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TOMORROW'S WORLD BELONGS TO CHILDREN

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US LAWMAKERS FOR WITHHOLDING ASSISTANCE TO PAKISTAN

MONEY 10
FLURRY OF IPOs; 5 FIRMS GEAR UP TO RAISE ₹7,300 CR NEXT WEEK

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ATP FINALS:
DJOKOVIC CHASING SEVENTH TITLE
11 SPORT

HOPE LOSES

India bows out of World Cup again Versus Australia

SWARN KUMAR ANAND ■ NEW DELHI

In a heart-wrenching turn of events, India's fervent aspirations to rewrite history in the Cricket World Cup were cruelly dashed by the five-time champion Australia at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Sunday. Team India, despite a promising start, found themselves bulldozed by the cricketing prowess of the Aussies, leaving the hopes and dreams of 130 crore Indians shattered in the echoes of a painful defeat.

relentless aggression of the Australian attack, leaving the Indian batting line in disarray. Although Virat Kohli contributed with the bat, his innings lacked the dependability associated with the cricketing maestro. KL Rahul adopted a cautious approach, facing a 107 balls to score just 67. The fragility of India's batting, despite intermittent brilliance, was apparent on the scoreboard. As India's innings concluded at 240, a palpable sense of despondency hung in the air. The target, while not insurmountable, posed a formidable challenge for India to defend against the powerhouse Australian batting lineup. It felt as if India had conceded the match, with Australian players visibly exuding confidence as they walked onto the field to chase down the total. Australia's innings commenced with a blistering start, notching up 23 runs within the first two overs. However, the Indian bowlers displayed resilience. Mohammed Shami provided a breakthrough, dismissing David Warner in the second over, injecting a glimmer of hope into the Indian camp.



Australian players celebrate with the trophy after winning the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 finals at the Narendra Modi Stadium, in Ahmedabad, on Sunday PTI

Jasprit Bumrah followed suit by dismissing Mitchell Marsh in the fifth over and Steven Smith in the seventh over, a pivotal moment that seemed poised to turn the tide in India's favour. However, despite the early breakthroughs by the Indians, the Australians dominated the Indian bowling lineup until the very end of the match, leaving the Indian fielding unit lacking in its usual finesse and the hopes of Indian supporters hanging by a thread. Despite dramatic fluctuations in fortune during the first 15 overs of its batting, Australia showcased their mettle in the tense battle. The hopes of a vast Indian audience were eventually crushed as Australia, with unwavering resilience and strategic brilliance, secured victory. The final match had held deeper significance for Indian fans beyond the immediate battle on the field. It was a chance for redemption, an opportunity to avenge the heartbreaking of the 2003 World Cup final loss to Australia. The wounds of that defeat had lingered for two decades, and as Team India seemed to capitulate to the resilient Aussies, the moment

of redemption turned into a moment of despair. At the onset of the match, the vibrant sea of blue, embodying the ardent Indian supporters, painted a tapestry of sheer euphoria. Flags waved triumphantly, chants reverberated through the air, and the stadium echoed with a celebration that transcended geographical boundaries. Each fallen wicket was met with a thunderous roar, shaking the very foundations of the arena, while every run scored by Australia elicited a polite applause, thinly veiling an undercurrent of unwavering confidence. However, the initial wave of euphoria soon proved to be misplaced as Travis Head (137 runs in 120 balls), backed by Marnus Labuschagne, showcased exceptional prowess against the Indian bowling attack, steering his team to a resounding victory. In the end, the hopes of the nation were shattered, and the dream of rewriting history came crashing down. The Australian juggernaut rolled on, leaving Indian cricket with a bitter taste of defeat in a match that will be etched in the annals of cricketing heartbreak.



Devotees perform rituals of Chhath Puja festival in New Delhi on Sunday Ranjan Dimri

Free Israelis to end war: US

AGENCIES ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden's main adviser on the Middle East said there would be a "significant pause" in the Israel-Hamas war if hostages held by militants in Gaza are freed. Hamas terrorists seized about 240 hostages on October 7 when they surged across Gaza's militarised border into southern Israel to kill around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, according to Israeli officials. In response, Israel is carrying out a relentless bombardment and ground offensive of targets in the Gaza Strip which has so far killed 12,300 people, according to the Palestinian territory's Hamas government. "The surge in humanitarian relief, the surge in fuel, the pause... will come when hostages are released," Brett McGurk told a security conference in Bahrain. Release of a large number of hostages would result in "a significant pause... and a massive surge of humanitarian relief," he said.

McGurk said Biden had discussed the issue on Friday evening with the ruler of the Gulf nation of Qatar, which is leading mediation efforts toward a ceasefire and release of the captives. The White House said Biden and Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani discussed "the urgent need for all hostages held by Hamas to be released without further delay". Two days earlier Biden had said he was "mildly hopeful" of reaching a deal to free the hostages, believed to include about 10 US citizens. French President Emmanuel Macron also discussed the hostages with al-Thani and Egyptian leader Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on Saturday, his office said. Macron said immediately freeing the captives, of whom eight are French, was "an absolute priority for France". The three leaders also talked about strengthening their coordination to deliver aid to civilians in Gaza, Macron's office said. So far efforts by Qatar have led

to the release of four of the captives. A fifth hostage, a soldier, was rescued in an Israeli operation. Israel's Army said this week it had recovered the bodies of two women hostages in Gaza. McGurk said on Saturday that the situation in the besieged Palestinian territory was "horrific" and "intolerable". Israel has refused to heed calls for a ceasefire before all the hostages are released. Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, who also attended the Bahrain conference, said it was "unacceptable" to link humanitarian pauses to release of hostages. Meanwhile EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell reflected on the future of Gaza, saying, "Hamas cannot be in control of Gaza anymore". The Palestinian Authority, based in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah, "told me they are ready and willing to take this responsibility" with the help of the international community, said Borrell. He added that Arab countries

should also play a role in any future configuration, both political and economic, for Gaza. Meanwhile, Israel said Yemen's Houthi rebels seized an Israeli-linked cargo ship in a crucial Red Sea shipping route on Sunday, raising fears that regional tensions heightened over the Israel-Hamas war were playing out on a new maritime front. There was no immediate comment from the Houthis, an Iran-backed rebel movement in Yemen that threatened earlier on Sunday to target Israeli-linked vessels in the Red Sea. Last month, Houthi rebels were suspected of sending missiles and drones over the crucial shipping lane of the sea. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said 25 crew members of various nationalities, including Bulgarians, Filipinos, Mexicans and Ukrainians but no Israelis, had been on board the hijacked Bahamas-flagged ship. Netanyahu's office condemned the seizure of the Galaxy Leader, a vehicle carrier, as an "Iranian act of terror".

Curbs on vehicles lifted as Delhi NCR air improves

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The restrictions imposed to combat air pollution, as part of Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP-4), have been lifted in the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR). This decision comes in response to a noticeable improvement in air quality conditions in the region. The measures outlined in GRAP-4, such as prohibiting the entry of environmentally harmful vehicles from other states, requiring 50 per cent of employees to work from home, and suspending in-person classes for primary school students, were implemented on November 5. The Centre removed stringent curbs, including a ban on construction work related to linear projects and the entry of vehicles, including polluting trucks into Delhi, in view of the dip in air pollution levels

due to favourable wind speed and direction. These measures constitute the final stage — Stage IV — of the Centre's air pollution control plan called the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP). The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas (CAQM), a statutory body responsible for formulating strategies to combat pollution in the region, asked Delhi and NCR states to revoke all emergency measures, under which only CNG, electric and BS VI-compliant vehicles from other states are allowed to enter Delhi, with exemptions granted to those involved in essential services. All medium and heavy goods vehicles not engaged in essential services were also banned in the capital under Stage IV of GRAP, according to the latest CAQM order. The pollution control body said all other curbs under

stages I, II and III of GRAP, including a ban on non-essential construction work, mining, stone crushers and diesel generators will continue. The air quality forecasts by the India Meteorological Department/Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology do not indicate any steep degradation in the overall air quality of Delhi-NCR in the coming days, the CAQM said. Recent findings from a joint project by the Delhi Government and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur found that vehicular emissions accounted for about 45 per cent of the capital's air pollution on Friday. This reduced to 33 per cent on Saturday. Secondary inorganic aerosols — particles such as sulfate and nitrate that are formed in the atmosphere due to the interaction of gases and particulate pollutants from sources like power plants, refineries and vehicles — are the second



major contributor to Delhi's foul air, accounting for 19 to 36 per cent of the air pollution in the city over the last few days. Air quality in Delhi and its suburbs improved further on Sunday due to favourable atmospheric conditions, pri-

marily wind direction and speed. Delhi's air quality index stood at 290 at 7 am. The 24-hour average AQI, recorded at 4 pm every day, was 319 on Saturday, 405 on Friday and 419 on Thursday. Neighbouring Ghaziabad (280), Gurugram (234), Greater Noida (236), Noida (268) and Faridabad (327) also recorded "poor" to "very poor" air quality. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', 401 and 450 'severe' and above 450 'severe plus'. Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Sunday said although the air quality in Delhi has shown improvement in the past two days, people should remain vigilant and adhere to pollution control measures. Rai also recalled that the progress made just before Diwali due to rain and

favourable meteorological conditions was compromised by people bursting firecrackers. "Despite the recent improvements, it's crucial to stay cautious and follow all air pollution control measures," the Minister told reporters. Rai confirmed that other restrictions under stages I, II, and III of GRAP, including a ban on non-essential construction, mining, stone crushers and diesel generators will continue. The ban on BS III petrol and BS IV diesel vehicles will also continue, he said. "We will reassess these restrictions if the situation continues to improve," the Minister said. The air quality predictions by the India Meteorological Department and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology suggest no significant deterioration in the overall air quality of Delhi-NCR in the upcoming days, according to the CAQM.

STUBBLE BURNING: Pb Police registers 932 FIRs, imposes Rs 1.67-cr fine

State witnesses drastic dip in cases

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

In a positive turn of events, the state of Punjab has witnessed a notable reduction in farm fire cases in the past two days, recording 740 and 637 incidents on Sunday and Saturday, respectively. The state's Special Director General of Police (Spl DGP), Law and Order, nodal officer for checking stubble burning menace, Arpit Shukla attributed the decline to the concerted efforts of the Punjab Police in curbing stubble burning. Complying with the directives of the Supreme Court to halt stubble burning, the state DGP Gaurav Yadav appointed Spl DGP Arpit Shukla as the Police Nodal Officer to oversee actions against stubble burning. DGP Yadav has been conducting daily meetings with senior officers, Range Officers, Commissioners of Police, Senior superintendents of Police, and SHOs to review cases of stubble burning. To address districts with high stubble burning cases, show cause notices have been issued to SSPs, emphasizing the need for action against the menace. Special DGP Arpit Shukla commended the untiring efforts of police personnel and civil administration officials working at the ground level. The issuance of show cause notices to SSPs in districts witnessing a high number of stub-

ble burning cases showcases a commitment to accountability. This proactive measure aims to ensure that law enforcement officials are actively engaged in curbing stubble burning and are held responsible for the prevailing situation in their respective jurisdictions. The Special DGP exhorted farmers to cooperate and not put matchstick on crop residue, which will not only lead to the deterioration of the environment but will also affect the health of children. Meanwhile, depending on the area and size of the Police Station, a sufficient number of additional patrolling parties are already activated, while, flying squads have also been keeping vigil on stubble burning. Legal Action and Penalties Imposed Legal action is being taken against individuals found burning stubble, resulting in 932 FIRs registered by police teams since November 8. Penalties amounting to Rs 1.67 crores have been imposed in 7,405 cases serves as a financial deterrent, discouraging farmers from resorting to stubble burning; with red entries made in revenue records of 340 farmers during this period emphasizing the tangible consequences of engaging in this harmful practice. Flying Squads and Community Meetings With 1072 flying squads

comprising police and civil officials keeping vigil on stubble burning, community meetings at both district and block levels have been organized to sensitize farmers about Supreme Court orders. Since November 8, total 2,189 such meetings have taken place. These squads play a crucial role in monitoring and responding to incidents promptly. Additionally, the organization of community meetings at both district and block levels reflects an inclusive approach, involving local communities in the fight against stubble burning. Air Quality Indices and Stubble Burning Incidents Despite these efforts, Punjab reported 740 stubble burning incidents on Sunday, with Fazilka recording the highest number at 151. The total number of farm fire cases since September 15 has now reached 34,459. While the recent data shows a reduction in stubble burning incidents, with 740 cases reported on Sunday, it is essential to recognize that challenges persist. The air quality indices, remaining in the 'very poor' and 'poor' categories in many parts of Haryana and Punjab, underscore the urgency of sustained efforts to combat this environmental menace. Honoring Farmers Against Stubble Burning In a positive move, Punjab

Vidhan Sabha plans to honour the farmers who refrain from burning paddy straw and crop residues. Speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan announced the government's appreciation for farmers contributing to environmental preservation and public welfare in an apparent attempt to motivate the farmers for not burning paddy straw and crop residues in their fields. Punjab Government has decided to appreciate these farmers in all districts...The officials of Agriculture Department would compile the lists of such farmers so as to extend them a special appreciation," he said. With the help of Agriculture and other line departments, special programs will be organized across the State to honour the farmers shunning farm fires besides appreciating them in Vidhan Sabha also, said the Speaker, adding that last year too, they had honoured a large number of farmers in districts and State Assembly. Speaker Sandhwan urged the farmers to spread the anti-farm fire message across villages, emphasizing the need to protect the environment from pollution. He called on farmers to plant more saplings for a cleaner, greener, and pollution-free environment. "Those, who not set crop residues on fire, are making a constructive contribution to save environment from differ-

ent sort of pollution, human health from hazardous diseases and fertility of soil in the fields. It is a high time to come out of this harmful activity of farm fires to ensure healthy environment in the state," he said. Sandhwan called upon farmers to take the message against farm fires to every nook and corner of their villages so as to motivate others to follow their footsteps. He also motivated the farmers to sow the wheat crop with the help of machines of advanced technology. He said Agriculture Officials were apprising and helping the farmers about these machines throughout Punjab. The recent developments in Punjab shed light on the commendable efforts taken by the State Government and law enforcement agencies to combat the persisting issue of stubble burning. The multifaceted approach, involving legal actions, community engagement, and environmental awareness, aims to address the root causes and consequences of this harmful practice. Punjab, known as the 'Granary of India', has been grappling with the adverse effects of stubble burning, particularly during the post-harvest season. The burning of crop residues, primarily paddy straw, contributes significantly to air pollution, posing severe health risks and environmental degradation.

Drug Scandal Rocks AAP as nephew of MLA Dhun nabbed with 1kg heroin, Ignites political firestorm

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The nephew of AAP MLA Sarwan Singh Dhun, identified as Jashanpreet Singh alias Jashan, was apprehended by Khalra police in Khemkaran with one kilogram of heroin. The arrest, made through the interception of a drone sent from Pakistan, has raised concerns about the alleged involvement of AAP legislators in drug trafficking. The incident unfolded as the Border Security Force (BSF) personnel deployed along the India-Pakistan border observed suspicious activity through night vision cameras. The BSF jawans, belonging to the 103rd Battalion stationed in the BOP Kesar border outpost, detected a drone crossing the border. In response, they fired eight rounds to deter its approach. Subsequent investigations revealed that the drone was transporting heroin from Pakistan. Simultaneously, the Khalra police, acting on intelligence inputs, conducted a search

operation near Narli village and intercepted two individuals, including Jashanpreet Singh. The police seized 1.10 kilograms of heroin from their possession. Both individuals were taken into custody, and the police have initiated a thorough investigation into the matter. Jashanpreet Singh, also known as Jashan, is the nephew of Sarwan Singh Dhun, legislator of the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) representing Khemkaran segment. The arrest has intensified accusations against AAP legislators, with opposition leaders alleging their involvement in drug trafficking. Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal seized the opportunity to criticize the AAP government, asserting that the arrest provided concrete evidence of AAP legislators engaging in drug smuggling. Sukhbir called for Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's resignation, stating that the AAP-led government has failed to address the drug menace effectively. The arrest follows a series of accusations

against AAP legislators for their alleged connections with the drug trade. Sukhbir emphasized that this incident underscores the urgent need for action against the drug mafia operating within the State. He further criticized the Chief Minister and AAP's national convener Arvind Kejriwal for their role in perpetuating this alleged nexus. The drug-related arrests have intensified the political turmoil, prompting questions about the AAP Government's ability to tackle the escalating drug menace in Punjab. The incident, involving the nephew of an AAP legislator, underscores the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in curbing cross-border drug trafficking and raises concerns about the influence of drug cartels in the region. As investigations proceed, the political fallout from this incident is likely to deepen, with opposition leaders demanding a comprehensive inquiry into the alleged connections between AAP legislators and the drug trade.

Stage Set for MLF-2023 Honoring 1947-48 War Martyrs

Punjab Governor Flags Off Bravehearts Ride

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

In a spirited event that revved up the city's streets, Punjab Governor and UT Chandigarh Administrator Banwarilal Purohit on Sunday flagged off the Bravehearts Ride. The exciting spectacle marked the prelude to the annual Military Literature Festival (MLF) scheduled for December 2 and 3. The ride, dedicated to the memory of martyrs of the 1947-48 Indo-Pak War, saw 890 bikers, including veterans from the Army, Airforce, and Navy, rallying for safe driving and a drugs-free lifestyle. The Bravehearts Ride kicked off from the grounds near Punjab Civil Secretariat Mains, with a thunderous display of camaraderie and patriotism. A convoy of over 1000 bikers, led by Colonel Rusnil Singh Chahal (retired), embarked on a journey through the city roads, culminating at the Chandimandir Cantonment. This vibrant procession was not just a spectacle of roaring engines but a symbol of solidarity and remembrance. Earlier in the day, Governor Banwarilal Purohit paid homage to the fallen soldiers by laying a wreath at the Chandigarh War Memorial. The ceremony, attended by esteemed personalities such as Former Chief of Army Staff General VP Malik (retired), Former Chief of Air Staff General Sunil Lanba (retired), and Lt General TS Shergill (retired), included the solemn observance of a two-minute silence. The all-women contingent of Punjab Police presented a poignant Guard of Honour. Governor Purohit seized the opportunity to inspire the youth, urging them to consider a life in the Armed Forces. Interacting with students from

various schools present at the event, he emphasized that a soldier's life embodies the sacrifices a nation is built upon. "There is no better way to live an enriching life than serving the nation by joining the Forces," he passionately declared. The upcoming Military Literature Festival, scheduled for December 2 and December 3, holds a special significance as it is dedicated to the memory of martyrs from the first Indo-Pak War of 1947-48. A joint initiative of the Punjab Government, Chandigarh Administration, and Western Command Headquarters at Chandimandir, the MLF has become the most anticipated annual military literature event in the Northern Region. Governor Purohit commended the organizers for their efforts in inspiring the youth to serve the nation. He noted that the MLF's growing popularity is a testament to its overwhelming success in providing a platform for discussions on national, international, and geo-political matters. MLF chairman General TS Shergill highlighted the tremendous response to the Bravehearts Ride, with over 1000 bike entries received. The Bravehearts Riders, led by Colonel Rusnil Singh Chahal, comprised Thumpers, Saragarhi Foundation, and 26 other groups from across the nation. Notably, officers from the US and UK joined this much-anticipated event, adding an international flavor to the patriotic rally. As part of the ceremony, Governor Purohit unveiled a four-minute Announcement Film encapsulating the exciting journey of the MLF since its inception in 2017. Directed by the national award-winning director Ojaswee Sharma, the film promises to capture the essence of the festival and will be featured at the main MLF event in December.

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Take action on public complaints: Haryana Home Minister to officers

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij on Sunday issued directives to the concerned authorities to take action on the public complaints. The directions came after the considerable number of people approached the Home Minister at his residence in Ambala for redressal of their grievances. The government official spokesperson said that an athlete from Sonapat, a national medalist, complained to the Home Minister about not being provided a job under the OSP (Outstanding Sports Person) quota of the State Government despite being eligible. The athlete, who has

won medals in national competitions, stated that her application was rejected despite being qualified for the OSP quota. On this, Home Minister assured the athlete of all possible assistance and sent her application to the Additional Chief Secretary of the Sports Department for examination. A woman, residing in Ambala Cantonment, complained to the Home Minister about the lack of action in a case of misconduct against her. Despite the complaint being filed, the Ambala city police did not take any action. Home Minister Anil Vij directed the Ambala SP to take strict action in the case. A person from Jind complained to the Home Minister about being scammed of Rs 35

lakhs in the name of sending his child abroad. He alleged that an agent took the money on the pretext of sending the child to the United States, but neither the child was sent abroad nor were the money returned. The Home Minister ordered that Special Investigation Team (SIT) formed for this purpose will investigate the matter. Similarly, a family from Panipat accused a property dealer of fraudulent activities involving Rs 34 lakhs in the name of selling a plot. They claimed that the property dealer duped them by promising a plot but neither provided the plot nor refunded the money. On this, Vij directed the Panipat SP to investigate the case.

CM Khattar urges Railways Minister to install Samrat Vikramaditya's statue in Rewari

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Sunday urged the Union Minister of Railways, Communications and Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw for the installation of a magnificent statue of Samrat Hemchandra Vikramaditya in the central courtyard of the Railway Station in Rewari. Khattar, in an official letter, also expressed his sincere gratitude to Vaishnaw for the release of a commemorative postage stamp on the occasion of Samrat Hemchandra Vikramaditya's coronation on

October 7, 2023. Spokesperson informed that the Chief Minister, while supporting the public demand raised by Samrat Hemchandra Vikramaditya Manch, Rewari, has said that the installation of the statue would not only pay homage to the remarkable achievements of Samrat Hemchandra Vikramaditya lovingly called as 'Hemu' by the people of Haryana, but also serve as an enduring source of inspiration for generations to come. It may be recalled that Samrat Hemchandra Vikramaditya, had triumphed in 22 consecutive wars, and emerged victorious over the forces of Emperor Akbar.

Haryana CM announces construction of 3 Chhath Pooja Ghats with Rs 5 cr in Panipat

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, after offering prayers during the Chhath Puja celebrations on Sunday, announced the construction of three ghats dedicated to Chhath Pooja in Panipat district, with an estimated expenditure of Rs five crore. Khattar, addressing a large gathering, responded to the demands by announcing the construction of a 700 feet ghat at Avlana distributory costing Rs two crore; a 300 feet ghat near the thermal channel on Assandh road with an allocation of Rs one crore; and another 300 feet ghat near Babarpur bridge on drain number 2 with a budget of Rs two crore. The Chief Minister also announced for the construction of Suryamandir between two canals on Mahrana village land. Discussions are currently underway for the transfer of the village land for this purpose. The Chief Minister also announced a discretionary grant of Rs 21 lakh for the upcoming Suryamandir following the successful transfer of land for this purpose. Conveying warm wishes to the people on this auspicious occasion, the Chief Minister said that today, Chhath Puja is being celebrated in approximately 300 locations across the State, with about five lakh people participating in the holy festivities. He further conveyed appreciation to all the people from Purvanchal in attendance



at this event for their unwavering contributions to the development of Haryana. Their diligence and expertise have been instrumental in sustaining industries and fostering agricultural growth in the State. Regardless of adverse weather conditions, they work tirelessly day and night to contribute to significant infrastructure projects in the state, he emphasized. The Chief Minister highlighted that the present state government has successfully regularized approximately 1000 colonies in the last year alone. An investment of Rs 2000 crore is earmarked for the infrastructure development in these colonies. Acknowledging many women participating in the puja and commending their faith, patience, and courage, Khattar said that the Prime Minister had launched the 'Beti

Bachao Beti Padhao' campaign from Panipat on January 22, 2015. "Following this noble initiative, Haryana, once considered a bad name as a State with a high prevalence of female feticide, has now emerged as a leader in promoting the welfare of daughters. Our sex ratio, which stood at 871 at that time, has now risen to above 931," he added. Thousands of devotees offer prayers to setting God Sun on Chhath Puja A large number of devotees on Sunday evening gathered at different Chhath Ghats on the banks of rivers, ponds, reservoirs, and other water bodies in Punjab, Haryana, and Chandigarh and offered prayers to the setting Sun God on the occasion of Chhath Puja, one of the most important festivals of eastern part of India especially Bihar, Eastern Uttar

Pradesh and Jharkhand. At various Chhath Ghats, devotees were spotted offering prayer at sunset, standing in waist-deep water as part of the main Pooja, which is meant to take place on the third day of the Chhath Puja in the region. In Chandigarh, along with the family members, thousands of devotees from all parts of the tricity thronged the Sector 42 lake and offered their first arghya 'offering' to the setting Sun for all the blessings and prosperity. Devotees have been fasting since Saturday, and on Sunday, they offered their evening prayers to the setting Sun. Moreover, the Municipal Corporation Chandigarh has made elaborate arrangements at the Sector 42 Lake with special lighting and cleanliness, keeping in view the spirit of the festival. Traffic and security arrangements were also made

by the UT Chandigarh Police as around thousands of people gathered here for the Chhath Puja celebrations. Purvanchal Welfare Association president DK Singh said: "With the help of administration and MCC and volunteers, we had made all the arrangements for the devotees for this festival. A large number of devotees and their relatives gathered here and performed Pooja ritual." Subhash Mishra, one of the devotees at Sector 42 lake, said that the festivities commenced with Nahai Khai (eating after bathing) and would continue for four days with traditional rituals like lohanda or Kharna, Sanjha Arghya and final prayer and offering of the Subah Arghya on Monday. On Monday morning, the devotees would offer their final heartfelt gratitude to the Surya Bhagwan (Sun God) with the Subah Arghya or Soop which consists of flowers, seasonal fruits, grass, sugarcane, radish and other newly harvested crops. Another devotee said that the festival and the vrat (fast) honours and remembers the natural forces which have been sustaining the human body, mind, and the spirit since the dawn of civilization. This is the only festival of the country in which prayers are offered not only to the rising sun but also the setting sun. The symbolism is inherent - never forget one who is down and out. Thanks giving and seeking the blessings from the forces of nature - Sun God, mother earth and the river (water) is

the core of the festival. He further said that every activity and offering is natural, derived from the five elements of nature - earth, fire, sky, water and air - the five pillars of life. Chhath also is a symbolism of Hindu philosophy which says that a person is made of these five elements and then dissolves himself in those five elements after his life cycle comes to an end, he added. MCC Celebrates Chhath Puja With a Difference The Municipal Corporation has developed a beautiful sarovar (water body) for performing the ritual at Indra Colony, Manimajra, along with all the necessary materials through its self-help groups, all in one platform. Spokesperson said that it was a zero waste programme organized by the MCC. After the programme, all the decoration flowers will be used in the Arpan project of MCC and other residue of ritual puja of Chhat will be collected by the Visar Vahan for recycling. To make Chhath Puja a truly special occasion this year, the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation has provided a comprehensive platform for performing the ritual puja at a green belt in Indra Colony, including the development of a beautiful water body and an attractive landscape. Additionally, green rooms have been set up for changing clothes, and stalls have been organized to provide all the required items for the puja ceremony, prepared by women Self-Help Groups, he added.

BRIEFS

HP CM pays floral tribute to former PM Indira Gandhi on her birth anniversary
Shimla: Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvir Singh Sukhu on Sunday offered floral tributes to India's first woman Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on her birth anniversary at the historic Ridge. Recalling her contribution in nation building, the Chief Minister said that today, the country is getting the benefits of her visionary decisions. "She carried out brave decisions of bringing land reforms and nationalizing the banks to benefit the common man. She has also made an important contribution in the liberation of Bangladesh, which is an unparalleled example of patriotism," he said, adding that Indira Gandhi sacrificed her life for the unity and integrity of the country.

MCC committed towards sanitation and inclusivity: Commissioner
Chandigarh: On World Toilet Day, Municipal Corporation, Chandigarh (MCC), acknowledged and celebrated the exceptional efforts of sanitation workers in maintaining cleanliness and hygiene standards in the city's public conveniences. In recognition of their selfless service, Commissioner Anindita Mitra led a city-wide cleanliness drive with a visit to the Community Toilet in Sanjay Colony, Industrial Area, Phase-1, managed by the dedicated Pooja Self Help Group. During her visit, Mitra expressed her gratitude towards the sanitation workers for their unwavering commitment to maintaining the facility to high standards, showcasing the spirit of inclusivity and accessibility for all.

Haryana Govt undertakes several welfare measures for Anganwadi Workers, Helpers
Chandigarh: Haryana Minister of State for Women and Child Development Kamlesh Dhanda on Sunday expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar for increasing honorarium for Anganwadi workers and helpers in the State saying that the move not only ensured the highest honorarium nationwide but also worked towards providing more facilities compared to previous reigns. The Government's acknowledgment is expected to boost morale of thousands of Anganwadi workers and helpers in the State, encouraging them to fulfill their responsibilities even more effectively.

Developing tourism sector in full potential is Govt's top priority: Minister
Chandigarh/New Delhi: Punjab Tourism, Cultural Affairs and Investment Promotion Minister Anmol Gagan Maan said that Punjab Government's steps to develop tourism - eco-tourism, adventure and water sports and tourism sector as a whole in full potential - will bring exemplary results in near future. The Minister said that it is for the first time that the heritage fairs and festivals are being organized by the Punjab Government and for this particular purpose, a budget of Rs 15 crore has been allocated.

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Punjab Land of Unlimited Opportunities



Players of Punjab Enhanced the PRIDE OF THE NATION

Punjabi Players Break the Record of **72 Years**

Sr. No.	Asian Games	Gold Medal	Silver Medal	Bronze Medals	Total Medals
1	1951 New Delhi (India)	7	3	5	15
2	1954 Manila (Phillipines)	4	2	1	7
3	1958 Tokyo (Japan)	5	1	1	7
4	1962 Jakarta (Indonesia)	7	5	1	13
5	1966 Bangkok (Thailand)	4	1	4	9
6	1970 Bangkok (Thailand)	4	2	-	6
7	1974 Tehran (Iran)	-	6	5	11
8	1978 Bangkok (Thailand)	5	1	-	6
9	1982 New Delhi (India)	3	4	5	12
10	1986 Seoul (South Korea)	1	3	8	12
11	1990 Beijing (China)	1	1	-	2
12	1994 Heroshima (Japan)	1	1	2	4
13	1998 Bangkok (Thailand)	1	3	5	9
14	2002 Busan (South Korea)	4	3	2	9
15	2006 Doha (Qatar)	2	6	2	10
16	2010 Guangzhou (China)	2	2	3	7
17	2014 Incheon (South Korea)	3	1	4	8
18	2018 Jakarta (Indonesia)	3	2	3	8
19	2023 Hangzhou (China)	8	6	6	20

19 2023 Hangzhou (China) 8 6 6 20



Bhagwant Singh Mann
Chief Minister, Punjab

Asian Games-2023:Punjab's Medal Winning Players

Gold Medal	
Sport / Event	Name of Player
Rifle Shooting Individual	Sift Samra
Shooting Team	Arjun Singh Cheema
Shooting Team	Zorawar Singh Sandhu
Shotput (Athletics)	Tajinder Pal Singh Toor
Archery Team	Parneet Kaur
Men's Cricket	Arshdeep Singh, Prabhsimran Singh
Women's Cricket	Harmanpreet Kaur (Captain), Kanika Ahuja, Amanjot Kaur
Men's Hockey	Harmanpreet Singh (Captain), Hardik Singh (Vice Captain), Manpreet Singh, Mandeep Singh, Varun Kumar, Gurjant Singh, Shamsheer Singh, Krishan Bahadur Pathak, Jarmanpreet Singh Bal, Sukhjeet Singh

Silver Medal	
Sport / Event	Name of Player
Rifle Shooting Team	Sift Samra
800 Metre (Athletics)	Harmilan Bains
1500 Metre (Athletics)	Harmilan Bains
Badminton Team	Dhruv Kapila
Trap Shooting Team	Rajeshwari Kumari
Rowing Team	Jaswinder Singh, Charanjeet Singh

Bronze Medal	
Sport / Event	Name of Player
Shooting Pistol Team	Vijayveer Sidhu
Rowing Team	Satnam Singh, Sukhmeet Singh
Rowing Team	Jaswinder Singh
Race Walk Team (Athletics)	Manju Rani
Archery Team	Simranjeet Kaur
Shooting Skeet Team	Gurjoat Singh Khangura, Angad Vir Singh Bajwa

Classifieds

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Harjeet Gujral W/o Atinderpal Singh Gulati R/O H.No. 1453 Phase-3B2 (SAS Nagar, Mohali) Punjab-160059, (Aadhar Card No. 4808-1298-1259) declare that I have known by both names Harjeet Gujral and Harjeet Kaur Gulati is one and the same person.

CHANGE OF NAME

I (Ravi Dayal Nanda) s/o (Devki Nandan Nanda) r/o H.No., Purani Saji Mandi W NO-8 Nagar Palika Pathankot , TEH-Pathankot. Dist-Pathankot-145001 (Ravi Nanda) (old name) to (Ravi Dayal Nanda) (New Name)

I, Muskan daughter of Anuj Garg residence of h.no. 12, model town extension Panipat have changed my name to Muskan Garg for all purposes.

I, Mohinder Jain S/o Sh. Luna Ram R/O #14/231/2, Ram Colony, Barnala Road, Sirsa (Haryana) affirm that I have changed my name from Mohinder Jain to Mohinder Kumar. In future, my name is to be called as Mohinder Kumar.

I, Jasveer Sagu S/o Mool Chand R/o village Saniana, Tehsil Tohana, Distt. Fatehabad declares that both names i.e. Jasveer Sagu and Jasbir Singh are mine and of one person. All concerned please.

I, Mohammad Imran Nadwi S/o Sh Samayind, R/O Ward No. 05, Idgah Colony, Sonipat, and make this statement by oath. I have changed my name from Mohammad Imran to Mohammad Imran Nadwi. In future known and recognized me only name of Mohammad Imran Nadwi.

I, Yograj S/o Kulpreeth Singh R/O H.No.85, Kapurthala Road, New Goutam Nagar, Basti Bawa Kheh, Jalandhar have changed my name from Yograj to Yograj Singh (Singh as Surname)

I, Esha W/o Akshay Kumar Jamwal R/O H.No. 7, Gujja Peer Road, New Gobind Nagar, Jalandhar-144004, Punjab, have changed my name from Esha to Esha Jamwal, after marriage. (Surname as Jamwal).

I, Bakhshish Kaur W/o Pal Chand R/O Village Raowali, Nanpur, Jalandhar, Nanpur, Punjab- 144012. have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as Baksho Rani.

I, Sanjna D/o Surjit Pal R/O Khanaura, Hoshiarpur, Punjab-146001. have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as Sanjna Kumari.

I, Nonu Gupta S/o Naveen Gupta R/o 2, Telephone Exchange Road, Sainik Vihar, Jandli, Ambala City, Ambala, Haryana- 134003, have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as Aakarsh Gupta.

I, Phoolan Chauhan W/o Mukhtar Chauhan R/O H.No-90, Street No-05, Bhamian Road, Near Denty Sweet Shop, Kuliawal, Sawan Vihar, Focal Point, Ludhiana, Punjab-141010. have changed my name as Fula Devi.

I, Rakesh Rani W/o Kewal Krishan R/O H.No.5967, Street No-12, Ward No-40 Hargobind Nagar, near Hanuman Mandir, Ludhiana, Punjab-141008. have changed my name as Raksha Rani.

I, Sunita Kaler W/o Pardeep Kumar R/O Village Pandori Musharkati, Po,Bundala, Tehsil Phillaur, Distt. Jalandhar have changed my name from Sunita Kaler to Sunita Thaper, After marriage.

I, Surinder Singh S/o Pal Dass R/O VPO. Sunner Kalan, Tehsil Phillaur, Distt. Jalandhar have changed my name from Surinder Singh to Surinder Kumar.

I, Shifali Verma D/o Paramjit Kumar R/O Krishna Colony Goraya, Tehsil Phillaur, Distt. Jalandhar have changed my name from Shifali Verma to Shipali.

I, Rashmika Kaur D/o Bhupinder Singh Saini # 1614/A, Sector 32 Chandigarh declare that in my school record my Father's name is mentioned as Bhupinder Singh. That Bhupinder Singh Saini and Bhupinder Singh is one and the same person.

I Harjinder Kaur W/o Lakha Singh R/O Village Kansuha Khurd. Post Office Allowal (Patiala) have changed my name to Sukhdeep Kaur.

I, Charanjit Kaur Dhalwal W/o Hardev Singh R/O House No 498, Street No 3, Hira Mahal Nabha (Patiala) have changed my name to Charanjit Kaur.

I, Hardev Singh Dhalwal S/o Gurdial Singh R/O House No 498, Street No 3, Hira Mahal Nabha (Patiala) have changed my name to Hardev Singh.

I Sukhjith Kaur W/o Talwinder Singh R/O Village Ajnouda Kalan Nabha (Patiala) have changed my name to Sukhjith Kaur.

I, Sangeeta Manakatala wife of Vikas Kumar resident of House No. 14/21 Kucha Mahesh Chand Ferozepur City have changed my name Sangeeta Rani.

I Vikas Kumar son of Surinder Kumar resident of House No. 14/21 Kucha Mahesh Chand Ferozepur City Have changed my minor son name from Vyom Manakatala to Vyom Manakala.

I Vikas Kumar Mankatala son of Surinder Kumar resident of House No. 14/21 Kucha Mahesh Chand Ferozepur City have changed my name to Vikas Kumar.

I Boots Son of Ramjan Resident of Village Faride Wala, Sher Khan Wala District Ferozepur have changed my name to Buta.

I, Deepinder Kaur Alias Deepak W/o Harbhajan Singh R/O House No. 567, New Azad Nagar Ward No. 09, District Ferozepur Have Changed My Name To Deepinder Kaur.

I Gourav chhabra so Suresh chhabra, House number 92 shastri colony Yamunanagar, I clear that the name of Gourav chhabra and Gaurav chhabra is one and same person.

I, Ris Ranjeet Singh Yadav resident of Village- Noori, Post-Noori, Tehsil- Chandauli, District- Chandauli, State- UP, Pin-232106, have changed my Son name from Raghuber Yadav to Raghubeer Yadav Vide affidavit No.IN -PB59742609051143V dated 18 Nov 2023 before notary public Pathankot

I Charanjiv s/o Ram Jass Pal r/o h.no 353 Gandhi Nagar Gali no.8 karnal have changed my name from Charanjiv to Charanjiv Bhagrath

I, Paramjit Kaur Mankoo W/o Sharanjit Singh R/O Vpo. Jandaur Teh-Dasuya (Hoshiarpur) have changed my name to Paramjit Kaur.

I, Charu Sablok W/o Parvesh Garg R/O H.No.51, W.No.12, Ucha Vehra, Khanna (Ludhiana) have changed my name after marriage as Charu Garg.

I, Tania Khullar W/o Dipanshu Batra R/O H.No.93, W.No.20, Mala Rani Mohalla, Khanna (Ludhiana) have changed my name after marriage as Tania Batra.

I, Jasmit Kaur W/o Harpal Singh R/O Vpo. Jeobala (Tarn Taran) Punjab, have changed my name from Jasmeet Kaur to Jasmit Kaur.

I Parminder Kaur W/o Harvinder Singh R/O Chamba Kalan Distt Tarn Taran I have changed my name Parminder Kaur to Parvinder Kaur. Please Note All.

I Arti Devi W/o Amar Nath R/O Near Sham Mandir, Kotkapura (Faridkot) have changed my name to Arti Sharma.

I Manpreet Kaur W/o Jagmeet Singh Arora R/O S.B.S. College road, Near Kisan Cold Store, Kotkapura (Faridkot) have changed my name to Manpreet Kaur Arora.

I Sehajdeep Kaur D/O Kawaljeet Singh R/O House No 5/53 Mohalla Guru Ka Khuh Tehsil & Distt Tarn Taran Have Changed My Given Name To Sehajdeep And Surname To Kaur.

I Manjit Kaur W/O Dilbagh Singh R/O VPO Manochahal Kalan Tehsil & District Tarn Taran Have Changed My Name To Manjeet Kaur.

I, Smita Ashok Nair D/o Balakrishnan Soman Unnithan Resident of 1002, 10th floor, Tower C, Hermitage Park, Dhakoli, SAS Nagar, Punjab 160104 I have changed my Daughter name from Ramya Ashok Nair to Ramya Nair.

I hitherto known as Lovepreet Kaur Sidhu W/o Vipan Kumar Grover R/O House No. 445, Ward No. 25, Street No. 17/3, Preet Nagar, Moga, Punjab-142001, India have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Lovepreet Kaur.

I Rinku S/o Gurmeet Chand R/O V.P.O Malsian Patthi Shala Nagar, Tehsil Shahkot, Jalandhar, Punjab-144701, have changed my name to Rinku Sabharwal.

I Karan S/o Anmol Rattan Arora R/O 1022, Ward Number - 04, Gandhi Chowk, Shahkot, Jalandhar, Punjab-144702, have changed my name to Karan Arora.

I Meena D/o Satnam R/o Village Chak Vandal, Tehsil Nakodar, Chak Vandal, Jalandhar, Punjab - 144033, have changed my name to Meena Rani.

I Gurdev S/O Tara Singh R/O Vpo Kotla Heran Teh-Shahkot Police Station Nakodar, Distt Jalandhar, Punjab-144625, have changed my name to Gurdev Singh.

I Manjeet Kaur D/o Hardev Singh and W/o Ricky Singh Bhangal R/O VTC Bhangala, PO Bhangala, District Phillaur, Jalandhar, Punjab - 144033, have changed my name to Manjeet Kaur Bhangal.

Disclaimer: The Pioneer does not take responsibility for the contents of advertisements. Classifieds are carried in this newspaper. Readers are requested to verify the content on their own.

IN THE COURT OF Ms. Sarita Solanki Judicial Magistrate 1st Class, Gurugram. M/S PINNACLE CAPITAL SOLUTIONS PVT LTD VS. M/S 4 GENIUS MINDS CIS NO 7734/2018. PUBLICATION ISSUED TO: ABHISHEK AGARWAL, DIRECTOR, ADITYA AGARWAL, PARTNER OF M/S 4 GENIUS MINDS K-1/17, CHITTRANJAN PARK NEW DELHI, M/S 4 GENIUS MINDS M-46 GK-1 NEW DELHI, 110048.

IN THE COURT OF Ms. Sarita Solanki Judicial Magistrate 1st Class, Gurugram. M/S INDIA INFOLINE HOUSING FINANCE LTD VS. DHARAMVIR CIS NO. 2697/2018. PUBLICATION ISSUED TO: DHARAMVIR PLOT NO. - 51 EXT FLAT NO 202, 1ST FLOOR UTTAM VIHAR WEST DELHI 110059.

IN THE COURT OF Ms. Sarita Solanki Judicial Magistrate 1st Class, Gurugram. M/S PINNACLE CAPITAL SOLUTIONS PVT LTD VS. M/S 4 GENIUS MINDS CIS NO 7734/2018. PUBLICATION ISSUED TO: ABHISHEK AGARWAL, DIRECTOR, ADITYA AGARWAL, PARTNER OF M/S 4 GENIUS MINDS K-1/17, CHITTRANJAN PARK NEW DELHI, M/S 4 GENIUS MINDS M-46 GK-1 NEW DELHI, 110048.

HIMACHAL PRADESH STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED (A State Govt. Undertaking). "SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING E-TENDERING" (E-Tendering Mode Only). Online tender is hereby invited by the undersigned, for and on behalf of the Chairman-cum-Management Director, HPSEB Ltd. Shimla-4 from the experienced/reputed bidders.

Chunav सूचना: चुनाव तिथि :- 29.12.2023. दि जाण्डवाला बागड प्राथमिक कृषि सहकारी समिति लिओ जाण्डवाला बागड (पैक्स) तहसील व जिला फतेहाबाद के सभी सदस्यों को सूचित किया जाता है कि आपकी सहकारी समिति की प्रबन्धक कमेटी का चुनाव हरियाणा सहकारी समितियां, संघोषित अधिनियम 2006 की धारा 28 के प्रावधानों के अन्तर्गत निम्नलिखित कार्यक्रम अनुसार दिनांक 29.12.2023 को होना निश्चित हुआ है।

STATE BANK OF INDIA Railway Road, Kotakpura. [Rule-8(1)] Possession Notice (For Immovable Property). Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised officer of the State Bank Of India, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No.3 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice to borrower(s)/ guarantor(s), on the date mentioned hereunder, calling upon the borrower(s)/ guarantor(s), to repay the amount mentioned in the respective demand notice, within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice(s).

Chunav सूचना: चुनाव तिथि :- 22.12.2023. दि गौरखपुर प्राथमिक कृषि सहकारी समिति लिओ गौरखपुर (पैक्स) तहसील व जिला फतेहाबाद के सभी सदस्यों को सूचित किया जाता है कि आपकी सहकारी समिति की प्रबन्धक कमेटी का चुनाव हरियाणा सहकारी समितियां, संघोषित अधिनियम 2006 की धारा 28 के प्रावधानों के अन्तर्गत निम्नलिखित कार्यक्रम अनुसार दिनांक 22.12.2023 को होना निश्चित हुआ है।

Chunav सूचना: चुनाव तिथि :- 22.12.2023. दि गौरखपुर प्राथमिक कृषि सहकारी समिति लिओ गौरखपुर (पैक्स) तहसील व जिला फतेहाबाद के सभी सदस्यों को सूचित किया जाता है कि आपकी सहकारी समिति की प्रबन्धक कमेटी का चुनाव हरियाणा सहकारी समितियां, संघोषित अधिनियम 2006 की धारा 28 के प्रावधानों के अन्तर्गत निम्नलिखित कार्यक्रम अनुसार दिनांक 22.12.2023 को होना निश्चित हुआ है।

SMFG INDIA HOME FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED (FORMERLY FULLERTON INDIA HOME FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED) Corporate Off. : 503 & 504, 5th Floor, G-Block, Inspire Park, BKC Main Road, Bandra Kuria Complex, Bandra (E), Mumbai - 400051

DEMAND NOTICE UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 ("the Act") AND THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002 ("the Rules") The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of SMFG India Home Finance Company Limited (Formerly Fullerton India Home Finance Company Limited) (SMFGIHFL) under the Act and in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 13 (12) of the Act read with Rule 3 issued Demand Notice(s) under Section 13(2) of the Act, calling upon the following borrower(s) to repay the amount mentioned in respective notice(s) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The undersigned reasonably believes that borrower(s) is/are avoiding the service of the Demand Notice(s), therefore the service of notice is being effected by affixation and publication as per Rules. The contents of Demand Notice(s) are extracted herein below :

Table with columns: SL. No., Loan Account No. & Name of the Borrower / Co-Borrowers Property Holders as the case may be, Date of Demand Notice U/s, 13 (2) & Total O/s. Includes details for Kawaljeet Singh, Maninder Kaur, Priyanka Kumari, Uma Kant Thakur, Amar Singh, Ritu Singh, Ektar Singh, and Arjan Dass.

Public Notice: I, Ghan Chand alias Giani Ram, son of Shri Amar Singh, R/o H. No. 352 PLA, Hisar (Haryana), declare that my son Deepak and my daughter-in-law Rubi Devi, who Deepak are beyond of my saying and live separately from me. I disinherit both of them from all my movable and immovable property. In future I will have nothing to do with these two, Whoever deals with them will be responsible for himself/herself. I or any member of my family will not be responsible. Deponent.

सार्वजनिक सूचना (नगर निगम रोडका) जन साधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि दिनेश कोहली पुत्र स्वर्गीय सतदेव कोहली ने जापान नं. 1207/9 बंगाली मोहल्ला अम्बाला राजनी जो कि सतदेव कोहली पुत्र हनुमंत राय कोहली के नाम गृहकार में दर्ज है अब वसोयत/ भाग्य पत्र / मूल प्रमाण पत्र के आधार पर अपने नाम करवाने को नगर परिषद अम्बाला सदर जिले में आदेश दिया है और किसी भी व्यक्ति को यह नाम बदलने वर किन्हीं भी तरह का दरवाजा नही तो 15 दिन के भीतर दरवाजा सौदा कर सकता है अन्यथा नियमानुसार नाम बदल दिया जाएगा। सविन नगर परिषद अम्बाला

सार्वजनिक सूचना (नगर निगम रोडका) सर्व साधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि नरम निगम, रोडका की कर शाखा के सफलकर के रिकार्ड में नई प्रोपर्टी आईडी नं. 1HLTK4V7 सुपनी प्रोपर्टी आईडी नं. 250C198U291 बार्ड नं.पता जनात कालोनी, रोडका श्री/श्रीमती जेड एम पुत्र मेहर चंद के नाम से दर्ज है। अब नरम निगम के रिकार्ड में इस आईडी नं. में प्रार्थी सिस्का नाम श्री/श्रीमती विजये सिंह पुत्र जेड एम के द्वारा वसोयत/वासना के आधार पर अपने नाम रद्दकरना करवाना चाहते हैं। यदि किसी भी व्यक्तियुक्त को इनके नाम रद्दकरने में कोई भी आपत्ति है तो 30दिन के अंदर-अंदर नरम निगम कार्यालय में अपनी आपत्ति दर्ज करवायें, अन्यथा प्रोपर्टी टेक्स में उसके नाम रद्दकरने कर दी जाएगी। सिस्के लिमि नरम निगम, रोडका कोर्डेस रोडवर्क नही होगा। क्रमिक: MCR2712023/2536 क्षेत्रीय सहायक अधिकारी दिनांक: 09.11.2023 नरम निगम, रोडका

Public Notice: I, Ghan Chand alias Giani Ram, son of Shri Amar Singh, R/o H. No. 352 PLA, Hisar (Haryana), declare that my son Deepak and my daughter-in-law Rubi Devi, who Deepak are beyond of my saying and live separately from me. I disinherit both of them from all my movable and immovable property. In future I will have nothing to do with these two, Whoever deals with them will be responsible for himself/herself. I or any member of my family will not be responsible. Deponent.

Classified Advertisement: The Pioneer. COLOR OR BLACK AND WHITE ADS CONTACT: 9417419351

Thousands offer 'arghya' at sunset

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Thousands of devotees thronged various Ganga and Varuna ghats apart from some ponds including famous Surya Sarovar in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) premises here on Sunday evening to offer 'arghya' to Surya Bhagwan (Sun God) at the time of sunset on the penultimate day of four-day Surya Shasthi festival, popularly known as Dala Chhath Puja. Heavy rush of devotees was seen at the ghats.

Elaborate security arrangements have been made at various ghats and ponds when the cops were deployed in civil uniforms on the banks of river Ganga between Samnaghat and Rajghat. Besides, the personnel of Water Police and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) kept vigil on 88-odd Ganga ghats and in the river through boats. The activities of trouble makers and anti-social elements were watched through drones and CCTV cameras installed at the major ghats. The vehicles including two wheelers were not allowed to reach Ganga ghats.

The devotees started thronging various ghats of Ganga and Varuna to secure space at the stairs in the afternoon hours. Rush was also seen at different ghats of Ramnagar including Shastri and Balua ghats. The ghats like Dashaswamedh, Rajendra Prasad, Ahliyabai, Man Mandir, Assi, Sheela, Scindia, Panchganga, Nagva, Bhainsasur, Rajghat, Narad,



Devotees offering arghya at sunset during Chhath Puja in Varanasi on Sunday evening.

Kedar, Hanuman, Ravidas and Tulsī Ghat witnessed gathering of a heavy rush of devotees. Besides, a rush of devotees was also seen at Shastri and other ghats of river Varuna. Rush of devotees was also seen at various kund and ponds including in BLW.

For the last many days, there was a festive mood in the markets due to this festival which has become very popular in this holy city in the recent decades as thousands of families from different districts of Purvanchal (eastern UP) and adjoining areas migrated here and settled in hundreds of new colonies in all the outskirts of the city. It was due to this popularity, now the district

administration and police have been forced to make proper arrangements and for the last many days, through dozens of pumps, Nagar Nigam was also trying to remove the silt collected at the stairs of ghats during the recent floods apart from launching a massive cleanliness drive. For making elaborate security arrangements, six teams of NDRF were deployed in the city ghats apart from two in Chandauli areas across the river Ganga with all necessary safety equipment and water ambulance. To handle the responsibility of security and medical care of the devotees coming in view of Chhath, the NDRF personnel were deployed at the Ganga ghats.

Manoj Kumar Sharma, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of 11th Battalion NDRF, said that six teams were deployed in the Ganga river in Varanasi and each team consisted of 25 to 30 personnel. NDRF rescue personnel were deployed at all major ghats with water ambulances, divers, paramedics, deep divers, deep diving suits, life jackets, oxygen cylinders and other necessary rescue equipment. NDRF rescue personnel along with rescue motor boats and water ambulances continued patrolling the Ganga for the safety of the devotees. There were also trained MFR (Medical First Aid and Response) personnel on all boats.

Cleanliness drive launched at Ganga ghats

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The activists of Namami Gange conducted a cleanliness campaign from Sangtha to Scindia ghats here on Sunday before the start of Surya Shasthi (Dala Chhath) festival. The activists removed puja (worship) materials lying on the banks of the river and appealed to the people to keep the ghats clean. Offering their shramdaan, the activists collected the garbage scattered here and there and kept them in the dustbins so that the same can be shifted from there. They also stopped many people from immersing the idols of deities in the Ganga by filling them in polythene bags.

Regional convener (Kashi) Rajesh Shukla said that the Chhath festival has been celebrated since time immemorial in which the prayers are to be offered to Lord Bhaskar (Surya Bhagwan), who transmits energy on the earth.

Before the festival, the work of cleaning water bodies like rivers, ponds, puddles etc starts. The importance of Chhath Puja is not only limited



Namami Gange activists removing garbage at Scindia Ghat in Varanasi on Sunday morning.

to religious or folk life, but it also underlines the relationship between our environment and lifestyle.

Today, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi is running an awareness mission about programmes like 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan', campaign against single-use plastic, it has become more relevant to

mention the importance of Chhath, because in this festival special attention is given to cleanliness, he added.

Atharvaraj Pandey, representative of the National Mission for Clean Ganga (New Delhi), said that Chhath Mahaparv is special from the point of view of cleanliness and environment along with reli-

gious importance. Lok Parv Chhath is a great festival of worship of nature, which gives the message of making the environment clean.

City co-coordinators Sarika Gupta and Seema Choudhary, Sonu, Pankaj Kumar, Pintu Sharma, Sanjay Gupta etc were also present and offered Shramdaan.

Inspect paddy purchasing centres: Varanasi DM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam gave necessary instructions to the district level/ nodal officers deployed in paddy procurement to inspect the paddy purchasing centres at a meeting held at the Rifle Club here on Saturday. He directed every nodal officer to check whether the banner at the purchasing centre mentioning toll free number and the mobile number on it or not so that the farmers can register their complaints in case of any problem.

He also directed the officers to check the availability of electronic measurements, dusters, moisture meters and cotton bags at the paddy purchasing centres. Besides, he said that the details of online paddy purchase should be checked from the centre in-charges, whether the payment has been made to the farmers or not.

"Payment to farmers should be made within 48 hours. Also check the proceedings of appointment and agreement of handling and transportation contractors, rice mill affiliations and agreement at the purchasing centre," he said, instructing the officers that token registers should be maintained at the centres and purchases should be made as per the token and the farmers should not be returned from the



DM S Rajalingam holding a meeting of officers on paddy purchasing centre in Varanasi on Saturday.

centres under any circumstances.

The DM said that the nodal officers should contact the farmers in the centres as well as in the nearby villages and find out at which centres the farmers sold their paddy apart from where, when and at what price they sold the same.

The storage capacity at the purchasing centres should be checked and whether the paddy is being dispatched to the rice mills on time or not. The amenities for the farmers at the purchasing centres such as seating arrangements, drinking water, space for parking vehicles etc should also be checked.

All the nodal officers should inspect the purchasing centres once a week and if any shortage or irregularity is found at the purchasing centres, it should be immediately informed to the ADM (Civil Supplies) and District Food Marketing Officer.

The DM has taken the District Manager (PCU) to task for not getting the contract for handling/ transportation contractors and rice mill and zero purchase at four purchasing centres and non-payment to farmers.

He instructed the District Food Marketing department to forward a letter to the government for action against the said officer.

Similarly, the DM has also taken the concerned officers of two purchase centres each of PCF and UPS to task for zero purchase and less payment.

He gave instructions to the officers to get the purchases done by Monday. Rajalingam instructed the purchasing agencies to ensure payment to farmers within 48 hours.

District Food Marketing Officer informed that so far a total of 8636.70 quintals of paddy has been purchased from 197 farmers in the district. Registration has been done by 3636 farmers in the district, out of which 2232 have been verified.

Indira Marathon: Baghel, Renu Singh stand first

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Army's runners won the 38th Indira Marathon on Sunday. Army's Jaswant Singh Baghel stood first in the men's category in the race of 42.195 km whereas in the women's category, Renu Singh of the Army bagged the first position. Renu is posted in CISF Bhopal. In the women's category, Nutan stood second and Shipra stood third. Nutan is of Delhi while Shipra is from Prayagraj.

In the men's category, B Srinu of Army stood second and Anil Kumar of Prayagraj stood third. As many as 410 runners participated in the marathon. The marathon which started from Anand Bhawan ended at Madan Mohan Malviya Stadium. Jaswant Baghel of Firozabad, has won the first prize in Indira Marathon. He received Rs 2 lakh as prize. His father is a farmer and mother a housewife. Jaswant said, "I have participated in Indira Marathon

for the first time and started preparations for running six months ago. I practised for half an hour every day under the supervision of the coach. I never felt tired while running".

The theme of the marathon was kept as "Cleanliness on Run, No Plastic Run". Keeping Mahakumbh in mind, this theme was kept to make people aware. The first prize money in men's and women's category has been kept at Rs 2 lakh. The second winner received a prize money of Rs 1 lakh, while the third winner got a prize money of Rs 75,000. As many as 11 athletes were also given a consolation prize of Rs 10,000 each. Overall, the participants were awarded prize money of Rs 9.70 lakh. All the winners were also given a certificate for participating in the marathon. A total of 1,000 officers and employees were deployed to conduct the Indira Marathon. Security arrangements were also tight.

CASE REGISTERED: A

case has been registered against seven people, including slain mafia Ashraf's wife Zainab Fatima, for allegedly seizing and selling Waqf property worth Rs 50 crore.

The employee looking after the property said in the report lodged at Puramufiti police station that the owner of the land living in America did not sign the sale deed anywhere. When he protested against the sale and possession, he was given death threats. This FIR was lodged by Mabud Alam of Puramufiti.

He first told the police that Syed Mohammad Ijaz had given dozens of bighas of his land to the Waqf Board years ago. The mutawalli has appointed Mohammad Asiyam to look after the property. About six months ago, Mohammad Ijaz had to go out of the district for cancer treatment.

Meanwhile, Zainab Ashraf's brothers-in-law Zaid and Saddam etc in connivance

with Mohammad Asiyam and his wife Jinnat, allegedly seized the waqf property.

It is alleged that mutawalli's wife Jinnat, in connivance with land mafia, made a fake agreement and sold the waqf property.

Landowner Syed Mohammad Ijaz has gone to America long ago. The waqf property has been sold without his signature. The value of the property is around Rs 50 crore. DCP Nagar Deepak Bhukar said that a case has been registered against all the seven accused and investigation is underway.

R E W A R D ANNOUNCED: Police has announced a reward of Rs 50,000 on mafia Atiq Ahmed's henchman and owner of Eat On Biryani, Nafees Biryani. The Creta used in the Umesh Pal murder case belonged to Nafees whose name was included during investigation. Nafees is absconding since the Umesh Pal murder case.

New chapter in fight against dengue virus

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Sinapic acid, which is found in spices, fruits, and oils, especially in green and dry olive, could be used as a potential antidote to dengue, a study has established.

Undertaken by Amit Dubey, an Allahabad University alumnus and his Malaysian counterpart Prof Aluwī, the study has been published in a journal called 'Aspects of Molecular Medicine' published by Netherland-based Elsevier. The duo has unveiled the game-changing findings on Sinapic acid's potential to combat dengue virus.

Amidst the relentless battle against dengue virus, a global symphony of hope resonates. Each year 50-100 million individuals face its grip, with 5,00,000 falling prey to severe dengue hemorrhagic fever, resulting in 20,000 fatalities, said Dubey, adding that Sinapic acid is a culinary marvel hidden in everyday delights including spices, citrus, berries, vegetables, cereals and olive oils.

Sinapic acid derivatives showcase impressive interactions with DENV proteins, scoring well in a sort of molecular docking experiment.

They play a leading role in activating enzymes in our body performing a captivating ballet of health effects. However, there is cautious note about their safety, expressed through toxicity rates across different ways they could enter the body.

This breakthrough resonates as a crispy melody of hope, heralding a new chapter in the fight against dengue virus, said Dubey.

BODY DONATED: The 84th body donation took place in the Anatomy Department of Moti Lal Nehru Medical College (MNLMC). Raju (63) of Satna, Madhya Pradesh, died on November 18. The family wanted to donate the body to the medical college.

On behalf of Sri Satya Sai Seva Sangathan, Satna, this information was given to Dr SP Singh, Principal of MNLMC. The process of body donation was completed immediately. The body was kept safe in the

department by Dr Badal Singh, Associate Professor.

The team of Manohar Das Eye Hospital also completed the process of eye donation which will be implanted in the eyes of a needy.

Deceased Raju was associated with social work for a long time by joining Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation. After his death, he was being brought to Prayagraj for the last rites. On getting information Dr SP Singh talked to the family and organisation members. After mutual consent, everyone donated the body to the medical college.

VANDALISED: Dozens of miscreants entered a shop in Sonar Ka Tara area of Meja police station area and vandalised it over a rent dispute and threatened to kill the owner. Following a complaint police have registered a case and started investigating the matter. Asharam of Tulapur Auta village, runs an electronics shop in a rented room in Sonar Ka Tara area. He was at home on Saturday night. His younger brother and nephew

Rahul were at the shop. As soon as dozens of miscreants reached the shop, they started hurling abuses over the rent dispute.

When people protested they entered the shop and started beating and vandalising it. Seeing the crowd the goons managed to escape. The victim gave a written complaint at Meja police station demanding action from the police.

Jevnia outpost in-charge Brijesh Kumar Tiwari said that there was a fight between the two parties over the rent. A case has been registered on the complaint of the shopkeeper.

Meanwhile, half a dozen boys chased a student going to the coaching centre and beat him up in the middle of the road in an area under Meja police station. The student riding the bicycle was beaten badly with a belt and fists. The police have started investigating the matter. ACP Major Vimal Kishore Mishra said that he has received information about the video. The police has been instructed to investigate and take action.

Loan approval letters distributed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

VARANASI (PNS): With an objective to achieve the target of retail, agriculture and MSME set by the government at Centre, the Indian Bank, Zonal Office, Varanasi organised a programme here to distribute the loan approval letters to the beneficiaries. The chief guest

and MD & CEO of Indian Bank SL Jain distributed the loan approval letters to the beneficiaries and while addressing the customers assured that the bank would provide the qualitative service to them. He also assured the customers to make the facilities and services more

easier and significant. The Zonal Manager Rajesh said that we are committed to provide banking services to customers and added that the customers could take advantage of the bank's mobile application IndOASIS MobileApp being at home. The sub-zonal

manager Anant Kumar offered a vote of thanks, while Chief General Manager Vikas Kumar, Regional General Manager of Prayagraj Region Naveen Kumar Srivastava and officers of Varanasi, Prayagraj, Gorakhpur and Mirzapur zones attended the programme.

Sampoorna Samadhan Diwas organised

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

On Sampoorna Samadhan Diwas organised on Saturday Divisional Commissioner Dr Muthukumarasami B heard the grievances of the aggrieved at Sadar tehsil and District Magistrate Priyanka Niranjana at Chunar tehsil During the hearing at Sadar tehsil headquarters the DC directed the officials concerned to ensure disposal of cases to the satisfaction of the parties concerned but on merit basis. He reviewed the disposal of cases of the last Sampoorna Samadhan Diwas. On the day out of 222 cases only one could be disposed of on the spot. The DC inspected the tehsil office too and issued the necessary directions to the officials concerned. The DM while hearing the cases at tehsil headquarters Chunar formed 12 teams with the direction to go to the spot, solve the matters on merit and report through the SDM. A complainant Shailendra Tripathi of Arajiline Sultanpur village alleged that a resident of same village had grabbed the barren land by doing construction. A Divyang person, Malloo of Bhuli Khas village complained that he was deprived of the facility of house under government scheme despite being eligible. Out of 148 applications only two could be disposed of on the spot. Chief



District Magistrate Priyanka Niranjana hearing the problems of the people during the Sampoorna Samadhan Diwas organised at Chunar tehsil on Saturday

Development Officer (CDO) Srilaxmi VS, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr CL Verma and other officers were present. In Lalganj tehsil Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) Satya Prakash Singh heard the grievances of the aggrieved.

INSPECTED: Deputy regional marketing officer Dhananjay Singh on Saturday inspected the paddy purchase centres of the district. During it the centre set up at Mahamalpur under Mahajawan block was found closed and no staff was present to tell about the reason. Dy RMO said the centre was to be run by UPSS for which the district manager concerned has been informed with the direction to take action against the incharge for laxity and show cause notice has been issued to the district manager concerned.

He said against the target of purchasing two lakh tonnes of paddy in the district through different purchase centres 675.96 MT had been procured through 145 farmers and online registration of 17,807 farmers had been registered. About Shree Anna he said till date purchase of about 600 tonnes had been completed. He said he had asked all purchase centres as well as agencies to ensure that they remain open all the day and no excuse will be accepted. Instructions had already been issued to ensure facilities for farmers at all centres, he added.

S U S P E N D E D : Superintendent of Police (SP) Abhinandan has suspended two constables for laxity in duty. Two criminals who had been arrested by the Dehat Kotwali police after an

encounter were undergoing treatment at the divisional hospital and two constables had been deployed there for security. During the inspection of Station House Officer (SHO) Dehat Kotwali Shailesh Rai the constables were found absent about which he reported to the SP. Taking the matter seriously the SP issued the suspension order.

ARRESTED: The Rajgarh police have arrested cattle smuggler carrying a reward of Rs 50,000 after an encounter late on Saturday evening. After Station House Officer (SHO) Rana Pratap Yadav was tipped off by an informer the police rushed to the spot. On seeing the police the smuggler tried to flee on his motorcycle. When the police chased him he opened fire. In self defence the police retaliated and the cattle smuggler received a bullet injury in his leg and was nabbed.

He was identified as Ajeet Paswan of Akkhor village under Robertsganj police station, Sonbhadra, and brought to the CHC in an injured condition from where he was referred to the trauma centre Mirzapur. CO (Naxal) Anil Kumar Pandey said the smuggler was out of danger and was under treatment at the hospital.

The police had recovered a country-made gun, a cartridge etc from him, he added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Waiting to exhale

Delhi's air quality improves marginally, but that is no reason to lower the guard just yet

In the smog-heavy and pollution-laden environment that defines the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) in the winter months, this is as exciting as it gets. Notorious for severe pollution, the Capital is witnessing a positive turn as the toxic air levels come down somewhat and schools reopen today. The improved air quality is a welcome respite for residents who have long grappled with hazardous pollution conditions. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the battle may have been won, but the war is far from over. Regrettably, the authorities can claim little credit for this sudden and pleasant development, for it can be traced easily to conducive weather conditions. Over the weekend, Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) registered significant improvement, if it can be called that, transitioning from 'severe' to 'very poor.' The positive shift prompted the Government to reopen all schools in the Capital; however, outdoor sports activities and the morning assembly in the open will not be held at least this week. The sub-committee on the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) revoked its invocation of Stage IV, which had mandated stringent measures to combat the pollution. The Commission for Air Quality Management has lifted Stage IV of GRAP, allowing the entry of medium and heavy goods vehicles into the Capital. All this signals a degree of confidence in the improving air quality scenario, but it also underscores the need for continuous monitoring and proactive measures to sustain the current improvement going forward.



The AQI level in Delhi is hovering around 300+, which is still way above the acceptable limit, categorising the air quality as 'very poor.' Ghaziabad, Gurugram, Greater Noida, Noida and Faridabad are also in the same bracket, making the NCR one of the most polluted regions across the world. Logically and medically speaking, the 'very poor' air quality level must be taken seriously and no outdoor activity should be permitted as it drastically heightens the risk of asthma and other bronchial diseases. Children, the elderly and the already sick can be adversely affected by high PM 2.5 levels as particulate matter can seep deep into their blood stream and make them sick. Meanwhile, as the NCR slowly steps into a new phase of cautious reopening, all the residents, authorities and educational institutes must work collaboratively to ensure the well-being of the community. Implementing sustainable practices, promoting green initiatives and adhering to pollution control measures will be crucial in maintaining and improving the falling air quality in the region. While the immediate future appears promising, a long-term commitment to environmental consciousness is imperative for the well-being of the NCR's residents. The Government must make concerted efforts to deal with the problem which is not only a blot on the capital but also a health hazard.

PICTALK



Devotees perform rituals during celebrations of 'Chhath Puja' festival, in New Delhi.

Tomorrow's world belongs to children

This World Children's Day, let us reiterate our commitment to safeguard children's rights and ensure bright future for them

The anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on World Children's Day is a cannot-miss opportunity for society collectively, to set the agenda and speak loudly for the universality of child rights.

Child rights, inherent to every child globally, must be enjoyed regardless of age, caste, religion, or gender. The UNCRC delineates these rights, encompassing crucial elements such as the right to survival, education, protection from harm, holistic development, participation in decisions, affirming identity, and fostering an inclusive environment for children to thrive. Child rights are basic human rights and are fundamental to a prosperous and just society. Unfortunately, too many children across the world are being denied these rights. World Children's Day serves as a crucial reminder to refocus on safeguarding and nurturing children's fundamental principles and rights.

No Girl Should Miss Opportunities

However, gender biases pose a significant hurdle in achieving an equitable environment for every child. Evident not only in India but globally, these biases hinder the realisation of child rights, impacting both boys and girls differently. Boys often experience more freedom, while girls face limitations that hinder their potential and decision-making abilities, affecting various aspects including education, and marriage, and exposing them to social challenges like child marriage, teenage pregnancy, child labour, and missed opportunities in life. Boys can be involved in positive masculinity by championing girl's issues. One of UNICEF's programmes in Jharkhand - the child reporter's programme which works with both girls and boys and empowers children - to champion issues in their community such as ending child marriage and education of the girl child among others. Girls and boys when allowed to think and innovate - can be smart and innovate for social good. For this, girls must have equal access



to books, digital devices, and resources to promote learning. Girls these days can aspire to have access to and choose any vocation or career. For this, all girls and boys must remain enrolled in secondary education. Addressing these challenges is crucial to fostering equity and inclusion for every child, irrespective of gender to build a society where every child's rights are respected without discrimination.

Empower Children And Adolescents For A Brighter Future

However, this ambition cannot be realised in isolation. Empowering children and adolescents is pivotal in fulfilling child rights. Adolescence, marked by rapid physical, and mental development, coupled with emotional and behavioural changes shapes their understanding of societal norms and gender. Upholding their rights during this crucial stage is essential, enabling them to make informed actions without discrimination and fostering a bias-free environment. Harnessing their potential allows them to actively participate in creating a more inclusive and just world for all children, especially the most vulnerable. Education as a catalyst Education, as a basic child right itself, holds immense potential in shaping youths as advocates for child rights. Quality education not only



PARENTS, AS PRIMARY CAREGIVERS, MUST INITIATE EDUCATION BY ENABLING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT VALUING EVERY CHILD'S RIGHTS

breaks the cycle of poverty but also acts as a catalyst for addressing various social inequities. It nurtures critical thinking, empathy, and a sense of social responsibility, encouraging active involvement in initiatives centred on child welfare. It equips youths with legal understanding and leadership skills, empowering them to identify, prevent, and address violations of child rights. Despite its significance, barriers persist in achieving universal education access for all children. Overcoming these issues requires joint efforts from influential figures in a child's life like parents and teachers. They are pivotal in instilling the value of education and fostering an understanding of child rights.

Our Responsibility For Promoting Child Rights

Parents, as primary caregivers, must initiate education by enabling a learning environment valuing every child's rights. Engaging in conversations and setting examples, can instil crucial values of respect, equality, and advocacy. Similarly, teachers play a vital role in shaping children's perceptions. Beyond academics, they serve as guides, and integrating child rights lessons into the curriculum and creating safe spaces for discussions on children's challenges, can inspire students to advocate for their rights and the rights of others.

Policymakers also wield significant influence in shaping child rights, and creating an environment that nurtures children's holistic development, ensuring their rights are respected and protected. They need to enforce laws ensuring access to education, healthcare, and protection from exploitation. Policies must prioritise equitable education access and essential healthcare services for all children while addressing issues like child labour and abuse. In its unwavering dedication to safeguarding child rights, UNICEF collaborates with governments, NGOs, corporations, and academic institutions, forming partnerships to ensure every child enjoys their rights. Through these diverse alliances, UNICEF extends its reach and impact, working collectively to safeguard and uphold the rights of every child worldwide.

On this World Children's Day, it's vital to recommit to these challenges. Let's not just talk about child rights but actively work to safeguard, advocate, and practice them. Our combined efforts today will shape a world where every child's rights are acknowledged and protected for the future.

(Dr. Kaninika Mitra is the Chief of UNICEF Jharkhand and Astha Alang is the Communication Specialist, UNICEF Jharkhand, views are personal)

Citation is not the last word in scientific research

Real-world applications, influence on public policy, or inspiring future generations may not be immediately reflected in citation

The productivity of scientific research is often evaluated through bibliometric analysis that mostly depends on the citation indices. Citation indexes are databases or tools used to measure how influential certain academic works have been through their citations. Researchers and institutions typically use these indices to estimate the importance of a given paper, author, or journal in the academic community. The evolution of citation databases can be traced back to the mid-20th century. The Science Citation Index (SCI), established by Dr. Eugene Garfield, is one of the first and most prominent citation indexes. Despite the existence of citation indices for almost fifty years, there are still some intriguing questions that have not been answered. Do the papers with the highest number of citations represent the most significant ones? Do most cited papers produce disruptive research and innovation? Indeed, citations are universally acknowledged as a conventional gauge of academic impact, indicating that a piece of work has not only been



read but also found valuable for subsequent research. Scientific papers that have a large number of citations play a crucial role in the network of sharing and discussing scientific information. The absence of citations does not necessarily mean that a work is unimportant. It might be ahead of its time, focused on a niche topic, or overlooked by the research community. Research impact can take time, and some groundbreaking ideas might gain recognition only after a considerable period. One of the papers about measuring osmotic pressure published by the geneticist and Nobel prizewinner Oliver Smithies in 1953, had "the dubious distinction of never being cited". While citations can be a measure of impact, they do not always reflect the quality of a work. A paper might be cited frequently for reasons other than its scientific rigour, such as controversy or popularity

or even by the author concerned. Many factors influence whether a paper gets cited, including the visibility of the journal, the popularity of the topic, and the author's network. High-quality research may go unnoticed due to factors unrelated to its merit. Of late, many journal editors are compelling prospective authors to cite papers published in their journals to increase the impact factor. The number of citations does not determine the accuracy or truthfulness of research findings. Scholars may cite work for critique, replication, or to build upon it without necessarily endorsing its conclusions. Not all impacts of research are captured by citations. Real-world applications, influence on public policy, or inspiring future generations may not be immediately reflected in citation counts. There are many excellent disruptive research works that get published in low-profile journals, which many eminent scientists fear to cite due to repercussions from competent authority. Many consider low-profile journals classified as 'predatory', the term which to date

has no clear-cut definition. Even if we go by the definition given by scholars in 2019, "Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterised by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices", many so-called reputed journals fall into this category. Researchers and institutions are increasingly recognising the limitations of relying solely on citation metrics to assess the value of research. Altmetrics, which consider social media mentions, downloads, and other non-traditional indicators, are gaining prominence as complements to traditional citation metrics. Researchers should be aware of these myths and consider a broader range of indicators when evaluating the impact and significance of their work.

The writer is a science communicator and an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru; views are personal



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INDIAN LEOPARDS

Sir— Amid the tigers and the cheetahs, the beautiful Indian leopards are often forgotten. There always has been a tremendous confusion about the leopard-number in the country. As of 2020, the leopard count was approximately 13000 within forested habitats in tiger range landscapes in India. The number may as well be much more if non-forest habitats and elevated areas are taken into consideration. India needs more sanctuaries and groundwater to prevent the animal from straying to human dwellings. Landscape fragmentation, electrocution, poisoning and road accidents have proved lethal to the leopards. Stringent laws have to be put in place to preserve them. Poachers need to be dealt with severely to protect the animals from going the way of their famous brethren—the tigers.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

ELECTION PROMISES

Sir—Addressing an election rally in Gadwal, Telangana, Union Home Minister (HM) Amit Shah alleged that the Congress has hindered and delayed construction of the Ram temple for the last 70 years (sadly, his amnesia, not to mention the court case). Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi performed the 'Bhumi Puja' at the temple, and the 'pran pratishtha' will be done on January 22, 2024. HM Shah not only stopped here; he, like Madhya Pradesh (MP) and other states, once again promised that if BJP gained power in Telangana, its government would send people from the state to Ram temple in Ayodhya, as he said earlier in MP "Don't spend money. HM Amit Shah is playing excellent politics. By saying Ram now and then, he is keeping his Hindu vote intact, and by doing real development, he is keeping his smart people's vote intact. However, people wonder: has HM Shah fallen short of ideas? Is this offer not reflecting his and the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) desperation? I want to remind HM Shah that self-respect and

Corona is still a menace



It must be acknowledged that the harrowing phase of the Corona period has concluded. However, its anticipated repercussions will persist for an extended period, affecting our health, economy, and daily lives. The

Central Government has disclosed that individuals recovering from Corona should refrain from strenuous labour or exercise to prevent a surge in heart attacks, even among the young.

This has contributed to a downturn in the economy, factory closures, and a decline in employment. Recent data indicates the closure of over 40 thousand small manufacturing units in the last two years, as revealed in tax records. Before Corona (2019-20), 8,16,021 companies paid taxes, whereas post-Corona (2021-22), only 7,15,846 companies fulfilled this obligation. Small and private sector establishments, responsible for 90% of employment, have been significantly impacted, foreshadowing an increase in unemployment. Although the pandemic era is concluding, its adverse effects persist across various sectors, a reality that will endure for years to come.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

pride are when we get rid of poverty, when everyone has enough food to eat when millions of our countrymen do not flock to seek employment abroad when women have equal rights, when our children do not remain stunted due to malnutrition, and when we can provide justice to the poorest amongst us. Then we can feel pride and be part of a prosperous nation. May Almighty show us that day soon. Hence, not only the Ram Temple but also a society based on the values of Lord Ram

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

BICKERING IN THE PARTY

Sir—The appointments of BJP veteran BS Yediyurappa's younger son BY Vijayendra as Karnataka president of the saffron party and his loyalist MR Ashoka as the leader of the opposition (LOP) in the assembly have triggered pronounced discontent among functionaries. Some veterans have already voiced their displeasure over the preference shown to 47-year-old first-time

MLA Vijayendra and 66-year-old seven-time MLA Ashoka. The granting of key positions to the two members of the Yediyurappa camp has reportedly unsettled several functionaries in the other group, comprising former BJP national general secretary CT Ravi, former Union minister Basangouda Patil Yatnal, and former Karnataka minister V Somanna. The unfolding situation indicates discord within the state unit as a section, which is sulking over the perceived prioritisation of Yediyurappa's son and his loyalists, has decided to wait till the announcement of Lok Sabha polls to decide about their future course of action. There is also a concern among the party brass that this might affect the BJP's performance in the upcoming elections and that it may face defeat.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

CHANGE YOUR FOOD,
RECLAIM YOUR LIFE

One should eat as much home-cooked food as possible, outside food can be harmful



SAKSHI R SETHI

Have you ever observed that the table at special occasions is filled with more of fast foods be it sodas, sugary and preserved fruit juices, chips, cakes, cookies, and much more? But have you realised that the so-called real food that is pre-made such as instant potatoes, instant cheese balls, chemical-filled dressings or stuffing, microwavable foods, etc. are ruining the body? Today almost 45% of the global population is either obese or overweight. Most of the world's population is suffering from the problem of a high BMI, bloated body, dehydration, constipation, less successful weight loss, and excessive gain. But the question arises who are we to blame: the food industry companies or the Gen Z food influencers?? Well, it is difficult to decide. Living in a fast-moving world, the fast-food industry supplying processed foods; prepared meals; frozen foods; dry goods; baked products and even beverages has boomed at such a rapid rate that it has solely increased the FMCG sales volume. Also, with the rapid increase in technological advancements, making the products available through ordering foods through various applications running with tempting offers and discounts and easy availability of vending machines at the nearest kiosk wherein just by inserting a coin in the machine or simply scanning the QR Code can fetch an individual a snack or a drink as per their choice without realising that such machines contain highly processed edible products which are not only unhealthy and harmful for the body but are a cause for increasing the risk of obesity as these foods tend to be high in fat and low in fibres, a combination that slows the digestion process.



MNCs and IT companies nowadays seem to use these industrial foods for their convenience, cheaper costs, and as a reward system to encourage their employees. Also, unhealthy food marketing strategies such as the use of appealing visuals, celebrity endorsements and popular cartoon characters create powerful associations between unhealthy foods and positive emotions that as a result the target youth and the children at large develop preferences for products that are detrimental to their health. Not only this, but fast food is also poised to become an addiction for children so in if not offered their favourite burger, pizza, fries, or drink, they tend to become aggressive. And the icing on the cake is when the young generation starts consulting social media for almost every new buzz thing in town and many social media influencers and food bloggers take this as an advantage for their selfishness.

Parents have tried unique and different ways to prevent eating fast food excessively but are in vain. Modern-day studies have proved that all these additives and addictive food items seem to be the "status quo" regardless of socio-economic status. People from all walks of life are consuming these so-called "comfort foods" without any forethought as to how these foods may impact their health. They are at a high risk of getting heart attacks; diabetes; BP-related problems and even cancer. It is of immense need that the children of today right from an early age are taught the importance of eating healthy and fibre-rich foods such as eating more whole fruits instead of canned juices; nuts and seeds; whole grain products and many other, inclusion of such foods will embrace their nutritious choices, and eventually help them enjoy a higher quality of life. This will help in lowering cholesterol levels and controlling blood sugar levels. One should try to eat as much home-cooked food as possible as none of us is aware of the ingredients and the quality of materials being used while eating out. One must be smart with the food choices

(The writer is an educator, views are personal)

Stubble is not a trouble,
just need a viable solution

AS MITTAL

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned stubble burning in 2015 but despite coercive methods stubble burning continues



The recent rebuke of the Supreme Court on stubble-burning has highlighted some critical concerns about paddy cultivation in Punjab, implying that farmers need to consider sowing other crops instead of paddy to tackle the issue head-on. The Supreme Court has also asked for a meeting with farmer groups to find a sustainable solution to the problem, which is a crucial step in the right direction. The central and state governments should take ownership and collaborate to help farmers find a solution to the issue. It's imperative to realise that if we can send Chandrayaan-3 to the moon, we can certainly find a solution to stubble-burning. The action taken against Punjab farmers in the form of more than 250 FIRs is not a wise solution. Years of awareness campaigns in the state, along with Rs 1,000 crore worth of subsidies on straw management machines, have not led to any big shift away from stubble burning. There is a need to find a more practical solution to this problem that takes into account the challenges faced by farmers, who do not want to burn stubble anymore; instead, they want support for managing the residue effectively.

Every winter the sky is filled with smog combined with farm fires, household cooking, crackers, diesel-driven SUVs, commercial vehicles, industries, dust, and other factors that continue to contribute to the worsening of air quality. Although it is a national problem, stubble burning is usually associated with farmers in Punjab and Haryana who are unfairly blamed by urban dwellers and policymakers.

However, this perception is not only misguided but also a serious lapse on the part of policymakers to address a problem practically. It is time to recognize that farmers and their families are the first victims of stubble-burning pollution. Obduracy and a mental block are seen as the main obstacles to finding a solution. There is a need



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for better and more intelligent solutions to address this existential issue. Policymakers must take practical measures to combat this problem and ensure a safe and healthy environment for all.

Stubble burning after paddy harvesting is banned, but it continues to occur frequently in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and other parts of the country. The current solutions to this problem have not been effective. Although a subsidy scheme for employing a stubble residual machine has been implemented, it has had limited success. Most small and medium farmers find it unaffordable. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned stubble burning in 2015, and Punjab authorities fine farmers who violate the ban. However, coercive methods and monetary penalties have not been effective in deterring farmers from burning stubble.

The narrow gap between the paddy harvest and the wheat-sowing time in Punjab and Haryana exacerbates the issue of rice straw. The paddy crop is usually harvested between the first and last weeks of October, and farmers sow the wheat crop from the first week of November. The combined harvester and thresher machine often leaves behind a significant amount of stubble on the field, which prevents other machines from sowing wheat seeds. With only a 10-15-day window between the paddy-harvesting season and the wheat-sowing time, farmers feel compelled to burn the stubble to quickly clear the fields. The Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) has claimed success with a bio-decomposer spray called 'PUSA', which can decom-

pose most of the stubble into manure in a month. Nevertheless, the use of bio-decomposers in Punjab has not shown favourable results in trials, given the narrow gap of 10 to 15 days for sowing wheat after the paddy harvest.

The current slow progress in curbing stubble burning demands a practical commercial model that can effectively bring about a perceptible change in the atmosphere and people's attitudes. Fortunately, some private firms in Punjab have taken the initiative to buy stubble from farmers and produce gas and other by-products in biogas plants.

Global solution to local: It is important to find global solutions to our local problems, such as paddy straw burning. India could learn from other countries' experiences, where similar bans on crop residue burning failed to persuade farmers. Therefore, relying solely on government initiatives may not be effective due to the high levels of animosity among paddy cultivators. To solve the problem of crop residue burning, technical and legal interventions alone are not enough.

It's essential to focus on minimizing the costs for farmers who opt for alternative methods of paddy straw disposal and supplementing their sources of income. In Egypt, the government offered an incentive to traders to buy straws from farmers. Suggestions for alternative disposal methods include using it for animal feed, ploughing it back into the field as natural fertiliser, generating bio-energy, and using it as a substrate for mushroom cultivation.

The Way Forward: Farmers often find it difficult to stop the age-old practice of stubble burning. This is

because alternative methods of stubble management require additional expenses, which are usually borne by the farmers themselves. The cost of stubble management ranges from Rs 5,000 to Rs 6,000 per acre, but the proposed centre and state incentives of Rs 2500 per acre are currently on hold. However, ignoring the problem is not a solution either. Therefore, it is important to provide farmers with free reaper binders and paddy straw choppers at their farm gates to help them manage stubble effectively.

The state government can help by arranging to procure the stubble along with paddy grain, by hiring balers to work for free for the farmers. This will help them prepare their farms for wheat sowing after paddy harvesting.

The stubbles can then be sold to bio-mass-based power plants, paper mills, and cardboard factories. In the long run, replacing long-duration paddy varieties with shorter-duration varieties like PUSA Basmati-1509 and PR-126 can help reduce stubble burning. These varieties can be harvested in the third week of September itself, which will allow ample time for the paddy stubble to decompose, eliminating the need for stubble burning.

Providing farmers with the necessary assistance and equipment can encourage them to refrain from burning stubble. We all know that stubble retention has many benefits, but it requires a systems approach to manage disease, pest and weed pressure. Farmers need to be educated on how they are harming their farms by damaging the soil's nutrients.

Enhancing accessibility and accuracy for global students

The IELTS Exam (International English Language Testing System) is crucial for students pursuing education abroad but now it would be even more pinpointed

The pursuit of education abroad has become increasingly popular among students seeking a global perspective and enhanced career opportunities. As they embark on this journey, one crucial aspect that can significantly impact their chances of admission is the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam. This standardised test serves as a measure of proficiency in the English language and is recognised by universities and institutions worldwide.

The IELTS exam is recognised and accepted by over 10,000 institutions and organisations across 140 countries, making it one of the most widely acknowledged language proficiency tests globally. Its uni-



ROHIT SHARMA

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versal acceptance ensures that students can apply to a vast array of universities and programs around the world.

Many universities and colleges in English-speaking countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, require international applicants to submit IELTS scores as part of their admission process. The scores act as a reliable indicator of the student's ability to communicate effectively in English, a crucial skill for academic success in an English-language environment.

Beyond academic admission, IELTS scores often play a pivotal role in visa applications. Immigration authorities in various countries use these scores to assess an applicant's

language proficiency, ensuring they can navigate the linguistic challenges of living and studying in an English-speaking country.

The IELTS evaluates four language skills: Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking. Students must prepare for each section to ensure a well-rounded performance. Numerous resources, including practice tests, study guides, and language courses, are available to help candidates familiarise themselves with the test format. Preparation for the IELTS exam not only focuses on test-taking strategies but also on enhancing overall language skills. Taking mock IELTS tests under exam conditions is a crucial part of preparation.

Recently some changes have been made to the IELTS exam and potential enhancements that could further refine this critical assessment tool. The following would be the highlights of the new system of testing

Recent Changes to the IELTS Exam: Computer-Based Testing (CBT): Recognising the shift towards digital assessments, the IELTS exam has embraced computer-based testing alongside the traditional paper-based format. This change allows for more flexibility in scheduling exams, quicker result processing, and a more seamless test-taking experience for candidates. Shortened Duration for Listening Section: One notable change involves the

reduction of the Listening section duration. Previously spanning 30 minutes, the listening component has been shortened to 20 minutes, aligning it with the actual length of the recorded material. This adjustment aims to provide a more accurate reflection of a candidate's listening skills without unnecessary time constraints. Computer Adaptive Technology for Reading and Listening: In certain regions, the IELTS exam has introduced computer-adaptive technology for the Reading and Listening sections. This adaptive approach tailors the difficulty of questions based on a candidate's previous responses, offering a more personalised and precise evaluation of their language pro-

iciency. Enhanced Security Measures: To maintain the integrity of the testing process, the IELTS exam has implemented enhanced security measures, including biometric verification and stricter ID requirements.

Opportunities for Improvement While the IELTS Speaking section traditionally involves face-to-face interaction with an examiner, exploring the integration of technology, such as video interviews or AI-driven assessments, could enhance objectivity and consistency. Tailoring preparation materials to individual needs and proficiency levels could further support candidates in their IELTS journey. Interactive online resources,

adaptive learning platforms, and targeted practice materials could help students address specific weaknesses and optimise their performance in each section.

Expediting the release of test scores in real time could offer candidates more immediate feedback on their performance. This not only reduces anxiety but also allows for quicker decision-making in terms of university applications and visa processes. Providing a broader range of test dates could accommodate the diverse needs of international students, especially those facing time zone challenges. More flexibility in scheduling exams would contribute to a smoother and more accessible testing experience.

31 'very sick' babies evacuated from Gaza hospital

AP ■ KHAN YOUNIS (GAZA STRIP)

Thirty-one premature babies were safely transferred from Gaza's main hospital to another in the south on Sunday, and will be moved to Egypt, health officials said, as scores of other critically wounded patients remained stranded there days after Israeli forces entered the compound.

The fate of the newborns at Shifa Hospital had captured global attention after the release of images showing doctors trying to keep them warm. A power blackout had shut down incubators and other equipment, and food, water and medical supplies ran out as Israeli forces battled Palestinian militants outside the hospital.

World Health Organisation chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on social media that the "very sick" babies were evacuated, along with six health workers and 10 staff family members. He said they were taken to a hospital in the southern Gaza city of Rafah where they are receiving urgent care. They were taken in ambulances of the Palestinian Red Crescent.

A WHO team that visited the hospital on Saturday said 291 patients were still there, including the babies, trauma patients with severely infected wounds, and others with spinal injuries who are unable to move.



A Palestinian man runs with an injured boy following an Israeli airstrike in Khan Younis refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip, Saturday. AP/PTI

About 2,500 displaced people, mobile patients and medical staff left Shifa Hospital on Saturday morning, the WHO said. It said 25 medical staff remained, along with the patients.

"Patients and health staff with whom they spoke were terrified for their safety and health, and pleaded for evacuation," the agency said, describing Shifa as a death zone.

Israel has long alleged that Hamas maintains a sprawling command post inside and under Shifa, part of its wider accusation that the fighters use civilians as cover. It has portrayed the hospital as a key target in its war to end Hamas' rule in Gaza following the mil-

itant group's wide-ranging attack into southern Israel six weeks ago, which killed over 1,200 people and triggered the war.

Hamas and hospital staff deny the allegations, and critics have held up the hospital as a symbol of what they say is Israel's reckless endangerment of civilians. Thousands have been killed in Israeli strikes, and there are severe shortages of food, water, medicine and fuel in the besieged territory.

Israeli troops who have been based at the hospital and searching its grounds for days say they have found guns and other weapons, and showed reporters the entrance to a tunnel shaft. The Associated

Press couldn't independently verify Israel's findings.

HEAVY FIGHTING IN THE NORTH

Heavy clashes were reported in the built-up Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza overnight into Sunday. "There was the constant sound of gunfire and tank shelling," Yassin Sharif, who is sheltering in a UN-run hospital in the camp, said by phone. "It was another night of horror."

Dozens of people were killed in what witnesses described as an Israeli airstrike on a crowded UN shelter in the Jabaliya camp the day before, according to witnesses. AP photos from a local hospital showed more than 20 bodies wrapped in bloodstained sheets.

The Israeli military, which has repeatedly called on Palestinians to leave northern Gaza, said only that its troops were active in the area "with the aim of hitting terrorists".

More than 11,500 Palestinians have been killed, according to Palestinian health authorities. Another 2,700 have been reported missing, believed buried under rubble. The count does not differentiate between civilians and combatants; Israel says it has killed thousands of militants.

HOSTAGES FOR AID

Around 1,200 people have been killed on the Israeli side,

Tens of thousands of religious party supporters rally in Pak

Lahore (AP): Tens of thousands of supporters from Pakistan's main religious political party rallied in the eastern city of Lahore on Sunday against Israel's bombing of Palestinians in Gaza and what it said is the world's failure to protect Gazans.

Amid anti-Israeli and anti-American slogans the emotionally charged crowd also called for jihad, or holy war.

Earlier this month, Jamaat-e-Islami held massive rallies in the port city of Karachi and the capital, Islamabad. Supporters, including women and children, marched for several kilometers (miles) to reach the location of the rally, holding banners and posters with slogans opposing Israel and the United States and in support of the Palestinians. Senator Sirajul

Haq, the JJ chief, said the ongoing rallies in support of Palestinians around the world awaken world governments and give a voice to the innocent.

He said the resolutions and words issued by the Organization for Islamic Cooperation will not work, and that Muslim rulers have to rise and to stop the hand of the aggressor.

mainly civilians killed during Hamas' Oct 7 attack, in which the group dragged some 240 captives back into Gaza and shattered Israel's sense of security. The military says 52 Israeli soldiers have been killed.

Hamas has released four hostages, Israel has rescued one, and the bodies of two hostages were found near Shifa in an area where there had been heavy fighting.

Israel, the United States and the Persian Gulf nation of Qatar, which mediates with Hamas, have been negotiating over a hostage release for weeks. On Saturday, a senior White House official suggested it would need to be completed before the entry of large amounts of desperately needed aid. "A release of a large

number of hostages would result in a significant pause in fighting...and a massive surge of humanitarian relief," Brett McGurk, the White House's National Security Council coordinator for the Middle East, said at a conference in Bahrain.

Qatar's prime minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, said Sunday he was "confident" a deal would soon be reached, telling reporters that the "sticking points, honestly, at this stage are more practical, logistical".

WIND, RAIN HITS TENT CAMPS

More than two-thirds of Gaza's population of 2.3 million have fled their homes. The UN

agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, is struggling to provide basic services to hundreds of thousands of people sheltering in and around schools and other facilities. Their misery has worsened in recent days with the arrival of winter, as cold winds and driving rain buffet tent camps.

Over the weekend, Israel allowed UNRWA to import enough fuel to continue humanitarian operations for another couple of days, and to keep internet and telephone systems running.

Israel cut off all fuel imports at the start of the war, causing Gaza's sole power plant and most water treatment systems to shut down, leaving most residents without electricity or running water.

'Shooting suspect kills self after killing 4 women'

Memphis (US): A suspect in Tennessee died of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot while on the run early Sunday after he allegedly killed four and seriously injured a fifth victim during a deadly outbreak of domestic violence Saturday night, police said.

Officers found Mavis Christian Jr, 52, in his car during a manhunt following the shootings at three locations in Memphis that left three women and a teenage girl dead and critically wounded another teen girl. Memphis Police Department officers responded to a report of a shooting at 9:22 pm on the 100 Block of Howard Drive. Police found a woman with an apparent gunshot wound who was pronounced dead at the scene.

Investigators determined there were two other connected fatal shootings. At Field Lark Drive, a woman and a 13-year-old girl were killed and a 15-year-old girl was critically wounded. Another woman was found fatally shot on Warrington Road, Memphis Police Officer Christopher Williams said. Police believed Christian was responsible for all three shootings and began a search involving local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

Dissent over US policy in Israel-Hamas war stirs protests

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Federal government workers from the State Department to NASA are circulating open letters demanding that President Joe Biden pursue a cease-fire in Israel's war against Hamas. Congressional staffers are picking up microphones in front of the Capitol, speaking out to condemn what they say is the silence of lawmakers about the toll on Palestinian civilians.

As the deaths soar in Gaza, Biden and Congress are facing unusually public challenges from the inside over their support for Israel's offensive. Hundreds of staffers in the administration and on Capitol Hill are signing on to open letters, speaking to reporters and holding vigils, all in an effort to shift US policy toward more

urgent action to stem Palestinian casualties.

"Most of our bosses on Capitol Hill are not listening to the people they represent," one of the congressional staffers told the crowd at a protest this month. Wearing medical masks that obscured their faces, the roughly 100 congressional aides heaped flowers in front of Congress to honour the civilians killed in the conflict.

The objections coming from federal employees over the United States' military and other backing for Israel's Gaza campaign is partly an outgrowth of the changes happening more broadly across American society.

As the United States becomes more diverse, so does the federal workforce, including more appointees of Muslim and Arab heritage. And surveys

show public opinion shifting regarding US ally Israel, with more people expressing unhappiness over the hard-right government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

After weeks of seeing images of bloodied children and fleeing families in Gaza, a significant number of Americans, including from Biden's Democratic Party, disagree with his support of Israel's military campaign.

A poll by The Associated Press and NORC Centre for Public Affairs Research in early November found 40% of the US public believed Israel's response in Gaza had gone too far. The war has roiled college campuses and set off nationwide protests.

As of late this past week, one open letter had been endorsed by 650 staffers of

diverse religious backgrounds from more than 30 federal agencies, organisers said. The agencies range from the Executive Office of the President to the Census Bureau and include the State Department, US Agency for International Development and the Department of Defence.

A Biden political appointee who helped organize the multi-agency open letter said the president's rejection of appeals to push Netanyahu for a long-term cease-fire had left some federal staffers feeling "dismissed, in a way".

"That's why people are using all sorts of dissent cables and open letters. Because we've already gone through the channels of trying to do it internally," this person said.

The letter condemns both the Hamas killings of about

1,200 people in Israel in the militants' Oct 7 incursion and the Israeli military campaign, which has killed more than 11,500 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. The letter calls for the US to push for a cease-fire and a release of hostages held by Hamas and of Palestinians that the signers say are unjustly detained by Israel, as well as greater action overall on behalf of Gaza's civilians.

The organisers of the executive branch and congressional protests all spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity, citing fear of professional and other repercussions. The federal employees speaking up in opposition to the US policy appear to be seeking a balance, raising their objections in a way that doesn't deprive them of a seat at the table and risk their

careers. Some current and former officials and staffers said it's the public nature of some of the challenges from federal employees that is unusual. It worries some, as a potential threat to government function and to cohesion within agencies.

The State Department has an honoured tradition of allowing formal, structured statements of dissent to US policy. It dates to 1970, when US diplomats resisted President Richard Nixon's demands to fire foreign service officers and other State Department employees who signed an internal letter protesting the US carpet-bombing of Cambodia.

Ever since, foreign service officers and civil servants have used what is known as the dissent channel at moments of intense policy debate.

Cold weather claims five lives in Jajarkot

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Five elderly people, including two women, who were staying in makeshift tents have died due to harsh cold weather in Nepal's earthquake-hit Jajarkot district, police said on Sunday.

While three elderly persons — a man and two women — died on Saturday, two others died on Friday, they said.

All the five elderly individuals had taken refuge under separate tents as their homes were rendered uninhabitable by the destructive earthquake that hit the district earlier this month, police said.

Jajarkot was hit by a 6.4 magnitude earthquake on November 3 in which at least 153 people were killed and thousands rendered homeless.



According to local authorities, over 34,000 families in Jajarkot continue to live under makeshift tents as their residences were completely damaged by the earthquake. Among the most vulnerable to the harsh conditions are children, new mothers, patients with chronic illnesses, and the elderly population.

Hindu faith gives me freedom, says Ramaswamy

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Indian-American Republican presidential aspirant Vivek Ramaswamy has said that his Hindu faith gives him freedom and has inspired him to launch his bid for the White House. He also said that if elected, he would promote values that are not exclusive to one religion and make faith, family, hard work, patriotism "cool" again in the US. Ramaswamy's remarks came during The Family Leader Forum event organised on Saturday.

During the event, the 38-year-old tech entrepreneur opened up to the Christian audience about his Hindu faith and spoke about how it has instilled values in him that are similar to Christianity.

"My faith is what gives me my freedom...my faith is what led me to this presidential campaign actually," he said.

"I am a Hindu. I believe that God is true. God has sent us here for a purpose. It is our duty to realise the purpose of God. It is our moral duty. The core of our religion is that God resides in all of us," he said.

"Those are God's instruments that work through us in different ways, but we are still equal because God resides in each of us. That's the core of my faith". Ramaswamy, who launched his 2024 presidential bid in February, said that it is because of his upbringing that he has developed a respect for family, marriage and parents.

"I grew up in a traditional household. My parents taught me family is the foundation. Respect your parents. Marriage is sacred. Abstinence before marriage is the way to go. Adultery is wrong. Marriage is



between a man and a woman. Divorce is not just some preference you opt for...you get married before God and you make an oath to God and your family," Ramaswamy said.

Ramaswamy also drew parallels between Hinduism and Christianity.

"I went to Christian High School. What do we learn? We learned the 10 commandments. We read the Bible. Scriptures class. God is real. There is one true God. Don't take his name in vain. Respect your parents. Don't lie. Don't steal. Don't commit adultery. What I learned at that time, is that these values are familiar to me," he said.

He said these values don't belong to Hindus and they don't belong to Christians either. "They belong to God actually. And I think these are the values that undergird this country," Ramaswamy said. "Can I be a President who can promote Christianity across the country? I can't...I don't think that's what we should want a US President to do either...but will I stand for those shared values? Will I promote them in the examples that we set for the next generations? You are damn right, I will! Because that's my duty".

GOP secures all elected statewide offices in Louisiana

AP ■ BATON ROUGE

Come January, the GOP will control every elected statewide office in Louisiana after Republicans swept three runoff races for attorney general, secretary of state and treasurer Saturday night.

The GOP success, in a state that has had a Democrat in the governor's office for the past eight years, means that Republicans secured all of Louisiana's statewide offices for the first time since 2015.

In addition, the GOP holds a two-third supermajority in the House and Senate.

Liz Murrill was elected as attorney general, Nancy Landry as secretary of state and John Fleming as treasurer.

The results also mean Louisiana will have its first female attorney general and first woman elected as secretary of state.

Saturday's election completes the shaping of Louisiana's executive branch, where most incumbents didn't seek reelection and opened the door for new leadership in some of the most powerful positions.

Louisiana's gubernatorial election was decided in October when Jeff Landry, a Republican backed by former President Trump, won outright and avoided a runoff. In addition, last month Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser and Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry Mike Strain won reelection, and Tim Temple was elected to insurance commissioner. All are Republican.

Despite a low early voting turnout, Saturday's election caught the eye of Trump, who endorsed the Republican candidates in each of the three statewide races.

The three Republicans "are outstanding in every way and have my complete and total endorsement," Trump said in a statement issued by the Louisiana Republican Party.

Murrill, a Republican, will replace her boss, Jeff Landry, when he becomes governor in January. Murrill's opponent was Lindsey Cheek, a New Orleans-based trial attorney.

The attorney general represents the state in a variety of legal disputes.

However, Landry often made statewide and national headlines in the role, including his support for legislation banning gender-affirming medical care for transgender youths and a near-total abortion ban with no exceptions for cases of rape and incest.

Murrill has joined Landry in championing conservative causes, including a lawsuit against President Joe Biden's administration for the

COVID-19 vaccine mandate for federal contractors.

On the campaign trail, Murrill pledged to fight overreach by the federal government, defending the state's abortion ban and pushing a tough-on-crime rhetoric.

"When I entered this race. I promised to protect families, our future and our freedom because these things are important to me... I know they are important to everyone in our state," Murrill said during her victory speech Saturday night. "I'm so humbled and I'm honoured that the people of our state have chosen me to represent you and to fight for you."

Trump gains a close ally in the state treasurer's office: John Fleming, a conservative former congressman who co-founded the US House Freedom Caucus. After his time in Congress, the Republican

served as a member of the former president's administration.

In Saturday's runoff, Fleming faced Dustin Granger, a Democrat, who is a financial advisor based in Lake Charles. Nancy Landry, who is not related to the governor-elect, beat Gwen Collins-Greenup, a Democrat, in the race for secretary of state.

The Republican will take on the task of replacing Louisiana's outdated voting machines, which don't produce the paper ballots critical to ensuring accurate election results. The lengthy and ongoing replacement process was thrust into the national spotlight after allegations of bid-rigging and when conspiracy theorists, who support Trump's lies that the 2020 presidential election was stolen, inserted themselves into the conversation.

Indian-Americans celebrate Chhath

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Keeping their family tradition of generations alive, hundreds of Indian-American ties along with their friends and families gathered at a lakefront in the US city of Fremont to worship the Sun God as part of the Hindu festival of Chhath Puja. The four-day Chhath Puja began on November 17. During the festival, devotees fast and gather on the banks of rivers and ponds to offer prayers to the Sun God. Hundreds of Indian-Americans joined the celebrations in Fremont, California. "We are celebrating Chhath puja here. We started this back in 2011 and at that time only a couple of people participated. Afterwards, people started joining slowly and after 2014,



it actually started to grow. Now you can see it. Around 1,200 people joined us last year," Rakesh Singh, a resident said. This year, the organisers in Fremont offered free tickets for entry to the lakefront for the Chhath Puja celebrations. According to the organisers, the free tickets were

grabbed within hours of the system being opened up, with a large number of people on the waiting list.

"We thought how will our children know how Chhath is actually celebrated? It is quite normal to celebrate at home (in India). I took my wife and daughter to the lakefront as I live just nearby. I called my friends, Ajay and Rakesh to inform them that I am celebrating Chhath and they also joined," Sunil, another resident said.

Chhath Puja is one of the most auspicious festivals in Bihar, Jharkhand and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. The festival is dedicated to Sun God, which people believe sustains life on the earth. The puja is also performed to seek blessings from the Sun God to live a long, healthy, prosperous life.



Miss Nicaragua Sheynnis Palacios reacts after being crowned Miss Universe at the 72nd Miss Universe Beauty Pageant in San Salvador, El Salvador, Saturday. AP/PTI

Joe Biden: Dire warnings about Trump have become central to my campaign

Washington: President Joe Biden ends nearly every speech by saying he's "never been more optimistic" about the country's direction. But lately he also has begun painting a vision of a catastrophic future for the United States — that is, if Donald Trump returns to the presidency. Biden in recent days has accused the former Republican president of being "determined to destroy American democracy" and being out for "revenge" and "retribution".

Biden's reelection campaign is sending more emails with stark warnings: "Trump's America in 2025: A Unilateral National Abortion Ban" and "Trump's America in 2025: Mass Detention Camps." Trump has proposed the largest operation to arrest and deport migrants in U.S. history. He has not endorsed a federal ban on abortion.

Contrasting Biden and Trump was always going to be central to the Democratic president's 2024 strategy. But there was a time when Trump only merited short and derisive mentions in Biden's speeches, if Trump was mentioned at all.

Today, Biden's campaign has sharply increased its references to Trump with just under a year until the election. The change reflects how, with Biden low in the polls, lukewarm Democratic voters might be more motivated by stopping Trump than hearing about investments in infrastructure and renewable energy.

Biden has acknowledged that many voters don't feel great about the economy. Voters are frustrated by high inflation and have concerns about his age.

At nearly 81, Biden is already the oldest person elected president. AP

US lawmakers for withholding assistance to Pakistan

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A group of 11 influential US lawmakers have urged the Biden administration to withhold future assistance to Pakistan until Islamabad restores constitutional order and holds free and fair elections, it emerged on Sunday.

In a letter to Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, the lawmakers, which included Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, who is one of the champions of Muslim causes in the US Congress, requested the state department to assess if US-origin security assistance had facilitated human rights violations in Pakistan.

"We further request that future security assistance be withheld until Pakistan has moved decisively toward the restoration of Constitutional order, including by holding free and fair elections in which all parties are able to participate freely," they wrote.

Pakistan's moves to further strengthen the blasphemy law also figured prominently in the letter, which warned Secretary Blinken that the proposed changes would be used to further tighten the noose around smaller religious groups and minorities, the Dawn newspaper reported.

Seek restoration of constitutional order and rollback of blasphemy law changes in

Pakistan, the Congress members said, "We are extremely concerned about the passing of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2023 which will strengthen the existing blasphemy law, which has historically been used to persecute religious minorities."

In the letter, the US lawmakers pointed out that the bill, which is yet to be signed by President Joe Biden, was "passed in haste despite repeated calls from many lawmakers for a thorough parliamentary procedure."

Blasphemy is a sensitive issue in Pakistan, where even unproven allegations can incite violence by mobs. According to the Centre for Social Justice — an independent group advocating for the rights of minorities — more than 2,000 people in Pakistan have been accused of committing blasphemy since 1987 till May this year, and at least 88 people killed by lynch mobs for similar allegations.

The letter pointed out that on August 16, eight days after the bill was passed in Pakistan's Parliament, a mob desecrated churches and set fire to homes of Christians in Jaranwala. It also referred to reported protests against the bill, including by the Shia community in Gilgit-Baltistan.

"Religious persecution remains rampant in Pakistan,

and we are concerned about future restrictions on freedom of religion and belief should this Bill become law," the lawmakers warned.

Besides Omar, the signatories of the letter include Frank Pallone Jr, Joaquin Castro, Summer Lee, Ted W Lieu, Dina Titus, Lloyd Doggett and Cori Bush. In its latest report on Pakistan, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom noted that "religious minorities were especially vulnerable to prosecution or violence based on blasphemy allegations" and "blasphemy cases remained a substantial threat to religious freedom."

While acknowledging Pakistan's significance as a long-standing ally, the letter stressed the need to address issues like restrictions on freedom of expression, speech, and religion, enforced disappearances, military courts and the harassment and arrest of political opponents and human rights defenders.

Addressing ongoing harassment and arrests, the lawmakers mentioned the cases against jailed prime minister Imran Khan as well, noting that he could potentially face the death penalty for allegedly violating the Official Secrets Act. The letter also mentioned prominent Pakistani human rights lawyer

Imaan Mazari who was taken from her home at 3 am in August without an arrest warrant after she spoke at a rally against enforced disappearances. The lawmakers urged the US Embassy in Islamabad to send observers to hearings and other legal proceedings of human rights defenders and political dissidents, including for emblematic cases such as Khan and Mazari.

They also offered to work with Secretary Blinken to promote human rights, democracy, and stability in Pakistan. However, it remains unclear how the state department will respond to these concerns and whether it will impact the dynamics of the US-Pakistan relationship, the report said.

In Washington, the focus on human rights violations underscores the delicate balance between geopolitical alliances and the promotion of democratic values on the global stage. The state department has been markedly careful while commenting on the current political situation in Pakistan, the Dawn report said. The issue has been raised regularly at the state department's daily briefings, where the spokespersons has carefully avoided making statements that could be interpreted as an expression of support for either the government or the opposition, it said.

Pak army kills 4 militants along border with Afghanistan

Islamabad (AP): Pakistan security forces killed four militants in a shootout during an overnight raid in the country's northwest near the border with Afghanistan, the military said on Sunday. A military statement said security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation in the Khaisoor area of North Waziristan district, where they exchanged fire with militants. It said troops seized weapons and ammunition from the militants' hideout.

The military said one of the most wanted militant commanders, identified by single name of Ibrahim, was among the dead, all of whom were involved in attacks on security forces and civilians. Troops were carrying out sanitization of the surrounding areas to eliminate any hiding militants, it said. North Waziristan served for decades as a safe haven for militants until the military carried out a major operation after an attack on an army-run school in Peshawar in 2014 killed more than 150 people, mostly schoolchildren. The army announced after the years-long operation that it had cleared the region of militants, but attacks continue occasionally, raising concerns that the local Taliban, known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, found sanctuaries in Afghanistan and are regrouping in the area.

PML-N indicates plan B for making Nawaz PM

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Indicating that it has already prepared a plan B to ensure that Nawaz Sharif becomes the prime minister of Pakistan for a record fourth time, a senior PML-N leader has said that if there are legal hurdles for this, the party will remove them if voted back to power.

Pakistan is going to the polls on February 8. The 73-year-old Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Sharif returned to Pakistan from London on October 21 after four years of self-imposed exile. After his arrival, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) restored Nawaz's appeals against his conviction in the Avenfield Apartments and Al-Azizia corruption cases but did not fix any date for the hearing. Nawaz has been on protective bail.

Besides, the three-time prime minister is also facing disqualification till 2028 to contest polls in which he also needs a clean chit from the court. PML-N Punjab president Rana Sanaullah on Saturday said that if there are legal hurdles impeding Nawaz's accession to the Prime Minister's Office for a fourth term, the party will remove them after coming into power, the Express Tribune newspaper reported on Sunday.

"With a stop-gap arrangement in mind, the PML-N seems to have prepared a plan B for ensuring that its supremo (Nawaz Sharif) becomes



the premier for the fourth time," the report said.

Earlier, PML-N remained confident that there would be no legal impediments for Nawaz to become the prime minister yet again, and given the kind of concessions extended out to him, it appeared to be a likely possibility. However, Sanaullah's admission of a plan B has revealed that the party might not be all that confident about the prospects of the court cases against Nawaz, it said.

Sanaullah said PML-N hoped that "frivolous" cases against Nawaz must be heard expeditiously and decisions should be delivered at the earliest. He added that if there were any hurdles, the party's decision about Nawaz becoming the premier would still remain unchanged. To a question about any strategy to avoid confrontation with the 'powerful circles' to ensure Nawaz completed his fourth term as the premier, the PML-N Punjab chief said the party never had any issue with them in the past as well.

Meanwhile, PML-N Information Secretary Marriyum Aurangzeb exuded confidence and said her party's political rivals can see that Nawaz will become the prime minister after the February 8 elections. Addressing a press conference in Lahore on Sunday, the former federal minister said the PML-N's manifesto will be to provide relief to the people in the cash-strapped country. "We have to rise above our personal interests. Our political rivals can also see that Nawaz Sharif will become the next prime minister," Marriyum said.

How US strikes balance in responding to attacks by Iran-backed militias

Washington (AP): Iranian-backed militants in Iraq and Syria have long battled with US and coalition forces, launching sporadic attacks against bases in the region where troops are deployed to fight Islamic State group insurgents. But since October 17, as civilian deaths in Israel's war against Hamas began to skyrocket, there has been a dramatic spike in attacks by Iran's proxies, operating under the umbrella name of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq.

While most of the more than five dozen attacks have been largely ineffective, at least 60 US personnel have reported minor injuries. Most often those have been traumatic brain injuries from the explosions, and all troops have returned to duty, according to the Pentagon. In response to the attacks, the US has walked a delicate line. The US military has struck back just three times as the Biden administration balances efforts to deter the militants without triggering a broader Middle East conflict. According to the Pentagon, Iranian-backed militants have launched 61 attacks on bases and facilities housing US personnel in Iraq and Syria since October 17. Of those, 29 have been in Iraq and 32 in Syria.

The US has about 2,000 US forces in Iraq, under an agree-

ment with the Baghdad government, and about 900 in Syria, mainly to counter IS but also using the al-Tanf garrison farther south to keep tabs on Iranian proxies moving weapons across the border.

The latest jump in attacks began 10 days after Hamas' October 7 incursion into Israel, where at least 1,200 people were killed. Israel's blistering military response has killed thousands of civilians trapped in Gaza and fueled threats of retaliation by a range of Iran-backed groups, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, Yemen-based Houthis, and militants in Iraq and Syria. Those threats escalated after an Oct. 17 blast at a Gaza hospital killed hundreds of civilians. Hamas blamed Israel for the explosion, but Israel has denied it, and both Israeli and U.S. officials have blamed it on a missile misfire by Islamic Jihad.

The bulk of the attacks on bases and facilities have been with one-way suicide drones or rockets, and in most cases there were no injuries and only minor damage. A significant number of the injuries, particularly the traumatic brain injuries, were in the initial attacks between Oct 17 and 21 at al-Asad air base in Iraq and al-Tanf. One US contractor suffered a cardiac arrest and died while seeking shelter from a possible drone attack.

Argentines vote in election that could lead populist to presidency

AP ■ BUENOS AIRES

Voters in Argentina head to the polls Sunday in a presidential runoff election that will determine whether South America's second-largest economy will take a rightward shift.

Populist Javier Milei, an upstart candidate who got his start as a television talking head, has frequently been compared to former U.S. President Donald Trump. He faces Economy Minister Sergio Massa of the Peronist party, which has been a leading force in Argentine politics for decades. On Massa's watch, inflation has soared to more than 140% and poverty has increased. Milei, a self-described anarcho-capitalist, proposes to slash the size of the state and rein in inflation, while Massa has warned people about the negative impacts of such policies.

The highly polarizing election is forcing many to decide which of the two they consider to be the least bad option.

"Whatever happens in this election will be incredible," said Lucas Romero, director of local political consultancy Synopsis. "It would be incredible for Massa to win in this economic context or for Milei to win facing a candidate as professional as Massa."

Voting stations open at 8 am (1100 GMT) and close 10 hours later. Voting is conducted

with paper ballots, making the count unpredictable, but initial results were expected around three hours after polls close. Milei went from blasting the country's "political caste" on TV to winning a lawmaker seat two years ago. The economist's screeds resonated widely with Argentines angered by their struggle to make ends meet, particularly young men.

"Money covers less and less each day. I'm a qualified individual, and my salary isn't enough for anything," Esteban Medina, a 26-year-old physical therapist from Ezeiza, on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, told The Associated Press on the sidelines of a Milei rally earlier this week. Massa, as one of the most prominent figures in a deeply unpopular administration, was once seen as having little chance of victory. But he managed to mobilize the networks of his Peronist party and clinched a decisive first-place finish in the first round of voting. His campaign has cautioned Argentines that his libertarian opponent's plan to eliminate key ministries and otherwise sharply curtail the state would threaten public services, including health and education, and welfare programs many rely on. Massa has also drawn attention to his opponent's often aggressive rhetoric and has openly questioned his mental acuity; ahead of the first round, Milei some-

times carried a revving chainsaw at rallies.

Massa's "only chance to win this election when people want change ... is to make this election a referendum on whether Milei is fit to be president or not," said Ana Ipparraguirre, partner at pollster GBAO Strategies.

Milei has accused Massa and his allies of running a "campaign of fear" and he has walked back some of his most controversial proposals, such as loosening gun control. In his final campaign ad, Milei looks at the camera and assures voters he has no plans to privatize education or health care.

Most pre-election polls, which have been notoriously wrong at every step of this year's campaign, show a statistical tie between the two candidates. Voters for first-round candidates who didn't make the runoff will be key. Patricia Bullrich, who placed third, has endorsed Milei.

Javier Rojas, a 36-year-old pediatrician who voted for Bullrich in October, told The Associated Press he's leaning toward Milei, then added: "Well, to be honest, it's more of a vote against the other side than anything else." Underscoring the bitter division this campaign has brought to the fore, Milei received both jeers and cheers on Friday night at the legendary Colón Theater in Buenos Aires.

B'deshs top court upholds decision barring largest Islamist party from elections

AP ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh's highest court on Sunday dismissed an appeal by the country's largest Islamist party seeking to overturn a 2013 ruling that barred it from participating in elections for violating the constitutional provision of secularism.

Bangladesh is set to hold its next national elections on January 7. A five-member bench of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan handed out the ruling. Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami's main lawyer did not appear before the court due to "personal problems" and his petition, filed previously, seeking to postpone the hearing for six weeks was also rejected.

The High Court's decision 10 years ago canceled the party's registration with the Election Commission, thus stopping it from participating in elections or using party symbols. But it did not ban it from political participation.

The ruling, at the time, came amid calls to ban the party for opposing the country's 1971 independence war against Pakistan. The government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, after coming to power in 2009, sought to try Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami's

top leaders for their role in acts of genocide and war crimes during the country's independence war. Some have been hanged or given life sentences since 2013. "The verdict of the High Court has been upheld," Tania Amir, a lawyer who stood against the Jamaat-e-Islami party, said on Sunday.

"If they (Jamaat-e-Islami) attempt any meetings, rallies or gatherings or identify their party as legal to any high commission, embassy, foreign agency or state, we are at liberty to bring a new charge of contempt of court against them and an injunction," she said.

But Maitur Rahman Akanda, a lawyer for the party, said that it would continue to be politically active. "The court gave its opinion on whether the registration (with the Election Commission) will be upheld," he said, "there is no way to ban politics constitutionally." There have long been multiple calls in Bangladesh by secular forces and others to ban the Islamist party, but the government hasn't complied. The United States also considers it a moderate Islamist party.

Despite Sunday's decision by the High Court, it again remained unclear if Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami could continue its activities. Usually, the Ministry of Home Affairs is the

entity that bans radical groups deemed as anti-state. Jamaat-e-Islami has been a key partner to the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party led by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who has been the archrival of the current head of government, Hasina, for decades. The Islamist party and Zia shared power in 2001-2006 when the latter was the premier.

In January, Hasina will seek to return to power for a fourth consecutive term while Zia's party has threatened to boycott the polls. The Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami says they also will boycott elections under Hasina. The memories of the 1971 war with Pakistan are still fresh in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi authorities say Pakistani soldiers, aided by local collaborators, killed 3 million people, raped 200,000 women, and forced some 10 million people to flee the country to neighboring India during the nine-month war in what was then known as East Pakistan, renamed Bangladesh after independence.

India aided then an exiled government led by the country's independence leader and founding President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Hasina's father, to win the war against Pakistan.

Afghans to lose their homes, businesses yet again

PTI ■ KARACHI

Haji Mubarak Shinwari had come to Pakistan in 1982 with his five sons and two brothers. He worked assiduously to build a healthy network of businesses including cloth, fabrics, transport, and giving loans and now owns numerous properties at Al-Asif Square on the outskirts of Karachi.

"We have lived here without documents for all these years and set up our businesses with the help of locals," Shinwari said. He is not alone.

Barely a few kilometres north of downtown Karachi is the Al-Asif Square, which is known for its huge Afghan population. Close by are two big settlements of Afghan labourers and small business owners. A visit to Al-Asif Square and these settlements gives an impression of being in mini Kabul with Afghan people milling around many of their shops and different restaurants offering Afghan delicacies. Tens and thousands of Afghans, mainly those who came to Pakistan as refugees since the Soviet invasion in 1978, have done business and work in all major cities of Pakistan for decades with Karachi in Sindh province and

Quetta in the Balochistan province being their main centres. Sadiq Ullah Kakar, legal adviser for the Afghan consulate in Karachi, explained that the majority of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan belong to the lower middle class. "So, they do not possess any qualifications or even a tertiary level education," he said.

Two weeks after the October 31 deadline by the Pakistan government to send back Afghans without valid documents displacing thousands already - and now, even those with valid papers planned to be sent back after December 31 - the situation is grim with uncertainty writ large on their faces. More than 1,65,000 Afghans have already fled Pakistan since the deadline expired.

Reason? The Pakistan government is adamant that it needs to protect its state and claims that many of these Afghans are involved in criminal and terrorist activities and hence wants to get rid of any and everyone from its northern neighbour. It has also blamed the Taliban government in Kabul for not cooperating in preventing the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other splinter terror groups



from using Afghan soil to carry out terror attacks in Pakistan.

The decision has put hundreds of Afghans such as Mubarak at a loss. Thousands of Afghans who have lived in Pakistan for many years are being forced to leave the country after facing massive losses in their businesses, assets, and savings. "It is a bad situation for us now," Mubarak said.

He is unable to understand how he can save and transfer his hard-earned assets when he is forced to relocate to Afghanistan as the Pakistan government has placed restrictions on the transfer of cash and property to Afghanistan (from Pakistan), with refugees only allowed to take Rs 50,000 cash per person with them.

Most Afghans who have returned or are preparing to return to their homeland now face the harsh reality of losing their businesses and homes they built for decades. The issue has become so critical that Afghanistan's acting commerce minister, Haji Nooruddin Azizi met with Pakistan's Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani in Islamabad last week to discuss it. Another historical reason has been that these Afghans have been part of Pakistan's unofficial, undocumented, and unorganised sector economy.

Even those Afghans who hold some form of identification i.e. either a POR (Proof of Residency) card or an ACC

(Afghan Citizen Card) are not allowed to do business in their own names in Pakistan.

The purpose of both these cards is only to officially recognise the holders as refugees and grant them partial rights in Pakistan's healthcare and economic sectors. Mubarak said that he is facing difficulty in even recovering his loans in millions now from Pakistani customers because they are aware of his precarious situation. "They all promise they will clear loans soon but the situation is different now. They are not worried," he said.

Rehmat Khanzada, who runs two grocery shops in Quetta, told PTI on the phone that he fears all his savings are going down the drain now.

"It is a situation similar to what we have heard when partition took place in 1947. Many people in big cities seized properties and businesses of the Hindus, Parsis or even Muslims who decided to go to India," he said. Many Afghans are being forced to sell their possessions and properties at reduced rates. Ahmed, who has lived in Quetta for 30 years and owns a shoe business, said he sold most of his inventory, worth Rs 1.5 million for almost half the price last month.

Russian drones target Kyiv as UK Defence Ministry says little chance of front-line change

AP ■ KYIV

Russian drones targeted Kyiv on Sunday as the British Defence Ministry said there were "few immediate prospects" for major change along the Ukrainian front line as the war enters its second winter.

Russia launched 20 Iranian-made Shahed drones overnight, targeting the Ukrainian capital and the Cherkasy and Poltava regions, according to a military statement. Ukrainian anti-aircraft systems shot down 15 of the drones.

The overnight strike on Kyiv is the second attack on the Ukrainian capital in 48 hours, said the city's Military Administration spokesperson, Serhii Popko.

He said that the drones attacked Kyiv from different directions in waves that were "constantly changing vectors".

Preliminary reports indicated no casualties or critical damage, he said.

The UK Defence Ministry said on Sunday that

there were "few immediate prospects of major changes in the front line", with neither Russia nor Ukraine having made meaningful progress on the battlefield.

In a statement, it said that intense fighting was concentrated near Kupiansk in the Kharkiv region, Avdiivka in the Donetsk region, and on the left bank of the Dnieper River, where Ukrainian forces have established a bridgehead.

Meanwhile, five people were injured in Russian shelling on the Ukrainian city of Kherson, including a 3-year-old girl.

Aleksandr Prokudin, head of the Kherson region administration, said the strike damaged a residential apartment block.

Russian air defences also downed a Ukrainian drone over the Moscow region on Sunday night, local officials said.

In a statement, Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanin said that debris had hit the Bogorodskiy area bordering the Russian capital. No casualties were reported.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Be it known to all that My Clients Raghbir Garg S/o Late Mange Ram Garg and Suman Garg W/o Raghbir Garg R/o B-85 Pundrik Vihar, Pritampur Delhi-110034, have disowned their Son Nitin Garg & daughter in law Yukta (Neha), Grand daughter Diwangna D/o Nitin Garg from all their movable/immovable properties and severed all their relations both legal & social with them due to disrespectful behavior. Any person dealing with Nitin Garg & Yukta (Neha) shall be doing so at his/her own risk, and my clients shall not be responsible for the same.
Sanjeev Dwivedi (Advocate)
48, Gajmand Block, Tis Hazari Courts, ND-54

NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that following share certificates issued by Prime Industries Ltd. are stated to have been lost or misplaced or stolen and I, the registered holder thereof has applied to the Company for issue of Duplicate Certificates. The details are: (1) Share/Debiture certificate no-00002049. (2) No of shares-52000. (3) Distinctive no. 2092809 to 2144808. (4) Name of registered holder - Anil Bhatnagar. The Public is hereby warned against purchasing or dealing in any way, with the above share certificates. Any person(s) who has/have claim(s) in respect of said Share Certificates should lodge such claim(s) with the Company at its registered address: Master Chambers, 9, Feroze Gandhi Market, Ludhiana (Punjab) within 15 days of publication of this notice, after which no claim will be entertained and the Company will proceed to issue duplicate certificates.

UK seeks higher protection for its GI products

From agri sector under FTA with India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The UK's demand of a higher level of protection for its GI products from the agriculture sector under the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) with India remains an unresolved issue as the talks for the pact are on to iron out differences, an official said.

British GI (Geographical Indication) products include Scotch whisky, Stilton cheese and Cheddar cheese.

A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.

Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.

Once a product gets this tag, any person or company cannot sell a similar item under that name. India normally provides general protection for violation of GI rules, but the UK is seeking a higher level of protection, the official, who did not wish to be named, said.

"Negotiations are going on between the two countries. There are some issues pending in the intellectual property rights (IPRs) chapter," the official added.

According to experts, the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) under the World Trade Organisation outlines an elevated level of protection for GIs.

This enhanced protection prohibits the use of a GI if the product does not genuinely originate



from the designated area, regardless of whether the public is misled or the true origin is specified. This ensures complete protection of a GI, safeguarding its reputation under all circumstances.

It also prohibits the use of terms like 'kind', 'style', and 'type' for products that fall under this protection. Currently, this higher level of protection is exclusive to wines and spirits.

GI is an intellectual property right. On this subject, under a

free trade agreement, normally two countries include rules prescribed in the TRIPS and do not go beyond that.

Nilanshu Shekhar, founding partner at law firm KAnalysis, said Indian legislation does not differentiate between wines and spirits, and other products in terms of GI protection, and the decision to grant higher protection rests with the central government and varies based on international recognition.

India has been advocating for extended protection to other products beyond wines and spirits to prevent misuse of its labels like Basmati rice by other countries.

"The UK's interest in securing higher-level GI protection for more products in the proposed FTA with India predominantly benefits its strong export segments of wines and spirits, dairy products etc. As FTAs are based on mutual benefits, India should negotiate firmly for the UK to offer similar elevated GI protection to Indian products to a higher range of Indian products too," Shekhar said.

He said that this approach would create a more balanced and reciprocal trade relationship, potentially opening new markets and enhancing the global standing of Indian products.

A higher level of GI protection for products like cheese will create problems for Indian companies, hence, New Delhi should not accede to the demand unless

the UK is reciprocating equally in this or another department, he added.

Sharing similar views, expert on internal trade and WTO-related issues, Abhijit Das said: "If the UK is demanding a higher level of protection for its GIs, Britain must be willing to give a higher level of protection to our GIs as well. But, there could be some adverse consequences for cheese manufactured by Amul in India."

The famous Indian goods carrying GI tag include Basmati rice, Darjeeling Tea, Chandri Fabric, Mysore Silk, Kullu Shawl, Kangra Tea, Thanjavur Paintings, and Kashmir Walnut Wood Carving.



FinMin asks PSU banks to take measures to strengthen cybersecurity

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry has asked state-owned banks to review systems and processes related to their digital operation in view of the recent UCO Bank incident. According to sources, the banks have been advised to check their cybersecurity robustness and take measures to strengthen them.

Banks should keep a tight vigil, and there should be readiness for future cyber threats, sources said.

The Finance Ministry and RBI have been sensitising banks on this aspect at regular intervals amid the growing digitisation in the financial sector.

Last week, Kolkata-based public sector lender UCO Bank reported erroneous credit of Rs 820 crore to account holders of the bank

via Immediate Payment Service (IMPS).

During November 10-13, the bank had observed, due to technical issues in IMPS, certain transaction(s) initiated by holders of other banks have resulted in credit to the account holders in UCO Bank without actual receipt of money from these banks.

IMPS is a real-time interbank electronic funds transfer system without any intervention. The bank blocked the recipients' accounts and has been able to recover Rs 649 crore out of Rs 820 crore, which is about 79 per cent of the amount.

The state-owned bank is yet to clarify whether this technical glitch was due to human error or a hacking attempt.

However, the bank has reported the matter to the law enforcement agencies for necessary action.

Securing funding major challenge for women entrepreneurs, say founders

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Securing funding is a major challenge for women entrepreneurs along with balancing the demands of entrepreneurship with traditional gender roles and expectations.

"Historically, many business networks have been male-dominated, making it harder for women to access key connections and opportunities. I am constantly working to create a diverse and inclusive work environment. I am involved in building networks that support women in entrepreneurship."

"I am always advocating for equal funding opportunities, pushing for a more equitable distribution of resources," she said. Founder of SheThePeopleTV

and Gytree.Com Shaili Chopra said that as an advocate of gender equality, it is crucial to establish additional ways for women to enter the workforce. "This involves not only promoting equal opportunities but also addressing key areas



such as healthcare, financial autonomy, and inclusive dialogue. With both my initiatives, I have centred the platforms around the community, aiming to build a sisterhood economy, where women lead and make an impact," she said.

Design and architecture company Novatr's chief product officer Vipanchi Handa said personal problems in the sector faced during her corporate job propelled her to venture into doing her own thing.

Recounting her experience of working in a male-dominated industry such as construction, she shared how masons would re-confirm instructions from a male executive as well.



Startups will play important role in helping India become 3rd largest economy: CEA

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Startups will play an important role in helping India become the third largest economy in the world, Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) to the Union government V Anantha Nageswaran has said. Nageswaran said that tier-2 and 3 cities, including Kerala's capital, have become game-changers in helping startups flourish in the country due to improvements in infrastructure and supportive policies of the government, according to a KSUM release.

The CEA, during his Leadership Talk on the concluding day of the Huddle Global 2023 organised by the Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM), said that India was the fifth largest economy on course to become the third largest in a few years. "In fact, I will say 7-in-7 is the buzz slogan, that is 7 trillion USD economy in seven years. Seven trillion USD economy size by 2030 is possible if India maintains its present growth trajectory, and in that journey startup entrepreneurs are going to play an important role," he is quoted as having said in the release.

He was of the view that the active participation of startups in India in developing business models on the foundation of expanding physical and digital infrastructure will continue to generate efficiency, revenue and economic returns for the country. "The last decade has seen an exceptional transformation in the startup landscape in India, which has emerged as the third largest ecosystem globally, with over 1.12 lakh startups presently recognised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) across 763 districts. "Among them, more than 110 are unicorns with a total valuation of around USD 350 billion," he said. The CEA further said that the country ranks second in innovation quality.

He said that innovation in India was not just limited to certain sectors as startups were solving problems in 56 industrial sectors, with 13 per cent of them from IT services, nine per cent from health and life sciences, seven per cent from education,

five per cent from agriculture and five per cent from food and beverages.

Nageswaran also said it was significant that 49 per cent of the startups were from tier-2 and 3 cities which have turned to be game-changers as the business advantages in these locations enable entrepreneurs to operate at lower costs as compared to tier-1 cities.

"Apart from improved infrastructure and the government's pro-active policies, the availability of a technically skilled talent pool is a huge advantage for startups to set up and flourish in tier-2 and tier-3 cities," he said. He said that historically there was a perception that small towns were difficult places to conduct business.

"...But with improved internet penetration, vastly better physical infrastructure, road, rail and air connectivity and supportive government policies, this is no longer true," he said. He also noted Kerala's startup journey has been an inspiring one. The CEA said that KSUM has served as the catalyst since its establishment in 2006 to promote change that propelled the state into the forefront of the global startup arena.

KSUM is the Kerala government's nodal agency established in 2006 for entrepreneurship development and incubation activities in the state. Nageswaran said that with over 4,000 registered tech startups, 63 incubators and 10 lakh square feet of incubation space, KSUM has not only met its goal of promoting technology-based entrepreneurship but has also earned the distinguished position of being among the world's top business incubators.

The November 16-18 fifth edition of Huddle Global, India's biggest beachside startup conclave, was organised by KSUM at Adimalathura beach, near Vizhinjam, here. Attended by around 1,500 delegates, the event displayed sophisticated products from emerging sectors such as robotics, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, life sciences, space tech, blockchain, IoT, e-governance, fintech, healthtech, agritech, edutech and SaaS from across the country.

Flurry of IPOs; 5 firms gear up to raise ₹7,300 cr next week

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The initial public offering (IPO) lane will be busy in November with five companies, including Tata Technologies and Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd, tapping the primary market next week to raise over Rs 7,300 crore collectively.

The other three companies whose maiden public issues are ready to open are Fedbank

Financial Services, Flair Writing Industries, and Gandhar Oil Refinery India. Together, these five companies are expected to fetch more than Rs 7,300 crore through the IPOs, data from the stock exchanges showed.

Before this, three firms -- ASK Automotive, Protean eGov Technologies, and ESAF Small Finance Bank -- launched their public issues earlier this month. Further, IPOs of Honasa Consumer,

which owns FMCG brands Mamaearth, and household products and stationery manufacturer Cello World concluded in the first week of the month. V Prashant Rao, Director & Head-ECM, Investment Banking at Anand Rathi Advisors, attributed several factors to the hectic IPO activity next week, including strong post-listing returns (average 30 per cent) for recent public issues and robust macros.

"There have been several draft papers filings which indicate companies are gearing up to launch their IPOs in the coming quarters. Many of them, including the ones that have received Sebi clearance, are planning to launch before the general elections and hence you are seeing a flurry of IPOs getting launched," he said.

Overall, the Indian IPO market witnessed 31 initial share sales collecting Rs 26,300 crore in the first half of FY24. This

was a decline of 26 per cent from the Rs 35,456 crore mobilised by 14 IPOs during the same time in 2022-23. However, Rao believes that the second half of the current financial year (FY24) will see good quality companies that have been priced reasonably to launch their IPOs.

The initial share sale of state-owned Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) will open for public subscription during November

21-23, while the IPOs of the remaining four companies will open on November 22 and conclude on November 24. Tata Technologies' IPO is entirely an Offer for Sale (OFS) of 6.08 crore equity shares. Under the OFS, Tata Motors will offload an 11.4 per cent stake, private equity firm Alpha TC Holdings will sell a 2.4 per cent stake, and Tata Capital Growth Fund I will do away with 1.2 per cent of shareholding.

Conditions not ripe to make INR a hard currency: GTRI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India should become a middle-income country and then push to make INR (rupee) a hard currency, and then, it must promote the settlement of global trade in the local currency, think tank GTRI said on Sunday.

Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that transforming a currency into a hard currency is a complex process that hinges on several pivotal factors. Firstly, economic stability is paramount; a country must exhibit low and stable inflation, consistent growth, and a balanced trade environment. This stability underpins confidence among international investors and trading partners, it added. Equally crucial is the implementation of strong fiscal and monetary policies by the government and central bank, including effective national debt management and sensible interest rate policies, it said, adding aspiring for reserve currency status is a significant aspect. This status is typically achieved when a currency is widely used

and trusted, and reciprocally, it gains trust because of its widespread use.

Political stability also plays a critical role, as it reassures external entities of the nation's economic consistency, the think tank said.

Hard currencies are widely accepted around the world for international transactions and are considered a reliable and stable store of value. The presence of a currency as a hard currency reflects perceived stability, reliability, and economic strength of its issuing country. The US Dollar is the most dominant hard currency, often considered the world's primary reserve currency. It is used in a significant majority of international transactions and as a benchmark currency for most commodities.

"The process requires significant systemic changes, which could, potentially, destabilise India's economy. Therefore, it might be more prudent for India to wait until its economy grows further and reaches a middle-income status before aspiring to make the INR a hard currency.

Macrotech to invest ₹800 cr to construct 2 housing projects in Bengaluru: MD & CEO Lodha

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Macrotech Developers will invest about Rs 800 crore to construct two housing projects in Bengaluru where it has entered to expand business amid strong demand, its MD & CEO Abhishek Lodha said. Macrotech Developers, which markets its properties under Lodha brand, has a significant presence in Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and Pune.

In June last year, the company had announced its entry in the Bengaluru market by forming a joint venture to develop its first housing project. Later, it added one more housing project in the IT city.

Macrotech Developers this month launched its first residential project in Bengaluru. "We are targeting to launch the second project in the fourth quarter of this fiscal. It may slip to the first quarter of the next financial year," Lodha told PTI. Asked about construction cost of these two projects, he said it is estimated to be Rs 800 crore.



The gross development value or sales value is expected to be around Rs 2,500 crore from these two projects, Lodha said. Macrotech Developers will be selling apartments in the range of Rs 1.5-2.5 crore each. Lodha asserted that the company would continue to focus on MMR and Pune residential markets.

In Bengaluru, he said the company would like to focus on sales and marketing as well as execution of these two projects, before deciding to expand further. On operational front, Macrotech Developers achieved sale bookings of Rs 6,890 crore during the first six months of this fiscal as against Rs 6,000 crore in the same period of previous year.

Dabur plans to open manufacturing unit in South India; portfolio expansion in the offing

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leading FMCG and Ayurvedic products maker Dabur is planning to set up a new factory in South India in less than a year's time, as its business scales in the region, according to company's CEO Mohit Malhotra.

Dabur, which now gets 20 per cent of its domestic sales from South India with its business there doubling in the last 5-6 years, is identifying gaps and usages to launch products customised to the markets, he told PTI in an interview.

The company, having 13 manufacturing units across the country, is augmenting its capacity further to meet the demand and is diversifying its manufacturing activities by adding new lines, he added. Dabur India, which has an annual capex of around Rs 350-450 crore, also plans to expand its manufacturing activities in the international markets catering to regions

such as the Middle East and Europe.

Besides, the company is consolidating its manufacturing operations and has shut down some units where tax sunsets are coming in, and opening new units where GST regime is coming in, Malhotra added. On Dabur's business in South India, Malhotra said, "We have made substantial progress in South India... it now contributes 19 to 20 per cent of Dabur's domestic business. This was not even 10 per cent around seven to eight years back and thus contribution from the Southern region has doubled."

When asked about the new plant in South India, Malhotra said, "I do not think it's a few years away. Maybe it is a year away. Within a year, we might plan something for South of India as business scales up." Dabur's last investment to open a new unit was at Indore, where it had invested around Rs 350 crore.

Mercedes, Audi see record sales in festive season this year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Luxury carmakers Mercedes and Audi have dispatched record units this festive season as the demand for high-end cars continues to grow in the country. Driven by brisk sales throughout the year, the luxury car industry in India is hopeful of achieving its best-ever performance this year.

In an interaction with PTI, Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director Santosh Iyer said the festive season this year from

Onam to Diwali has been better than last years', owing to multiple new launches, an attractive portfolio and also strong customer sentiment. "We have seen record deliveries during Dussehra, Dhanteras and Diwali reflecting customer enthusiasm," he noted. Iyer said that the automaker continues to have a positive industry outlook, expecting record sales this year.

It however expects supply chain-related disruptions to continue to pose challenges, affecting the production and availability of SUVs, especially the GLC.

"We continue to have a positive industry outlook, expecting record sales this year. However, we forecast supply chain-related disruptions to continue in the coming months as well."

Audi India Head Balbir Singh Dhillon said the company has witnessed an 88 per cent growth with 5,530 units retailed in January-September 2023.

"We have been operating with one of our highest-order banks in recent times. This festive period marked bigger celebrations for Audi India as we witnessed our highest-ever festive season sales in the last seven years," he added.



Growth was on the back of sustained demand for our best-sellers including the A4, Q3, Q3 Sportback, Q5 and S5 Sportback, Dhillon said.

"Delhi and Mumbai continued to lead the demand for our products in the festive season. We also continue to witness good demand from Hyderabad, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, and Ahmedabad," he added.

This year, the luxury car industry in India will surpass 2018 volumes - and reach the 46,000-47,000 unit mark, Dhillon noted. "As a company, we are looking to end the year with a high double-digit growth," he added. BMW Group India President

Vikram Pawah said the company has launched some powerful products - both cars and motorcycles - in the festive period. "We will keep this momentum going," he added.

Lamborghini India Head Sharad Agarwal said India is one of the fastest growing markets globally and has the 3rd largest millionaire population. The Indian luxury car market was valued at USD 1.06 billion in 2021 and is expected to reach over USD 1.54 billion by 2027, registering a CAGR of more than 6.4 per cent during the

forecast period 2022-2027, he noted.

"This growth is driven by the evolution of customer taste and preferences and hence the automobile segment is seeing substantial expansion with increasing demand for luxury cars with advanced tech and safety features," Agarwal stated. The growth is further supported by better road infrastructure pan India, cities are being linked by expressways which coupled with high aspirations is driving demand from tier 2's and beyond, he added.

Alva, Nair win National Racing Championship titles

PTI ■ COIMBATORE

Ruhaan Alva clinched the LGB Formula 4 title, while Arjun S Nair bagged the Novice Cup in the 26th JK Tyre National Racing Championship here on Sunday. At the Kari Motor Speedway in Chettipalayam, Alva enjoyed a 20-point lead over Kolkata's Arya Singh of Dark Don Racing which he had gained earlier, and with only one race left it would have been enough for the racer from Bengaluru to seal the title. But Arya and a couple of drivers from the Momentum Motorsport team, in the Novice Cup, appealed to the Indian Motor Sports Appeal Court (IMSAC) and got their points back. These points were docked in a post-event scrutiny in the penultimate round at the same venue for technical infringement and they had slipped down the table. The pressure was back firmly



on MSport's Alva with this development but he fought back well from the eighth position to take the second spot in the final race. He eventually emerged the winner with an overall tally of 82 points. "It was a crazy final race. Diljith (Dark Don) and I were involved in a great battle (that) went neck to neck. He tried to hold me up for some time but I managed to cut a corner to come in second," said Alva. Arya and teammate Tijil Rao both finished on the podium but were tied for the second spot with 71 points each. In the Novice Cup, Nair did not face much trouble for his title win. His teammate Neythan McPherson (53 points) and DTS Racing's Joel Joseph (44) finished second and third respectively. In the GT Cup, Abhishek Vasudev (54) took the first spot while Jagadeesh Nagara (45) and Ullas S Nanda (39) were second and third respectively.



Verstappen earns 18th win of F1 season

AP ■ LAS VEGAS (US)

Max Verstappen won his 18th race of the season Saturday night with a pass of Charles Leclerc at the Las Vegas Grand Prix, which turned out to be one of the most competitive events of the season despite a disastrous start to Formula One's expensive extravaganza. "Viva Las Vegas! Viva Las Vegas!" sang the three-time reigning world champion as he crossed under the checkered flag waved by Justin Bieber. Verstappen had slammed the race at every chance, yet raced in an Elvis-inspired firesuit and took the victory on the famed Las Vegas Strip. "I hope everyone enjoyed it, we definitely did. Excited to come back here next year and try to do something similar," said Verstappen, who had markedly reversed his position on the Las Vegas spectacle.

Verstappen, Leclerc and Sergio Perez were driven in a limousine to a podium located near the Bellagio - "we go straight to the nightclub," Verstappen told his fellow podium finishers - but they were instead treated to the casino's famed fountain show. The Bellagio fountains had been turned off all week and restarted as part of the victory celebration. None of the participants seemed remotely interested as they stood chatting. After receiving their trophies, they were treated to a New Year's Eve-style fireworks show over the Strip.

Martin Garrix then launched into a throbbing DJ set to entertain those who opened their wallets for the most expensive spectator race of the season. Celebrities danced along on the grid and everyone seemed thrilled with the show and the stars in attendance included Brad Pitt, Rihanna, Usain Bolt and Shaquille O'Neal as F1 said the three-day event drew 315,000 spectators. The race was the third stop this season in the United States, more than any other country, and was promoted by F1 and owner Liberty Media. But the event has been lambasted - especially by Verstappen - for its opulence and excess. Tickets were expensive, hotels along the famed Strip hiked their prices, and the sporting element of the 21st race of the season was overshadowed by everything from celebrities, musical acts and a myriad of Elvis impersonators roaming the paddock that included a wedding chapel where former F1 champion Jacques Villeneuve was married earlier in the week.

Liberty expected to spend \$500 million on the first grand prix it self-promoted, but paddock speculation before Saturday night's main event was that Liberty had gone well over budget. The entire event nearly imploded nine minutes into the first practice session when Carlos Sainz Jr. Ran over a water drain valve on the track that

badly damaged his Ferrari and F1 had to close the 3.85-mile (6.2-kilometer) circuit for inspection. Fans were forced to leave at 1:30 a.m. Thursday night after witnessing just nine minutes of track activity. The second practice started at 2:30 a.m. And ran until 4 a.m., and instead of an apology, F1 simply offered \$200 credits to its merchandise store to any ticket holders who had only purchased Thursday access. A class-action lawsuit was filed Friday against the Las Vegas Grand Prix.

It made it critical for F1 to deliver a good race Saturday night and, even though it was Verstappen's sixth consecutive victory, it was one of the most spirited events of the season. Additionally, a track that had been likened to a "flying pig" because of its layout was praised for its raciness.

Seven-time F1 champion Lewis Hamilton, who finished seventh for Mercedes, said the circuit "provided a better race than most of the tracks we go to." "I don't think the music stopped this entire weekend in the paddock," said Logan Sargeant of Williams, the only American driver in F1. Leclerc and teammate Sainz had qualified 1-2 on Friday but Sainz was handed a 10-place penalty on the starting grid because Ferrari was forced to change his car because of the damage from hitting the drain cover. That pushed Verstappen up to second for the start and Verstappen immediately pounced.

The Dutchman forced Leclerc off track to take the lead, and although Leclerc demanded that Verstappen be forced to give the position back, Verstappen was only handed a five-second penalty.

He served it during a later pit stop, but his Red Bull is so strong, he remained in contention the entire race.

Leclerc passed Perez for the lead with 17 laps remaining, and then three laps later Verstappen passed his teammate to take second. He and Perez then worked to create a tow that allowed Verstappen to catch Leclerc for the win with 13 laps remaining.

Perez had worked his way past Leclerc for second but Leclerc grabbed it back at the finish to deny Red Bull its seventh 1-2 finish of the season. "I wanted that win so bad," Leclerc moaned. "But what a race. Honestly, there is nothing left. I enjoyed it so much. Second place with a lot of fights. There is no better race for the first race in Vegas. Even so, with Lewis Hamilton finishing seventh, Perez likely did enough to ensure he will finish second to Verstappen in the final driver standings.

The Leclerc finish helped Ferrari cut its deficit to Mercedes to four points for second in the constructor championship headed into next week's finale at Abu Dhabi.

ATP Finals: Djokovic chasing seventh title

AP ■ TURIN

Top-ranked Novak Djokovic will be bidding for a record-breaking seventh ATP Finals title when he takes on home favorite Jannik Sinner in Sunday's final. Djokovic took less than 90 minutes to beat Carlos Alcaraz 6-3 6-2 in a semifinal match between the top two ranked players on Saturday night, after Sinner had earlier dispatched Daniil Medvedev 6-3 6-7(4) 6-1.

The 36-year-old Djokovic is currently tied with Roger Federer on six titles at the season-ending tournament for the year's top eight players, while Sinner is the first Italian to reach the final. However, Sinner recorded his first-ever victory over Djokovic earlier this week and the Serbian will also have to contend again with a passionate, partisan crowd. "He's been playing fantastic tennis, arguably the best tennis of his life," Djokovic said. "We played a very close match

the other night. The atmosphere was unbelievable, electric really. I don't expect anything less than that, probably even louder than what we had in the group-stage matchup. "It's the final, I've been in this situation before many times. I'm really happy with the way I'm feeling, the way I'm playing, so hopefully I can deliver my A' game tomorrow."

Djokovic had plenty of support in Turin on Saturday, with many chanting his name between points. Alcaraz and Djokovic had played each other four times previously and won two each. Djokovic won their most recent encounter in the final in Cincinnati in August, while Alcaraz beat the Serb in five sets in the Wimbledon final. The latest battle between the two never hit those levels of drama, however, as Djokovic clinically took his chances after recovering from having to stave off two break points in the opening game. "I approached the match with the right attitude, the right



mentality, and I knew from the very first point it was going to be greatly intense," Djokovic said. "He had break points right

away, 15-40 in the first game. "That's Carlos. He always brings out his best in these kinds of matches and starts with a lot of high quality ten-

nis and intensity. You've got to match that, try to weather the storm, and I did that."

Djokovic nosed in front in the eighth game as Alcaraz - playing in his first ATP Finals - saved one break point but then hit a backhand into the net to leave Djokovic serving for the set.

He duly did so to love, seeing it out with an ace. Djokovic had won his past 15 matches after taking the opener and the writing appeared on the wall for Alcaraz when his opponent went a set and a break up early in the second set.

Alcaraz had the chance to level the set in the sixth game but Djokovic saved two break points, the second with a sumptuous crosscourt forehand that had the crowd roaring its approval. Djokovic lapped it up, raising his arms out, before cupping his hand to his ear and nodding his head and then pumping his fist. Instead, it was Djokovic who broke in the very next game and then duly served for the set.



Sindhu to train under 'mentor' Padukone

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Eying a third Olympic medal, ace Indian shuttler PV Sindhu will now move her base from Hyderabad to Bengaluru to train under the legendary Prakash Padukone in the build up to the Paris Games.

Sindhu had a week-long stint under Padukone in September and before the Asian Games, she had indicated that she would be training under him. The 28-year-old, who is nursing a niggle in her left knee, finally revealed the move in a social media post.

"For those wondering and constantly asking me, the cat is finally out of the bag!!," she wrote on 'X', formerly twitter. "Prakash sir is assuming the role of the mentor in my setup. I started training with him at the end of August, and it's been uphill ever since," wrote the former world champion.

"He's more than a mentor; he's my guide, my guru, and, above all, a true friend. I wholeheartedly believe he possesses the magic to bring out the absolute best from my game. "I am so grateful he reached out to me with one call when I was in Japan, and we've built on that connection exceptionally well. Dear sir, I AM PUMPED!! Looking forward to training with you! Let's get to work!" wrote Sindhu, who had won a silver at the Rio Olympics under chief coach Pullela Gopichand.

In February, Sindhu had parted ways with Korean coach Park Tae-Sang, who was instrumental in her winning the bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics.

The shuttler from Hyderabad worked with SAI coach Vidhi Chaudhary for sometime before roping in Malaysia's former All-England Commonwealth Games champion Muhammad Hafiz Hashim as her travelling coach. Recovering from a sore left knee, Sindhu has opted for a protected rank of No 10 which will be locked in BWF standings until she recovers. She sustained the injury on her left knee and pulled out during her second-round women's singles match against Thailand's Supanida Katethong at the French Open on October 26.

Sinner has won all four matches at ATP Finals



AP ■ TURIN

Sinner has been fervently backed by the fans in Turin - with the orange-clad "Carota Boys" ever present - and the 22-year-old raised his arms to the joyous crowd after serving the match out to love against 2020 champion Medvedev. "It is a privilege to have this kind of pressure," Sinner said. "The crowd has given me so much energy. "It was a very difficult match. He started better than me, then I somehow managed to

get the break and then I felt a bit better." Sinner is already up to No. 4 in the rankings - the highest an Italian man has risen since Adriano Panatta nearly a half-century ago. Sinner's win over the third-ranked Medvedev also saw him become the Italian with the most victories over top-five players (10), breaking Panatta's record. Medvedev had won all six of his matches against Sinner before last month but the Italian had ended that streak with victories in the finals at Beijing and Vienna.

The nerves appeared to be setting in for Medvedev after Sinner broke his serve in the second game of the decider and moments later the Russian hurled his racket at the boards after losing a scintillating rally, before reemerging with the crowd as the boos rang out. Medvedev managed to avoid a complete meltdown but Sinner dominated and broke again in the sixth game before serving out to love.

Netherlands, Switzerland, Romania qualify for Euro 2024

AP ■ LONDON

The Netherlands, Switzerland and Romania all secured places at Euro 2024, and France racked up the biggest-ever win in European Championship qualifying by beating Gibraltar 14-0.

The Netherlands needed a win over Ireland to be sure of qualifying and Wout Weghorst gave his team the lead in the 12th minute on Saturday, blasting a shot into the top-right corner. The goal was awarded despite Weghorst appearing to pull on Ireland defender Nathan Collins' jersey just before he received the ball.

The Netherlands had 18 shots to Ireland's three but couldn't score again. "We can be proud of ourselves and we certainly are now that we're going to the European Championship," Netherlands captain Virgil Van Dijk told Dutch broadcaster NOS. "With all the problems, injuries we've had, we've still managed it. Now we can start preparing." SWISS STREAK



Switzerland drew 1-1 with Kosovo to make sure of qualifying and continue a run of not missing any major tournament since Euro 2012. But the game continued a troubling Swiss trend to let leads slip. Switzerland dominated possession but couldn't get through the Kosovo defense until Ruben Vargas headed in a deflected ball in the 47th. Kosovo's Muhamet Hyseni leveled the score in the 82nd with a shot in off the post. It was Switzerland's fifth draw in six games, and in all of those draws Switzerland conceded at

least one goal after the 80th minute.

A draw was enough for Switzerland to qualify because Romania won 2-1 against third-place Israel.

Romania recovered from Israel's Eran Zahavi scoring in the second minute, responding with goals from George Pușcaș and Ianis Hagi. Israel was the official host team but Saturday's game was played in Hungary because of the Israel-Hamas war. Romania qualifies for its first major tournament since 2016 after missing the last European Championship despite being one of the host nations. Israel misses out on an automatic qualifying spot but goes into the playoffs because of its Nations League record. That means Norway and star striker Erling Haaland can no longer reach the playoffs and will not play at Euro 2024. Belarus beat Andorra 1-0 in the other game in the group. RECORD WIN FOR FRANCE France's 14 goals against Gibraltar broke the team's record for its biggest-ever win and also set a record for the competition.

AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

Argentina and Brazil tested new options up front for their World Cup qualifying match next week, an encounter that could give the losing side a bitter ending to 2023. Lionel Messi's Argentina lost to Uruguay on Thursday its first match since it hoisted the World Cup trophy in Qatar, while the host of the superclásico will play without the injured Vinicius Júnior at the Maracana Stadium after two consecutive defeats in South American qualifying.

Argentina eyes Di Maria and Brazil tests Jesus

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni on Saturday tested a formation in the first training, eyeing the match in Rio de Janeiro with veteran Ángel Di Maria replacing Nico González, trying to explore Brazil's weaknesses on the flanks. That was a problem for the World Cup champion in their 2-0 home defeat to Uruguay. Brazil's Fernando Diniz, facing pressure because of the team's

poor performances under his watch, tested Gabriel Jesus in Vinicius' position at the team's training ground. Without several key players, he seems to trust a system with four strikers who can also fill the mid-field: Jesus, Gabriel Martinelli, Rodrygo and Raphinha. Rodrygo said in a news conference that he accepts having "more responsibilities" on the team. Among the four strikers

Diniz is likely to play, he is the one who knows best how to function in multiple positions. "I knew my time would come, little by little. With Neymar out, Vini out, people expect more from me, and I need to deliver," he said. "Brazil vs Argentina at the Maracana is special. I am young, but I have some experience. This will be a top three in my most important matches."

Brazil has never lost a home match in World Cup qualifying. Argentina still leads the 10-team South American qualifying group with 12 points from five matches. Uruguay is second with 10 points. Colombia has nine and Venezuela eight. Brazil will host the World Cup champions at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro in fifth position, with seven points. Ecuador, Paraguay and Chile

have five points each. Bolivia has three and Peru one.

The 2026 World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada will include 48 teams, meaning direct entry for the top six teams from South America. The seventh-place team can earn a berth in an intercontinental playoff.

Brazil's soccer confederation said on Saturday all 69,000 tickets it had have been sold for

the clash --some more might be with Argentina's soccer body. The encounter could mark Messi's last match for Argentina playing at its bitter next-door neighbour.

The 36-year-old lost the 2014 World Cup final at the same Maracana Stadium where in 2021 he lifted his first national team title, that year's edition of Copa America playing against Brazil in the final.



OCEAN OF BLUE: ALL ROADS LEAD TO MOTERA



Indian Air Force's Surya team puts up spectacular show

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Usually composed of 13 pilots, the 'ambassador of Indian Air Force' SKAT team has only nine of them performing at any given time in their Hawk advanced trainer jets.

The Rohit Sharma-led Indian team was the first to make it to the semifinals after a 45-game league round and were also the first to enter the final, having recorded 10 consecutive wins in this World Cup.

Given their current form, two-time World Cup winners India are firm favourites to add a third title in their cabinet.

On the other hand, the five-time champions Australia were the third team to make the semifinals behind India and South Africa, but have been on an eight-game winning spree even though they are yet to produce a complete performance.

With the world's largest cricket stadium underneath packed to the brim by euphoric fans, the Surya Kiran Acrobatic Team of the Indian Air Force put up a spectacular show before the World Cup final between India and Australia here on Sunday.

A total of nine Hawk Mk-132 SKAT aircrafts of the IAF created history as it is for the first time that they produced an aerial show ahead of any cricket match in India and it is only fitting that their maiden show took place before a World Cup final.

The Surya Kiran team pilots, a part of the 52nd Squadron of the Indian Air Force, produced a 10-minute show before the toss at the Narendra Modi Stadium, which has a capacity of more than 1,30,000.

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The buzz had reached its crescendo at least 24 hours before the 'big match' and with three and half hours to go before the start of the most awaited World Cup final, an ocean of blue seems to be travelling towards Motera.

The city of Ahmedabad has become the centre of the cricketing world. It seems as if the entire city is moving in one direction. The roads of Ahmedabad are full of energy and a bit of madness. Fans wearing the India jerseys, carrying the Indian flag, laughing, joking and anticipating an Indian win are moving towards the Narendra Modi stadium.

There are families, friends, children, adults, teenagers, middle aged and the senior

citizen who have all painted the city blue. The traffic moved at a very slow pace till Motera but comes to a complete halt near the stadium. You can't move an inch if you don't have a VIP car park pasted on your vehicle. A hologram is required to be pasted on the accreditation card as well as a part of SPG protocol since Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australian deputy PM Richard Marles will be in attendance. The level of expectation from Rohit Sharma's team has long crossed the critical limit of craziness. The city is ready to explode as 132,000 capacity stadium won't even have an inch of space left. The streets that lead to Narendra Modi Stadium's main entry gate are lined with sellers of counterfeit India jerseys.

Little Hetwik, all of eight is a big Hardik Pandya fan as he is Gujarat Titans skipper. He wants a jersey with Pandya written on the back but gets disappointment. "Only Virat, Rohit, Maxwell and Warner available," the seller Qayamuddin said and started tending to other customers. "Beta, wear Virat, you look smart in this," the young father tried to persuade the kid whose eyes had already welled up. This final has been God-send for Sheetal Ben, who has an ailing husband at home and the counterfeit industry has been her way of putting food on the table. "I have been selling at least 200 to 260 Virat Kohli jerseys and 150 Rohit along with India hat which is a big hit. During India vs Pakistan match, I earned around 30,000

in three days. That's about what I will make in six months time when tournament is over. God bless Rohit and Virat. They run my kitchen," Sheetal Ben said, smiling. At least 70,000 or more fans who have tickets aren't the locals and have flown in from different parts of India and a few thousands are NRIs from UK, USA, Australia, Canada and Singapore, who have spent a bomb for a cricket vacation. At least 20 charter flights with dignitaries, politicians, business men and Bollywood personalities are supposed to land in Ahmedabad for the game. For the upmarket Indian elite, it's not just about Virat's cover drives or Bumrah's Yorker but also being at a happening place and have their "I was there moment" under the sun.

Who's who are booked at team hotel as the party will continue till wee hours of morning. The tickets worth Rs 3500 is being sold at 30 times premium in black market while hospitality tickets have been sold in lakhs. The hotel prices have shot through the roof. A few fans have decided to stay overnight at Ahmedabad railway station waiting room as they don't have enough money to pay Rs 15,000 for one-night stay at a hotel. That's the minimum rate available even at the 'cheapest' hotels. "Sab behti sabarmati mein haath dho rahein hain," remarked a fan. For the past three days, the ITC Narmada five star facility, where the national team is staying, has seen huge crowd gather in front of main gate. "I saw Dravid, Rohit and that

coach (Paras Mhambrey) the other night getting out of hotel," a fan, who reached Narendra Modi Stadium as early as 11 am trying to beat the traffic, said. The party had begun at 8:00am this morning and if India win, the celebrations will continue all night.

Prized possession for Kohli: Tendulkar gifts him iconic Number 10 jersey

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Star India batter Virat Kohli received a prized memorabilia ahead of the World Cup final against Australia here on Sunday -- the iconic No.10 jersey of his idol Sachin Tendulkar.

Tendulkar gifted Kohli his signed jersey worn during his last ODI, the Asia Cup match against Pakistan at Mirpur in 2012. Kohli had broken Tendulkar's record for most one-day centuries during the



World Cup semifinal against New Zealand at Mumbai on Wednesday.

"A special occasion & a special pre-match moment. There's CLASS written all over this gesture! The legendary Sachin Tendulkar gifts Virat Kohli his signed jersey from his last ODI," the BCCI wrote on X, with a picture of Kohli holding the jersey. Kohli is the first batsman in the history of the game to score 50 ODI centuries, going past Tendulkar who has made 49 tons.

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ICC ban betrayal of nation: Lankan Minister

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sports Minister Roshan Ranasinghe on Sunday slammed Sri Lanka Cricket for bidding for a ban from the ICC, calling it a "big betrayal of the country". Ranasinghe had appointed an interim committee after sacking the governing body headed by Shammi Silva following the national team's disastrous World Cup campaign.

"This is big betrayal of the country," said Ranasinghe after reading out correspondence with the ICC by Silva administration. "They were doing so to selfishly hang on to positions after audit reports had highlighted their corrupt action. Ranasinghe had appointed legendary captain Arjuna Ranatunga as the head of the seven-member interim committee. But the ICC then

suspended SLC with immediate effect for government interference and Silva also managed to obtain a court order suspending the interim committee.

In response to a parliamentary speech by the main opposition leader Sajith Premadasa accusing SLC of promoting the ICC for a ban, SLC said Ranasinghe was politically interfering in its work and as a full member they were duty bound to adhere to the articles of association of the ICC.

The case on the suspension of the interim committee is to be taken up on Monday in the Court of Appeal.

At least three judges have recused hearing the case. Ranasinghe led a scathing attack against the chair of the court of appeal in parliament for ignoring the audit report that highlighted the misdeeds of the SLC.

PUNJAB & SIND BANK KHALSA COLLEGE BRANCH, AMRITSAR

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES)

Whereas, the Undersigned being the "Authorized Officer" of Punjab & Sind Bank, under the Securitization & Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of the Security Interest Act 2002 in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(2) read with security interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued a demand notice on the date mentioned against account calling upon the respective borrowers / guarantors to repay the amount as mentioned against account within 60 days from the date of notice / date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrowers / guarantors having failed to repay the amount, notice hereby given to the borrowers / guarantors & the public in general that undersigned has taken possession of the Properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him / her under section 13(4) of said Act read with Rule 9 of the said rule on the date mentioned against each account.

The borrowers / guarantors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the Properties and any dealing with the Properties will be subject to the charge of the Punjab and Sind Bank, for the amounts, other charges, costs and interest thereon. The borrowers attention is invited to provisions of Sub Section (8) of the Section 13 of Act, in respect of time available to them, to redeem the secured assets.

Name of the (NPA) Account	Description of the Immovable Properties	Date of the Demand Notice	Date of the Possession	Amount Outstanding
(1) S. Kulwant Singh S/o S. Harbans Singh and Sharanjit Kaur W/o S. Kulwant Singh and Guarantor S. Sukhwant Singh S/o S. Bakshish Singh	Equitable mortgage of Property i.e. One Plot having length 60' and breadth approx. 18½', total area 125 sq. yards, bearing House no. 379, Khasra no. 952 min, situated at Village Wadali and Sharanjit Gura Urban, Abadi Hargobindpura, Sub-Division no. 2, Tehsil and District Amritsar owned by S. Kulwant Singh S/o S. Harbans Singh and Smt. Sharanjit Kaur W/o S. Kulwant Singh vide Sale deed dated 21-09-2000 duly Registered with the Office of Sub-Register, Amritsar vide Document no. 6956, Book no. 1, Jaid Bahi no. 1, Volume no. 1032 at page 48 entered on 21-09-2000 and bounded as per Sale Deed North : Others Property, South : Street 20' wide out of which 10' wide area shall be left from above said area, East : Others Property, West : Others Property	30-05-2023	14-11-2023	Rs. 8,22,377/70 as on 29-05-2023 + Interest, other charges and less recovery if any, till date affected
(2) S. Gurcharan Singh S/o S. Kulwant Singh and Pushpinder Kaur W/o S. Gurcharan Singh and Guarantor S. Tejinder Singh Mehta S/o S. Balbir Mehta	Equitable mortgage of Property i.e. One House area measuring 145.80 sq. yards, bearing Khasra no. 26/20 min as per sale deed and Khasra no. 26/20/6 min as per Jamabandi, Khata Khatouni no. 25/557, as per Jamabandi for the year 2009-10, Registered vide Vasika no. 4455, Jild no. 14354, Jaid Bahi no. 1, Page no. 8889 dated 26-08-2015, situated at Rakha Bharariwal Sub-Urban, Abadi Fateh Singh Colony, Amritsar, owned by Smt. Pushpinder Kaur W/o S. Gurcharan Singh and bounded as East : Gali 15 ft wide, West : Plot no. 63, North : Remaining area of Plot no. 70, South : Plot no. 28, 29	13-07-2023	15-11-2023	Rs. 9,89,640/65 as on 06-07-2023 + Interest, other charges and less recovery if any, till date affected

Date : 20-11-2023 Place : Amritsar Sd/- Authorised Officer

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