId 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 commandant, 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 Niranjana 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

PTI

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

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(The writer is a programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, views are personal)

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?



KALYANI SHANKAR



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 good-



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

ness, 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 Chandrashekar, 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

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

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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.

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.



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 Calvino 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.

Sunak urges world to use AI to end malnutrition

London (AP): British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said Monday that the UK is setting up a new science initiative to help develop flood-tolerant rice, disease-resistant wheat and other crops that are more resilient to climate change.

Sunak was joined by ministers, diplomats and philanthropists from about 20 countries at a one-day Global Food Security Summit in London, where he urged world leaders to harness artificial intelligence and other cutting-edge technology to end malnutrition around the globe. Sunak told delegates that a "fundamental shift" is needed to confront a food-security crisis that is being worsened by climate change. He focused on the role of science and said the UK would set up a "virtual science hub" linking international researchers working on more resilient crops. The UK hub will be part of a global research partnership known as CGIAR.

"Climate change, conflict and population rise mean ever greater challenges to food supplies," Sunak said. "So we need a fundamental shift in the way we approach food security, with a focus on long-term solutions to stop food crises before they start. And we need to harness the full power of science and technology to ensure supplies are resilient to threats like conflict, drought and floods." The event was co-hosted by Somalia and the United Arab Emirates alongside the Children's Investment Fund Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The conference venue was picketed by activists from Medical Aid for Palestinians calling for a cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war to get urgently needed food and humanitarian aid into Gaza. "It is good that they are talking about addressing food and security in the world. But if they're going to do that seriously, they cannot ignore the situation in Gaza, where 2.2 million people are at risk of starvation," said the group's chief executive, Melanie Ward. "Because of the siege that's been imposed on Gaza, the amount of aid that's gotten in the last month is only enough for about two normal days in Gaza."

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

Indore-born entrepreneur and London's Deputy Mayor for Business, Rajesh Agrawal, 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.

Agrawal, 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," Agrawal 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 Agrawal.

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 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 Likin 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. **1678-6580-0735-6946** certifies that the marriage of **Likin 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** will be doing so at his/her own risk and cost.
G.S.SINGH (Advocate)
B-825, FF, Sec-15, Rohini, Delhi-89. e-9811297679

Public Notice
It is informed to all the general public that on the basis of oral family settlement of property **H.No. 92,3rd Floor-B-3 Block,Paschim Vihar,Delhi-63** which is standing in the name of our husband/ father **Pradeep Mittal S/o late Rattan Lal Mittal**. But we **Sunita Mittal & Aman Mittal** had become owner in possession of above said property, they are in possession as the owner. All the original documents of title are in our possession **Pradeep Mittal** is missing since 24.3.23 & is also mentally disturbed. Therefore, general public is informed not to do any transaction with **Pradeep Mittal** regarding above mentioned property. In case of doing so, he himself will be responsible and our rights will not be affected. **Sunita Mittal & Aman Mittal H.No.92,3rd Flr-B3 Blk. Paschim Vihar,ND-63**

PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.
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Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813:
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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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-

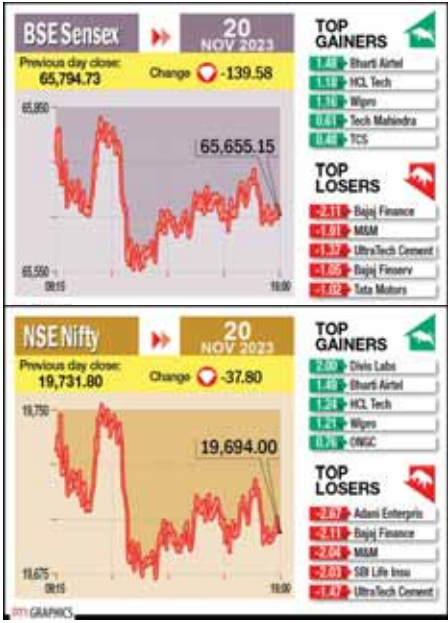


scores unwavering commitment to exceptional customer service, providing customers the option to collect packages at their convenience. This initiative demonstrates the company's commitment to revolutionise hyper-connected city logistics, enhancing last-mile delivery efficiency while ensuring a reliable 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-

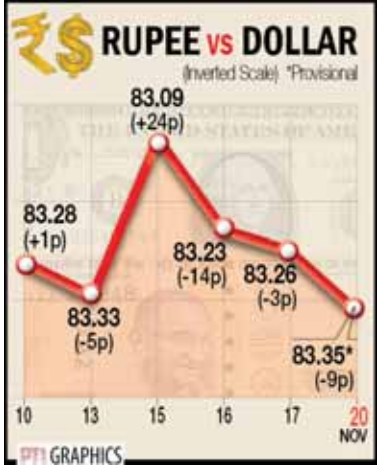


modities declined 0.66 per cent, capital goods (0.43 per cent), realty (0.33 per cent) and consumer discretionary (0.30 per cent). Energy, healthcare, IT and tech were the gainers. In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the green, while Tokyo ended lower. European markets were trading 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.

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.



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

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.

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

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 knockout 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.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 51/ET/SBP/ENGG/2023-24 Dated: 14.11.2023

(1) e-Tender No. : 24-eT-DENW-SBP-23

NAME OF WORK: EXECUTION OF ZONAL WORKS (FOR BRIDGE REPAIR WORKS) BETWEEN NAWAPARA ROAD (IN)- TITLAGARH (EX) SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION UNDER ADEW/KANTABANJI FOR THE PERIOD ENDS 30.06.2024.

Approx. Cost of the Work: ₹60,18,192.55, Bid Security : ₹ 1,20,400/-, Completion Period for the work: 30.06.2024.

(2) e-Tender No. : 45-eT-SDENC-SBP-23

NAME OF WORK: TSR(P)- 8.4 TKM- IN BETWEEN SARLA- DUNGRIPALI (DN) SECTION AND TSR(P)- 0.37 TKM IN BETWEEN HIRAKUD (HKG)- SAMBALPUR (SBP) (DN) SECTION IN SAMBALPUR (SBP) DIVISION UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF SR. DEN/CENTRAL.

Approx. Cost of the Work: ₹1,53,27,319.54, Bid Security : ₹ 2,26,700/-, Completion Period for the work: 06(Six) Months.

Tender closing Date & Time: At 1500 Hrs. on 08.12.2023 (for both tenders).

No manual offers sent by post/courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tender even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website: <http://www.reps.gov.in>

Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.), Sambalpur

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 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.

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



PTI ■ DUBAI

Rohit Sharma was Monday named the captain of the ICC's Team of the Tournament after the conclusion of the World Cup, with a total of six Indians including the Player of the Tournament, Virat Kohli, featuring among the XI.

India lost the summit clash to Australia who clinched their sixth win in World Cup with a six-wicket victory in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

Rohit led the team from the front as his fearless batting won him praise from all corners, with the Indian skipper finishing as the second highest scorer in the tournament with 597 runs in 11 matches at 54.27 with one century and three fifties.

Kohli, who became the first batter ever to score more than 700 runs in a single World Cup edition, finished with a total of 765 runs with three centuries and two fifties.

In the course of the tournament, Kohli also surpassed batting legend Sachin Tendulkar to have scored most ODI centuries 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's 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.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
NIMAPARA IRRIGATION DIVISION, NIMAPARA

Notice Invitation of Tenders
e-Procurement Notice No.-06 /2023-24 on dated 15.11.2023
E-mail Id: eendinimapara@gmail.com

1. Type of Works: - Canal, River Embankment, Road & Building works.

2. Total No. of Works: - 38 (Thirty-Seven) Nos.

3. Estimated Cost: - Varies from Rs. 5.04 to Rs. 42.37 Lakhs

4. Period of Completion: - 90 to 120 days

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Bid Amount in Lakh Rs.	Availability & Submission of Bids on line.
Superintending Engineer, Nimapara Irrigation Division, Nimapara	NID- 169 /2023-24 to NID- 206 /2023-24	Rs. 5.04 to Rs. 42.37	From 29.11.2023 10.00 A.M. to 08.12.2023 5.30 P.M.

Date of opening of the Bid: - 11.12.2023 at 11.00 A.M.
Further details can be seen from the Govt. Website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
OIPR-32097/11/0007/2324

Superintending Engineer
Nimapara Irrigation Division
Nimapara

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, BHANJANAGAR

e-mail: eerwbjnir@gmail.com

"e" Procurement Notice for: Road Works
Identification No. Online Tender /16/ RWBNJ/2023-2024

No. 4145 Date: 17.11.23

1. Name of the work :: Road Works

2. Total Number of works :: 25 Nos.

3. Estimated cost :: 05.04 Lakhs to 16.81 Lakhs

4. Class of Contractor :: 'D' & 'C' Class of Contractor

5. Period of Completion :: (Two) 02 Calendar Months.

6. Other details ::

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No	Availability of tender online for bidding
		From To
Superintending Engineer, R.W.Division, Bhanjanagar	Online Tender/16/ RWBDNJ/2023-2024	28.11.2023 at 10.00 A.M. 07.12.2023 upto 3.00 P.M.

Further details can be seen from the website: - www.tendersodisha.gov.in
OIPR-25174/11/0037/2324

Superintending Engineer
R.W. Division, Bhanjanagar

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, GANJAM, BERHAMPUR

Government of Odisha e-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. Online Tender/23/SERWD-II/2023-24

Memo No. 7702.....RWD-IIGB, Date: 17.11.23.

No.	Name of the work		
1	Name of the work	::	Road Works
2	Estimated cost	::	Rs 10.54 Lakh to Rs 34.47 Lakh as per Annexure
3	Period of Completion	::	2 (Two) Months as per Annexure
4	Date & Time of availability of Bid documents in the Portal	::	23.11.23 at 10.00 A.M. to 04.12.23 upto 3.00 P.M
5	Last Date/ Time for receipt of Bids in the Portal	::	04.12.23 upto 3.00 P.M
6	Date of tender finalization	::	07.12.23 at 11.30 AM
7	Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid	::	Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division-II, Ganjam, Berhampur

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal tendersodisha.gov.in/nicgp/app

Superintending Engineer
R.W. Division-II, Ganjam
Berhampur

OIPR-25073/11/0023/2324

SAMBALPUR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION : SAMBALPUR

Odisha - 768001

Phone No. 0663-2411316 / E Mail : sombalpurm.hud@nic.in

'e' Procurement NOTICE.
Bid Identification No: 23/SMC_SBP/2023-24

The Municipal Commissioner on behalf of Municipal Corporation, Sambalpur invites tenders in Single Cover System.

Bid documents consisting of specification the Schedule of Quantities & the set of terms & conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen the Govt. Website i.e. <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>

1. Name of work: Supplying, providing, fabricating, Assembling, hoisting, Erecting, and placing in position with complete finished structure as per approved drawing for vending zone shops at Kutcha Market, Burla in Ward No-4 under Sambalpur Municipal Corporation"

2. Date & time of availability of the bid documents in the portal: From 11.00 P.M. of 16.11.2023 to 05.00 PM of 27.11.2023

3. Last Date/ Time for receipt of bids in the portal: 05.00 PM of 27.11.2023

4. Bids will be opened on: 11.00 AM of Dt. 28.11.2023

5. Name & address of the officer inviting bid: Municipal Commissioner, Sambalpur Municipal Corporation, Sambalpur

SD/-
Commissioner
Sambalpur Municipal Corporation

OIPR-13122/11/0053/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE PURI MUNICIPALITY, PURI.

Email-purim.hud@nic.in

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
Identification No.P.M.02/2023-24
Notice No. 10633 Dated. 17.11.23

1. Type of Work: Civil Work. 2. Total No. of works:51 nos. of Individual Works. 3. Estimate Cost: Rs. 201117/- to Rs. 3220985/- 4. Period of completion: 45 to 60 Days

5. Date & time of availability of bid document in the Portal: - from 03 P.M of 23.11.2023 to 05 P.M of 05.12.2023 6. Last date/Time for receipt of bid in the portal: - up to 05 P.M of 05.12.2023 7. Date of Opening of bid 11 A.M. of dtd 06.12.2023 8. Name & address of the Officer inviting Bid: Executive Officer, Puri Municipality, Puri. Further detail can be seen from the e-procurement portal www.tendersorissa.gov.in

Executive Officer,
Puri Municipality, Puri

OIPR-13159/11/0033/2324

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.