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CHINESE ARE SAVING
FOR THE RAINY DAY

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IN RUBBLE IN GAZA

MONEY 10
SENSEX, NIFTY DECLINE ON SELLOFF
IN BANKING, FINANCIAL STOCKS

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PM sounds alarm on Deepfake

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday stressed the importance of understanding how artificial intelligence (AI) works as it could be used to create “deepfakes” and purposefully spread false information, potentially leading to a “big crisis” in society. He urged the media to spread awareness about the issue. The Prime Minister spoke about the dangers of deepfake technology and mentioned that he had seen a video where he is shown playing garba. He clarified, “I have not played garba since school.” “Even those who love me are forwarding the video,” he said in a lighter vein. Addressing the media at the annual Diwali Milan event at the BJP headquarters here, Modi said, “Deepfakes should also carry disclosures.” “There are many other such videos online,” he added, amid several cases of deepfake targeting politicians, sports, and film personalities coming to light in recent weeks. “In a diverse society like ours, deepfakes can cause a significant crisis and even stoke the fire of discontent as people generally trust anything associated with the media, in the same way, anyone clad in ‘gedua’ (safron) tends to get respect from others,” he said. “A new crisis is emerging due to deepfakes produced through artificial intelligence. There is a very significant section of



society that does not have a parallel verification system,” the PM told journalists at the programme where he shared views about a few things and sought their support to raise awareness. Deepfake videos are synthetic media in which a person in an existing image or video is replaced with someone else’s likeness. The Prime Minister noted that in the past, a movie with controversial comments would come and go, but now it has become a big issue. Even the screening of such films becomes difficult on the grounds that they have disrespected some section of society,

irrespective of the huge amount of money spent on making them, he said. Flagging the misuse of AI, the Prime Minister said the media must educate people about this crisis. Modi said, “During the times of Artificial Intelligence, it is important that technology should be used responsibly.” The deepfake videos on social media, featuring morphed faces of actors Rashmika Mandanna, Katrina Kaif, and Kajol, have caused public outrage, with experts voicing rising dangers of AI manipulations. The BJP has raised concern over a deepfake video of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, where he is purport-

edly alluding to Congress’ capability to perform. BJP IT Cell head Amit Malviya alleged Congress’ hand behind the video, though the latter had denied the charge. The Prime Minister said he had recently suggested to ChatGPT professionals that as products like cigarettes come with health warnings, deepfakes too should carry disclosures. AI-manipulated deepfakes have sent shockwaves internationally, with a fake video of the late American President Richard Nixon announcing that US astronauts Neil Armstrong and Aldrin on the Moon “may not be able to return to Earth”. In his Diwali Milan address, the

Prime Minister also referred to his resolve to make India “Viksit Bharat” (developed India), saying these are not merely words but a ground reality. He also mentioned that “vocal for local” has found people’s support. Modi further said India’s achievements during the COVID-19 pandemic have created confidence among the people that the country is not going to stop now. Accompanying the Prime Minister at the party office were Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president JP Nadda, making the event a significant gathering for the ruling party close to the ongoing Assembly polls in five States. Modi cited India’s achievements during the COVID-19 pandemic, saying they created confidence among people that the country is not going to stop now. He mentioned that about 130 countries attended a Global South summit hosted by India. A time comes in the life of a nation that can launch it to a higher trajectory, and this is what is happening to India, he asserted, urging the media to give strength to the programme for making the country developed by highlighting the country’s strengths without resorting to any untruth. Ideas related to developed India and economy are going to be at the centre of discourse for the next 25 years, and people are accepting the way the country has been progressing, Modi said.

Uttarkashi escape channel half ready

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Rescue teams, working around the clock, have used a high-powered machine to drill through up to 24 metres of rubble in the Silkyara tunnel till Friday. Their efforts are gradually bringing them closer to reaching the 40 labourers who have been trapped inside for the past five days. In its latest update on the rescue operation, the National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited said the fifth pipe — being used to prepare an escape passage for the trapped workers — is being positioned. The rescue workers have to drill up to 60 metres to insert 800 and 900 millimetre diameter pipes — one after the other — with the help of a giant drill till an escape passage can be created for the labourers stuck behind the collapsed portion of the under-construction tunnel, NHIDCL Director Anshu Manish Khalkho said. Asked why the machine was not able to achieve the expected drilling speed of four to five metres per hour, he said aligning the pipes on the machine and welding those properly before pushing those through takes time. Khalkho claimed the drilling machine being diesel operated is behind the slow progress. “We are working with a strategy but it has to be reinforced to ensure nothing goes wrong



Rescue and relief operations underway after a portion of a tunnel under construction between Silkyara and Dandagaon on the Brahmakhal-Yamunotri national highway collapsed, in Uttarkashi district, on Friday PTI

midway through,” he said. The machine has been working satisfactorily and the speed will go up as more progress is made through the rubble and the rescue workers get accustomed to the method, Khalkho added. Another “auger machine” is being airlifted from Indore as a backup so that the rescue operation continues uninterrupted, he said. Meanwhile, people whose relatives are among the 40 trapped workers are being allowed to speak to them through a pipe inside the tunnel. Two people from Uttar Pradesh were allowed to speak to their kin, who are among the trapped workers. “My nephew is among those

trapped. I spoke to him. He said that he was fine,” Shatrughan Lal said. A man from Lahimpur Kheri in Uttar Pradesh, whose son Manjit is among those trapped, said he was happy to hear his voice. The labourers have been trapped since Sunday morning when a part of the tunnel collapsed following a landslide. The stretch where debris is accumulated begins 270 metres from the mouth of the tunnel on the Silkyara side. Uttarkashi District Magistrate Abhishek Ruhela said the trapped workers are safe and being supplied with oxygen, medicines, and food and water through air compressed pipes.

MP, Chhattisgarh polls witness intense battles

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
BHOPAL/RAIPUR/NEW DELHI

The high-decibel poll in the single phase Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections and the last leg of the second phase in neighbouring Chhattisgarh sealed the fate of the BJP and the Congress on Friday, with a large number of voter turnouts amid sporadic poll-related incidents. The ruling Congress hopes to retain Chhattisgarh, while the party is certain to wrest power from the BJP in MP and increase their tally from the 2018 winning margins. However, the Congress Government collapsed to pave the way for BJP Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Amid the high-voltage political battle, one significant aspect was the cracks in the newly formed INDIA bloc of Opposition parties, with Congress, Samajwadi Party, and AAP contesting elections and engaging in verbal duels against the leaders of their respective parties. Until the last filed reports, Madhya Pradesh recorded a voter turnout of 71.16 per cent until 5 pm for the 230-member Assembly.



Voters wait in a queue at a polling station to cast their votes for the Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections, in Jabalpur, on Friday PTI

While the tentative voter turnout was 68.15 per cent in Chhattisgarh, until 5 pm, it also reported an ITBP jawan killed in a blast triggered by Naxalites in Gariaband district amid polling for the second phase. The first phase happened in the Naxal belt on November 7. Voting in Naxalite-affected Balaghat, Mandla, and Dindori districts of MP ended early at 3 pm, while it continued until 6 pm in other parts of the State. In Balaghat district, the Baihar Assembly constituency recorded a turnout of 80.38 per cent, Lanjhi 75.07 per cent, and Paraswada 81.56 per cent.

There are 2,533 candidates in the fray, including Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and his predecessor and State Congress chief Kamal Nath. The high-decibel campaigning saw top leaders of contesting parties, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, crisscrossing MP and Chhattisgarh, addressing rallies, holding roadshows, trading charges, and making a slew of promises to seek votes for their candidates. A total of 2,533 candidates are in the fray for the 230 Assembly seats in Madhya Pradesh,

where the main battle for power is between the ruling BJP and the Opposition Congress. After the 2018 polls, Congress, with 114 seats, emerged as the single largest party and formed the government with the help of BSP, SP, and independent MLAs under the leadership of Kamal Nath. However, the Nath regime collapsed in March 2020 after a rebellion by now Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and Congress MLAs loyal to him, paving the way for the return of the BJP government headed by Chouhan. On the last day of campaigning, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, his party’s general secretary Priyanka Gandhi-Vadra, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Union Minister Smriti Irani, and Maharashtra Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis (all three from BJP) made last-minute efforts to woo voters for their respective candidates. Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav also addressed rallies on the last day. On the penultimate day of electioneering, Modi addressed three election rallies and held a roadshow in Indore.

6 terrorists killed in Valley

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Half a dozen terrorists were eliminated by the joint team of security forces without suffering any collateral damage in two back to back operations in the South Kashmir district of Kulgam and Rajouri on Friday. Braving the winter chill, the crack teams waited overnight for the first light to launch a final assault in the Samno area of DH Pora. The security forces also blasted the terrorist hideout after shooting the terrorists. Locals in the close vicinity of the encounter site were also shifted to safer places to prevent any loss of lives during the exchange of heavy firing. Meanwhile, the sixth terrorist was neutralised in the Behroze top, under the jurisdiction of Budhal police station in the Rajouri district. All the killed terrorists in Kulgam were linked with the proscribed terror outfit Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT/TRF). On Wednesday, two terrorists, including a prominent launch commander Bashir Ahmad Malik of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, were also killed by the security forces in the Uri sector of North Kashmir’s Baramulla district. So far around 80 terrorists have been eliminated since January 1, 2023.



Security personnel stand guard during an encounter with militants in Kulgam district on Friday PTI

According to a Jammu and Kashmir Police spokesman, “The operation was launched in the area after getting specific inputs about the presence of a large group of terrorists in the Samno area of DH Pora in Kulgam late on Thursday afternoon.” During the search operation, as the joint search party approached the suspected spot, the hiding terrorists fired indiscriminately upon them, which was retaliated effectively leading to an encounter in which all the five terrorists were neutralised. The slain terrorists have been identified as Yasir Bilal Bhat @Humais son of Bilal Ahmad Bhat resident of KG RAINA Wanpoh, Danish Hameed Thoker son of Abdul Hameed, Ubaid Ahmad Padder son of Wali Mohd Padder, both resi-

dents of Chakoora Shopian, Sameer Farooq Sheikh son of Farooq Ahmad resident of Chak Cholend Shopian and Hanzal Yaqoob Shah @Hanzilla son of Mohd Yaqoob Shah resident of Rawalpura Shopian. As per the police records, the killed terrorists were categorised terrorists and involved in several terror crime cases including attacks on police/SFs and civilian atrocities. They were also involved in a number of attacks on minority pickets. The killed terrorist Sameer Farooq and terrorist Danish Hameed were involved in the attack on a Kashmiri Pandit Sonu Bhat of Chotigam, Shopian. Terrorist Danish Hameed along with terrorist Hanzal Yaqoob Shah were also involved in a terror attack on outside labourers at Shopian.

BharatPe founder, wife stopped from flying abroad

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

BharatPe co-founder Ashneer Grover and his wife Madhuri Jain were stopped at Terminal 3 of the Indra Gandhi International Airport on late on Thursday night after the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police issued a look out circular (LOC) against the couple. Sindhu Pillai, joint commissioner of police (EOW), said the couple was travelling to New York and were stopped before security check. “They were asked to return to their Delhi residence and join the probe at the EoW office at Mandir Marg next week,” she said. The joint CP also said the LOC was only to stop them from travelling abroad. Confirming the news, the former BharatPe MD took to X to talk about the incident that happened late on Thursday night. “I found it strange as I have travelled 4 times internationally since FIR filed in May — never been a problem and I had not even been summoned once,” Grover said. He said a lookout notice was delivered to him only Friday morning.

Indian nurse at mercy of Blood Money in Yemen

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court of Yemen has rejected the appeal against the death sentence of Indian nurse Nimisha Priya. On Thursday, the Delhi High Court requested the Central Government to decide on a request by Priya’s mother, Prema Mary, who seeks to negotiate “blood money” or compensation to save her daughter by traveling to Yemen. Blood money refers to the compensation paid by an offender or their family to the victim or their relatives. Priya, hailing from Palakkad district, Kerala, has been serving a prison sentence since 2017 for the murder of a

Yemeni national, Talal Abdo Mahdi. Found guilty, she was sentenced to death by a trial court in 2018, and her family has been advocating for her release since then. With the Yemeni Supreme Court rejecting her appeal on November 13, the decision now rests with the country’s President. Arindam Bagchi, spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs, stated that the Indian Government is aware of the matter and is providing consular assistance as needed. Following the completion of a nursing training programme, Priya went to Yemen and worked in several private hospitals. In 2014, she reportedly came into contact with Talal



Abdo Mahdi, who pledged to assist her in establishing her own clinic. A partnership was necessary as Yemeni law mandates collaboration with a local for starting any business. However, the partnership reportedly ended due to differences between Priya and Mahdi. Despite this, she proceeded to start her clinic with him in 2015. According to local reports, Mahdi began threatening Priya, who was

living in Yemen with her spouse Tony Thomas and their daughter. Mahdi allegedly confiscated her passport to prevent her from leaving Yemen. Priya filed a police complaint against Mahdi, leading to his arrest in 2016. However, after his release, he continued to harass her. In 2017, she injected him with sedatives in an attempt to reclaim her passport from his possession. Unfortunately, he died from an overdose. She then turned to Abdul Hanan, the nurse who had assisted her in opening her clinic, for help. Following that, the two reportedly chopped his body and threw it in a water tank. Residents discovered Mahdi’s

body, and the police launched a manhunt for her. In August 2017, Priya and Hanan were taken into custody and sentenced to life in prison. In 2018, Priya was given a death sentence following a year in jail. Priya’s family has been fighting to get her justice since 2018. Her mother moved the Delhi High Court earlier this year, seeking permission to travel to Yemen in spite of a travel ban for Indian nationals and negotiate the “blood money” to save her daughter. On Thursday, the Centre’s lawyer said according to a notification issued recently, the travel ban may be relaxed and Indian nationals may be allowed to travel to Yemen for specific reasons and durations.

The high court had earlier refused to direct the Centre to negotiate the payment of blood money to save the woman, but asked it to pursue the legal remedies against the conviction in Yemen. The High court asked the Centre to make a decision within a week. In her plea, Priya’s mother told the court she wanted to negotiate the “blood money” (compensation paid by an offender or his kin to the family of the victim) to save her daughter. Represented by lawyer Subash Chandaran KR, the woman told the court that the only way to save her daughter from the gallows was to negotiate with the deceased’s family by paying blood money, for which she wanted to travel to Yemen, but

due to the travel ban, she was unable to go there. In response, Justice Subramonium Prasad said, “In view of the representation, let the present petition be treated as a representation. The respondent is directed to decide the representation within one week from today.” The “Save Nimisha Priya International Action Council”, a group advocating for Priya’s release, approached the high court in 2022, imploring the Centre to “facilitate diplomatic interventions as well as negotiations with the family of the victim on behalf of Priya to save her life by paying blood money in accordance with the law of the land in a time-bound manner”.

CAPSULE

SEVERE AIR QUALITY AS HAZE BLANKETS DELHI
New Delhi: Delhi’s air quality has deteriorated further and now stands closer to the ‘severe plus’ category, a stage which may trigger the implementation of the odd-even car rationing measure in Delhi. The city’s air quality index stood at 437 at 7 am, worsening from 419 at 4 pm on Thursday. The Capital’s 24-hour average AQI, recorded at 4 pm every day, was 401 on Wednesday, 397 on Tuesday, 358 on Monday, 218 on Sunday, 220 on Saturday. The relatively better air quality last weekend is attributed to rain. Air pollution levels surged due to intense firecracker bursting on Diwali night and a resurgence in stubble burning in the neighbouring States. **P3**

TMC LEADER BOMBED TO DEATH

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■
KOLKATA

The ongoing fratricide in the ruling TMC once again drew blood on Friday when a Panchayat pradhan at Kamdevpur Haat in Amdanga village in North 24 Parganas was bombed to death in a crowded market. Roopchand Mondal, a local TMC leader and a Panchayat pradhan, was allegedly attacked by a rival faction of his party on Thursday while he was speaking to the police over phone.

Barrackpore MP Arjun Singh who visited the area later demanded the arrest of the culprits saying “it is a planned murder and police should find out the perpetrators”. His party colleague and Bengal TMC vice president Jayprakash Majumdar blamed the BJP and the CPI(M) for “unleashing a reign of terror” ahead of the Lok Sabha Elections. Mondal’s murder comes days after another TMC panchayat member, Saifuddin Laskar, was murdered at Joy nagar in South 24 Parganas district. The murder hit the news headlines as an angry mob



then set ablaze at least 20 houses belonging to the CPI(M) supporters following allegations that the Left was behind his murder. Though the CPI(M) promptly called it another example of fratricide in the TMC — all for the shares in the corruption money — the police on Thursday arrested a local CPI(M) leader Anisur Lashkar. In what is being viewed as a “war strategy” to lure in prospective “electoral

agniveers” for street fights in the next year’s general elections the Mamata Banerjee Government is planning to provide government jobs to the kin of those killed in this year’s Panchayat elections. The decision was taken in a specially convened meeting of the State ministers, sources said. The Chief Minister had earlier called the meeting in the run up to the Bengal Global Business Summit scheduled to take place on November 21-22.

The Chief Minister had earlier promised Rs 2 lakh each to the families of those killed in the Panchayat elections drawing criticism from the Opposition parties that had wondered whether right people would get the compensation and whether it was not the ruling party’s style of compensating its goons. At least 19 people had died during the rural elections — the figure could cross three times this number if the pre and post-poll murders are

taken into consideration — out of whom 9 belonged to the ruling Trinamool Congress, three of the CPI(M), and two each from Congress, ISF and BJP. Reacting to the Government’s decision to provide jobs to the alleged victims of poll violence BJP leader Samik Bhattacharya wondered whether the right people would get the jobs or not. “Already this government is saddled with scams ... again there will be a new scam and court cases after this scheme is implemented,” he said. The CPI(M) leadership questioned the very “legality” of the move, wondering whether jobs could be provided in such a manner — particularly to the kin of those who had indulged in electoral violence. “If at all a decision to provide jobs is taken the question will definitely arise as to how will the government decide who died while bombing and capturing booths and who was the victim of electoral violence ... it seems that the Government is preparing its own version of electoral agniveers ahead of 2024 luring them to charge bombs at the opposition,” said CPI(M)’s Sujan Chakrabarty.

Minister highlights India’s role in fight against climate change

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Stating that it stands among the few major economies on track to meet their anti-climate change national plans to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, India on Friday reminded the developed nations of their commitment to mobilising \$ 100 billion annually by 2020 for climate finance and doubling their contribution to adaptation finance from the 2019 level by 2025. “India has set an example with its robust domestic climate action and stands among the few major economies on track to meet their national plans to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius,” Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav said on Friday, in his opening address at the environment ministers’ session at the second Voice of Global South Summit. He highlighted India’s active role in the fight against climate change, despite its historically minimal contribution to global warming. The minister said India’s cur-



rent per capita greenhouse gas emissions are less than one-third of the global average and the developed countries are yet to fulfil their commitments to providing sufficient climate finance to developing nations to address climate-change impacts. He said 44 per cent of India’s total installed electricity-generating capacity now comes from non-fossil fuel sources, surpassing the original NDC target of 40 per cent by 2030. Yadav highlighted India’s adoption of the green credit programme, designed to incentivise voluntary environmental and climate-conscious actions by individuals as well as public and private entities, aimed

at accelerating collective efforts toward achieving a sustainable economy. India, with 17 per cent of the global population, accounted for only 4 per cent of global carbon emissions from 1850 until 2019. In contrast, the developed nations, with the same percentage of the global population, contribute nearly 60 per cent of global carbon emissions. Last August, India updated its nationally-determined contributions (NDC), committing to reducing the emission intensity of the GDP by 45 per cent by 2030 from the 2005 level and achieving 50 per cent cumulative electric power-installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030. While developed nations are dragging on their commitments made at various forums, a UN report released recently has flagged concerns that countries’ plans to deal with climate change by limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius and to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement remain insufficient.

Therapy used in cancer patients reduces TB growth: Scientists

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Scientists at Texas Biomedical Research Institute in the US has found that the therapy— combination of two molecules — one of which is already FDA-approved for use in cancer patients, and another that is being evaluated in Phase I/2 clinical trials for cancer — dramatically reduces TB growth, even for bacteria that are drug-resistant. The findings, reported in the journal Biomedicine & Pharmacotherapy, were made in novel cellular models that can help accelerate screening of potential TB drugs and therapies like this one. The therapy evaluated in this study combines two molecules - one is already FDA-approved for cancer patients, and the other is in Phase I/2 clinical trials for cancer. The compounds help the body initiate its normal cell death processes in targeted areas, be it cancerous cells, or in this case, cells infected with Mycobacterium tuberculosis (M.tb), the bacte-



ria that causes TB. “Immunotherapy has been a game changer in the cancer field by finding ways to help a patient’s own immune system fight tumors more effectively,” says Larry Schlesinger, MD, Texas Biomed Professor, President and CEO. “We believe that, similarly, host-directed therapies can be a game changer for infectious diseases.” TB causes more than 1.6 million deaths worldwide every year. The bacterium primarily infects the lungs. Patients must take antibiotics for months to

bring active infection under control; drug resistance is on the rise, making treatment even more challenging. Dr. Schlesinger’s lab seeks to understand the fundamental biological interactions between the bacteria and humans, and use those insights to identify potential treatment targets. M.tb blocks a normal cell death process called apoptosis. This allows the bacteria to grow inside immune cells in the lungs, called alveolar macrophages. The scientists found that by inhibiting two key proteins, MCL-1 and BCL-2, M.tb can no longer hijack the apoptosis process and macrophages are able to kill M.tb. The research team tested MCL-1 and BCL-2 inhibitors individually, together and in combination with TB antibiotics to see how TB growth was affected. Using both inhibitors was more effective at limiting TB growth than just one or the other; and combining them with antibiotics was far more effective than either inhibitors or antibiotics alone.

Cyclone Midhili: Rain lashes NE States

PTI ■ SHILLONG/ AIZAWL/ AGARTALA

Governments in various northeastern states sounded alerts following heavy rain on Friday, as a deep depression over the Bay of Bengal intensified into a cyclonic storm, officials said. The first day of Meghalaya’s Cherry Blossom Festival suffered a setback due to the bad weather, while states such as Mizoram, Tripura and Assam witnessed rainfall of varied intensity. Rain, accompanied by chilly winds, has been witnessed by the states since Friday morning, and the same is likely to continue on Saturday, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).



Cyclone ‘Midhili’ will cross the Bangladesh coast on Friday night or in the early hours of November 18. The organisers of Cherry Blossom Festival in Meghalaya have announced that the first of the three-day event has been cancelled due to adverse weather conditions. Tourism Minister Paul

Lyngdoh was to inaugurate the 3rd edition of the festival at Madan Kurkalang in Ri-Bhoi district. The organisers said the Day-1 ticket holders will receive complimentary access on any one of the remaining two days of the festival, while those holding season passes will receive a refund for the Friday show. Heavy rain battered Mizoram’s capital Aizawl and other parts of the state on Friday affecting normal life. The streets of Aizawl were a deserted look as people stayed indoors and only a few vehicles were seen on roads. District administrations and district disaster management authorities of Mizoram in notices asked people to be alert and take precautionary measures against any eventuality that can be caused due to the rain. The IMD forecast 51 mm of rain between the mornings of November 17 and 18 in Aizawl district. There are forecasts of heavy rain also in districts such as Champhai (52 mm), Kolasib (58 mm), Lawngtlai (52 mm) and Mamit (56 mm). In Tripura, a red alert has been sounded in four districts as the state witnessed moderate rainfall caused by the cyclonic storm since Friday morning, an official of the state disaster management authority said. “District magistrates of Sepahjala, Dhalai, Gomati and South have been requested for taking all necessary steps,” disaster management officer Sanath Das told PTI. The Met office recorded 87 mm of rainfall in the state capital Agartala since Thursday evening. Several places in Assam, including Guwahati, have also witnessed rainfall and chilly winds since Friday morning.

WHO to address epidemic of loneliness

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Do you feel lonely many times? If your answer is affirmative then , you are not alone. After the Covid pandemic, the world is all set to be swept by the epidemic of loneliness with the WHO calling it a pressing global health threat impacting one in four adults. To address the grievances arising out of loneliness and ensure its prevention, the WHO has now launched an international commission led by US surgeon general, Dr Vivek Murthy, and African Union youth envoy, Chido Mpemba . The panel also comprises 11 advocates and government ministers, including Ralph Regenvanu, the minister of climate change adaptation in Vanuatu, and Ayuko Kato, the minister in charge of measures for loneliness and isolation in Japan. The report, “Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation 2023” comes after the Covid-19 pandemic halted economic and social activity, increasing levels of loneliness, but also amid a new awareness of the importance of the issue. The WHO commission on social connection will run for three years. “The mortality impact of being socially disconnected is similar to that caused by smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day and even greater than that associated with obesity and physical inactivity. And the harmful consequences of a society that lacks social connection can be felt in our schools, workplaces, and civic organizations, where performance, productivity, and engagement are diminished,” said Murthy. “[Loneliness] transcends borders and is becoming a global



public health concern affecting every facet of health, wellbeing and development,” added Mpemba. “Social isolation knows no age or boundaries.” In older adults, loneliness is associated with a 50% increased risk of developing dementia and a 30% increased risk of incident coronary artery disease or stroke. But it also blights the lives of young people. Between 5% and 15% of adolescents are lonely, according to figures that are likely to be underestimated. In Africa, 12.7% adolescents experience loneliness compared to 5.3% in Europe. Young people experiencing loneliness at school are more likely to drop out of university. It can also lead to poorer economic outcomes; feeling disconnected and unsupported in a job can lead to poorer job satisfaction and performance. In India, loneliness is gradually becoming a disturbing trend owing to commercialization and growing nuclear families concept. It worsened during Covid-19. Dr Rajinder Dhamija, director of Delhi-based Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS) emphasized that dur-

ing Covid-19 pandemic social distancing had left many particularly adults lonely as they were not social media savvy. In his article published in the BMJ, he said, “In India, loneliness is a risk factor for a variety of psychological conditions. Most of the elderly people in developing countries are frail and dependent on younger people for community services, living in cohesive family systems. “Socially isolating or shielding these people from their kin could have deleterious effects on physical, social, and psychological wellbeing, especially for those with poor ambulation and cognitive impairment. “Most of these seniors either have no access to technology or are not conversant with it. Social isolation and distancing in lockdown have led to economic hardship in most developing countries.” Dr Dhamija stressed on multidisciplinary research to evaluate interventions that tackle the adverse consequences of social isolation and loneliness, especially among elderly people. The experts have emphasized upon social connections for healthy living.

Won’t hesitate to beg for donations for noble causes, says RSS chief

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat on Friday said he would have no hesitation in begging for donations for the improvement of society and for greater good. Underlining the necessity of financial resources for societal progress, Bhagwat said generous donations play an important role in supporting noble causes. He was speaking at an event commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Swami Vivekanand Medical Mission in Nagpur, during which a heart hospital was also inaugurated. “There should be no shame in soliciting donations for the improvement of society. I will never hesitate to beg for contributions for the greater good,” Bhagwat said. He hailed the credibility of the RSS’ commitment, which he said had been tested by society over time.



Ruing the raw deal the poor get at the hands of commercial hospitals in the country, he said there were several such facilities where those without money cannot even enter. Speaking on the occasion, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the influence and impact of the RSS ideology were such that it empowered ordinary individuals to achieve extraordinary feats. Fadnavis noted the evolving challenges faced by society, which had moved from food, clothing and shelter just post Independence to contemporary issues encompassing education, income and health care.

BJP chooses Ashoka as Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Assembly

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The BJP on Friday chose former deputy chief minister R Ashoka as the leader of opposition in the Karnataka Assembly. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, BJP National General Secretary Dushyant Kumar Gautam, BJP state unit President B Y Vijayendra, and former chief ministers B S Yediyurappa and Basavaraj Bommai were among those present at the legislature party meeting, where Ashoka was picked as its leader. Ashoka, 59, a seven-time BJP MLA, was the deputy chief minister in the BJP government from July 2012 to May 2013. The senior BJP leader had the opportunity to work with five chief ministers as a cabinet member. As a minister, he had held various portfolios such as home, revenue, municipal administration, transport and health and family welfare. Ashoka is a prominent Vokkaliga face in the party, which is one of the dominant communities in Karnataka, especially spread in the south-



ern parts of Karnataka such as Bengaluru, Chikkaballapura, Mysuru, Mandya, Chamarajanagar, Ramanagara, Kolar, Tumakuru and Chikkamagaluru. Last week, the BJP central leadership appointed as its state unit president Shikaripura MLA B Y Vijayendra, the son of BJP strongman B S Yediyurappa, who is a Lingayat — another dominant community of Karnataka. In the May elections to the 224-member assembly, the Congress ousted the BJP from power with a landslide victory. The Congress secured 135 seats, the BJP 66 and JD(S) 19. In his address, Ashoka said a

sincere effort will be made to expose the “maladministration and corruption” of the ruling Congress in Karnataka before public. He alleged that despite the severe drought in the state the Congress Government has failed to offer any relief to the farmers. “When the BJP was ruling the state, it had doubled the drought relief amount but the current government has emptied the state treasury,” the newly appointed leader of opposition said. He also charged that the government has failed to carry out any development work ever since it came to power. When the meeting to decide the leader of the opposition was in progress, Vijayapura MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal walked out saying that he was going to have tea. The MLA had earlier in the day expressed his strong resentment over the appointment of Vijayendra as the party state president, saying that BJP should not become a party of one family in an apparent reference to Yediyurappa and his family.

SALE NOTICE

The under mentioned Assets will be sold through auction on “**AS IS WHERE IS BASIS**” and “**AS IS WHAT IS BASIS**” for recovery of dues as per court orders, in the following cases:-

Case Details	Asset Details
ICICI BANK LTD VS RAJIV DALAL, Case No. TRC/933/2022, OA/459/2019 (DELHI DRT 3)	Vehicle No. HR73A4103, Make and Model - ASHOK LEYLAND LTD AL 3718 IL, Manu Year - 2017
ICICI BANK LTD VS M/S Super Trans Logistics Pvt Ltd, Case No. TRC/102/2023	Vehicle No. HR73A8646, Make and Model - ASHOK LEYLAND LTD AL 3718 IL, Manu Year - 2017
	Vehicle No. HR38S0108, Make and Model - EICHER 20.16, Manu Year - 2012
	Vehicle No. HR38S0342, Make and Model - EICHER 20.16, Manu Year - 2012

Auction Date: November 24, 2023 From 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.
Auction Type: Online Auction
Auction Portal Name & URL Link: BidKaro and https://bidkaro.net
Contact Person - Swapnil Upadhyay (8126013708) / Rajeev Ranjan (8584874809)

Terms of Sale

The particulars of the said asset specified herein above have been stated to the best of the information and knowledge of the undersigned, who shall however not be responsible for any error, misstatement or omission in the said particulars. The interested participant/s are therefore requested, in their own interest, to satisfy himself / themselves / itself with regard to the said asset and other relevant details pertaining to it before submitting the bids.

Successfully bidder shall have to deposit sale amount within 5 days from the approval date by the way of pay order/demand draft/RTGS/NEFT.

The intending bidders may visit at **ICICI Bank Ltd, Shal Tower Plot no. 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005** for details and inspection of the said hypothecated vehicles

Asking party MPs, MLAs if I should resign or run Govt from jail: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said he has been discussing with party MPs and MLAs on whether he should resign from his Chief Minister post or whether he should run the Government from jail if he is arrested in connection with the ongoing liquor probe. "I don't have any lust for power. I resigned from the post on the 49th day. Nobody asked for my resignation. But we have to ensure that we don't get trapped in BJP's conspiracies," Kejriwal said urging his party workers to take Delhi people's opinion on this. He was addressing a congregation of AAP workers (Karyakarta sammelan) at Tyagraj stadium. He claimed ruling BJP has plans to get him arrested to derail the Aam Aadmi Party's campaign for the Lok Sabha polls. Kejriwal asserted the Aam Aadmi Party will win in Delhi even if he is arrested.



"I have held meetings with councillors and MLAs who said that I should continue being the chief minister if I am arrested. I am assigning you a task -- go to every household, talk to people, ask them whether I should continue as the chief minister from the jail and tell them about BJP's conspiracies. Ensure that they do not get a single seat here. This will be campaigning for Lok Sabha polls. Four of our

leaders are in jail today. They are an inspiration. Don't be scared of going to jail. If Sanjay Singh and Manish Sisodia leave AAP today, they will be out of jail within 24 hours," Kejriwal said. He also came down heavily on Prime Minister Narendra Modi over "fake" liquor policy scam case alleging that he wants to topple the government and form the BJP government in the national capital.

"There is no liquor scam in Delhi. Liquor scams are there in Gujarat, Haryana. But the BJP has understood that it can't win an election against AAP unless it puts top AAP leaders in jail. But today I am telling you to arrest me and see AAP win from jail," Kejriwal said. The AAP national convener said the BJP knows it cannot defeat the AAP in Delhi and that is why it is "hatching conspiracies" and

putting AAP leaders in jail. He also said the BJP had plans to target leaders from different regional parties in the lead up to Lok Sabha polls to derail their election campaign. "They have planned to put me in jail to ensure that AAP cannot campaign in Lok Sabha polls. They have planned something similar in Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand. But I challenge you -- you put these leaders behind bars and you might just be cleaned up," he said. The chief minister also said the AAP has grown from strength to strength within a short span of 10 years to become a national party. "AAP is the fastest-growing party in the world, not the country. We should ask the Guinness Book of the Record whether they are putting our names. First Delhi and Punjab and then we did well in Goa and Gujarat. We became a national party, the third-largest party in the country. There are 1,350 registered parties and we left them

behind and are only behind BJP and Congress. My heart says the way it is growing, one day AAP will leave the BJP and the Congress behind soon and will rule the country. Big conspiracies will be hatched now against you," Kejriwal said to his party workers," he said. Kejriwal also talked about his former cabinet colleagues Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain, who have been arrested in different cases. "There is one person -- Manish Sisodia -- who brought an education revolution in the country but he is in jail. Satyendar Jain, who brought a health revolution, is out on interim bail. Four of our leaders are in jail today." "They are an inspiration. Don't be scared of going to jail. If Sanjay Singh and Manish Sisodia leave the AAP today, they will be out of jail within 24 hours," he said. "If you feel weak, you should consider these leaders as your inspiration, who are following the path of Bhagat Singh," Kejriwal added.

Kejriwal speech hilarious, he has lost touch with cadre: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva on Friday said Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's speech at his party's convention is a hilarious speech and the half empty convention stadium and lack of excitement amongst those present shows that he has lost touch with his party cadre. Sachdeva said people of Delhi have found Kejriwal's claim that Aam Aadmi Party is the fastest growing party as a big joke and people are saying the Chief Minister should have given full statement that AAP is the fastest growing corruption factory. Commenting on Kejriwal's claim that one day his party will leave all parties behind

and rule the country the Delhi BJP President said there is no doubt he has already left all parties far behind in corruption and nepotism. AAP has become the first party whose two state government ministers from Delhi and one from Punjab are in jail for their involvement in corruption scams. People of Delhi are asking Kejriwal did he do liquor scam, jal board scam apart from dozen of other scams or built his palatial bungalow with their approval, he said. Delhi BJP President said the way every other day Kejriwal is saying that he would run the government from jail it seems he is convinced that the evidence with investigation agencies inquiring liquor scam are strong enough to put him behind the bars.

Chief Secretary Kumar favoured son's firm for ILBS contract: AAP Govt

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Arvind Kejriwal Government has levelled fresh allegations against Delhi Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar, accusing him of alleged involvement in a 'hospital scam' between the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS) and a company in which his son was a partner. Vigilance Minister Atishi on Friday submitted her supplementary report to the Chief Minister accusing the Chief Secretary used his position to enable a "lucrative collaboration" between the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences and a company in which his son was a partner. Meanwhile the ILBS denied the allegations any payment to any vendor in this regard. "The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by ILBS on 24.01.2023 for a period of six months for research work, and this MoU expired on 23rd July 2023. This MoU was a research collaboration with zero expenditure to ILBS," it said. According to a detailed supplementary report submitted by Vigilance Minister Atishi to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday, Kumar's son's company, MetaMix, was allegedly awarded a contract to develop AI software for Delhi government's Institute of Liver and

Biliary Sciences (ILBS) Hospital without a tender process. The company, which was reportedly formed only eight months prior to the deal and is said to lack experience in creating AI software, is accused of making profits worth hundreds of crores from the project. The report highlights that proper procedures were not followed in selecting MetaMix for the project, raising concerns over the direct selection and signing of the agreement. In light of these allegations, Minister Atishi has called for the immediate removal of Kumar from his post and for disciplinary action to be taken. She has further recommended that the agreement between MetaMix and ILBS be terminated and the case be referred to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for a thorough probe. The 18-page report follows an earlier one submitted by Aitishi on a land acquisition matter in south west Delhi's Bammoli village. On the other hand, the ILBS has vehemently denied the allegations /reports regarding any payment to any vendor for the development of AI software. "It did not issue any purchase order or made any payment to any AI Software developer or company. These allegations are totally baseless and are without merit. ILBS firmly reiterates its commitment to transparency.

Toxic air continues to engulf city as AQI slides to severe +

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi continues to inhale "toxic air as the air quality has worsened, moving closer to the 'severe plus' category on Friday as calm winds, low temperatures and stubble intrusion continued to impact the national Capital's air. The national capital's 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) stood at 405 at 4 pm. It was 437 at 7 am. The visuals from different areas across Delhi showed a layer of haze engulfed skies with bare to minimum visibility. The situation is likely to be worsened further on the cricket world cup final match between India and Australia on November 19. Chhath puja's first argya will also take place on this day which may also witness burning fire crackers. Meanwhile, the National Green Tribunal has directed the authorities, including the Central Pollution Control Board and the Delhi Pollution Control Committee, to take "stringent measures" to improve the AQI in Delhi-NCR. Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai directed the transport department on Friday to conduct a special drive to prevent the entry of private polluting buses into the capital. He also reiterated that the Centre should call a meeting on air pollution involving northern states to



find out a permanent solutions. Satellite data showed Punjab on Thursday registered 1,150 stubble burning incidents, taking the total number of such cases to 33,082. However, the Anand Vihar station entered in the "moderate" category with PM 2.5 at 133 at 6 p.m and PM 10 at 185 while the CO was at 106, under "moderate" category, as per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The Bawana station's PM 2.5 was at 318, or "very poor" category, and PM 10 at 254, or "poor" while the CO reached 70 or "satisfactory". At Aya Nagar, the PM 2.5 reached 224 under "poor" category while PM 10 was at 178 under "moderate" category. The

CO was recorded at 66, under the "satisfactory" category at 6 p.m.. The station at Dwarka Sector 8 recorded PM 10 at 452, or "severe" and PM 2.5 at 341 or "very poor". The air quality at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport T3 area was in the "very poor" category with PM 2.5 at 315 and PM 10 at 202, in the "poor" category while the CO reached 98 and NO2 at 53, both in the "satisfactory" category. The PM 2.5 at Okhla Phase-II was recorded at 297 while PM 10 reached 279, both coming under the "poor" category. The NO2 was at 169 and CO was recorded at 117, both in "moderate" levels. At Siri Fort, the AQI

with PM 2.5 concentration was at 328 under the "very poor" category, while PM (particulate matter) 10 was recorded at 244, in the "poor" category while CO was at 102 in "moderate" category. Earlier, Rai reviewed the implementation of air pollution control measures at the Sarai Kale Interstate Bus Terminal and found buses from other states flouting the ban imposed on BS IV diesel vehicles under the Centre's Graded Response Action Plan. "We have found that private buses from other states have been violating the ban and have directed the transport department to run a special drive to check the entry of such vehicles into Delhi," he told reporters. Citing experts' views, Rai said that a slight improvement in meteorological conditions might lead to marginal relief but urged agencies to remain alert. Rai said that the issue of pollution persists not only in Delhi but the entire north India and cannot be resolved only if the national capital becomes active. "This situation is persisting in all of north India. Besides Delhi, Haryana is showing severe category air quality in 12 districts...There are 14 such locations in Rajasthan...There are several districts in western Uttar Pradesh where there is a similar situation," he said

Book DANICS officer for lodging fake case: Vigilance to police

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Government's Directorate of Vigilance (DoV) has written to Station House Officer of IP police station to register a case against former DANICS officer AV Premnath under appropriate penal provisions for lodging fake/ false and fabricated complaints knowing that they are false and also abetting preparation and uploading of fake videos etc. on social media. "He made reckless allegations without any documentary proof and evidence and also aided and abetted with other delinquent persons in preparing fake news and uploading the same in youtube channels and giving this false and fabricated news to various news publishers with an intention to harm the undersigned and other officers knowing very well that they are false and he has no documentary proof to make such allegations



of alleged scam that he claimed in his complaint dated 27.09.2023 and other forums," Secretary (Vigilance) YVVJ Rajasekhar said in his complaint. The complaint further said Premnath has also tweeted from his official twitter handle @avpremnath and made highly irresponsible allegations of Rs. 2500 Crores Scam besides other reckless allegations against the Chief Secretary, Delhi government. The Ministry of Home Affairs has compulsorily retired Premnath on October 9, this year. According to complaint, from the documents it is

revealed that when the Civil Judge Abhishek Kumar Shrivastava of Almor, Uttarakhand issued non-bailable warrants in January, 2021 against his wife Asha in a matter of FIR No. 58 of 2011 in case of cheating, forgery, using forged documents, etc., then he allegedly created fake email id in the name of one of his subordinate and sent complaints to the Uttarakhand High Court against this Civil Judge, and get this Judge suspended in February, 2021. Subsequently, when the matter was enquired into, it was found that such fake emails were issued from the computer of Premnath in Delhi and a FIR No. 3/2021 was registered against him by Vigilance Establishment Uttarakhand. Rajasekhar in his complaint stated that Premnath had filed several complaint against him without providing any documentary evidence.

Academic calendar delay has put pressure to finish course: JNUTA

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The delay in Jawaharlal Nehru University's academic calendar has put a burden on teachers and students to finish the coursework in a rush, the JNU Teachers' Association alleged on Friday reiterating its demand to bring back the old entrance exam system for admissions. The teachers' body claimed that professors have been asked to hold classes on weekends to complete the coursework on time. "This has affected the quality of teaching and learning as teachers are juggling with added responsibilities, they added. "The delay in CUET exams in JNU has further delayed our academic calendar as a result of which admissions in many courses are still going on in the middle of the academic year," JNUTA president D K Lobiya told PTL. He is protesting over long-pending demands of the

teachers for promotions, among other issues. "The delay has hampered the teaching and learning process and put pressure on both students and teachers to complete the course at the last minute," he added. The teachers' body has alleged that the statutory process of the university for admissions has been violated by the administration by allowing enrolment in many courses in the middle of the academic year. They claimed that this has not only put pressure over students to complete their syllabus in a hurry but also added an additional load on teachers to hasten the coursework without giving time for quality learning. When asked, JNU Vice Chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit said the "Covid pandemic has created the dislocation". "All academic decisions are taken at the levels of chairper-

son and deans and then conveyed to the Director of Admissions and Controller of Examination (CoE)," the VC said. "The JNU administration includes all of them as well. The VC and her office doesn't interfere," she said. Admission to many MA courses are still being held at the JNU and are pending for PhD programmes. The new students who have joined in the middle of the academic year face similar pressure of covering up the two-year coursework in a few months. "The administration is rushing us to cover two years' coursework in two months. The faculty has been asked to take classes on Saturdays and Sundays. It is also unfair for new joiners who have to complete the entire course in such a short span of time," said Moushumi Basu, associate professor and member of JNUTA.

Delhi Police issues traffic advisory on Chhath Puja

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Traffic Police on Friday issued a traffic advisory for Chhath Puja celebration in the national capital, warning that the traffic flow is likely to be affected from Sunday afternoon to Monday morning on roads adjoining major ponds. On Sunday, thousands of devotees will be congregating at various ponds since afternoon. The prayers will be offered at the time of sunset. While some devotees may leave after sunset prayers, several will stay for the night at various ponds in tents, the advisory said. The traffic police advised commuters to avoid the roads

near the sites allocated for Chhath Puja celebration to ensure smooth traffic movement. The ponds at Sonia Vihar, Krishna Market Jhilmil Colony, DDA Land near JPC Hospital, Tughlakabad Kaya Maya Ground, DDA Ground near Jain Mandir Suraj Kund Road, opposite D-Block Mangol Puri, Chhat Puja Kalyan Samiti Sainik Enclave etc. Could witness heavy footfall of devotees, the advisory said. Keeping in view the huge gatherings expected at the ponds, elaborate traffic arrangements have been made, the police said. Appropriate diversions would be made based on requirement, they added.



the decision. While some termed it a "Good decision," others gave a negative feedback to it. Looking on the business aspect, some felt bad for the liquor shops and pubs who looked forward for arranging live screenings during the finale match. On the otherhand, people guessed the alternative resorts and said: "So Noida and Gurugram to benefit here because of the World Cup match." Earlier, Delhi Revenue Minister Atishi on Friday visited Chhath ghats at ITO and West Vinod Nagar to take stock of the preparations for the festival. She asserted that the government will ensure there are no shortcomings in preparations. During the inspection, she directed officials to expedite preparations of ghats and complete them soon. She said Delhi is home to a large number of people from the 'Purvanchal' region who contribute socially, economically and culturally to the development of Delhi. "The Kejriwal government setting up 1000+ Chhath ghats across Delhi so that devotees don't have to go far from their homes to celebrate Chhath. The internet was divided over

Now, book ticket on rapid rail with a 'single tap' by 'RRTS Connect' app

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a first-of-a-kind initiative, the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) has introduced a "single-tap ticketing" feature to commute in Namo Bharat trains through the 'Rapid Rail Transit System (RRTS) Connect' Mobile App. This feature allows commuters to generate a QR code swiftly on their RRTS Connect app from anywhere within 300 meters of

the RRTS station premise, with just one tap, without bothering about destination, saving them time and effort to book tickets in advance. This is the first time in the world that such a ticketing feature is being provided in any public transport system. This will ensure a seamless and hassle-free travel experience, this initiative lets commuters travel with spontaneity and allows flexibility in changing destinations during the journey.

"This innovative one-tap booking feature makes the ticketing process fast and convenient for commuters. It eliminates the hassle of buying tickets or going through the whole process of generating a digital QR code by selecting the origin and destination. Generally, any such app requires origin & destination selection at the start of the journey, thereby limiting the flexibility of changing destination during the journey," the NCRTC said in a



statement. To avail of this new-age feature, commuters need to download the 'RRTS Connect' mobile application and ensure a few simple prerequisites to avail this new-age feature. Commuters need to link the E-Wallet to the mobile application and the E-Wallet is required to have a minimum balance. Then they need to enable the Location Services of their mobile phone while using this app. This setup is a one-time

process which will enable single-tap ticket booking for all future Namo Bharat journeys. Following this process, with a single tap on the RRTS connect mobile application, a QR code is generated enabling the commuter to board the train from his origin station. At the destination station, once the commuter exits by scanning the QR code on the AFC gate, the fare is deducted accordingly. For the convenience of com-

muters, NCRTC is providing various ticketing options like Digital QR code-based Ticket through the NCRTC Mobile Application, 'RRTS Connect' by 'one-tap' or origin-destination selection, Paper QR code-based tickets which can be generated via Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) or bought from UPI-enabled ticket vending machines. These TVMs also recharge the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC).

Modi condemns civilians' death in Israel-Hamas conflict

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday condemned civilians' death in the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict and said new challenges are emerging from the incidents in West Asia. He underlined it is time for the countries of the Global South to talk in one voice for greater global good. Highlighting these issues in his address at the second edition of the India-hosted virtual Voice of Global South Summit, he said New Delhi has emphasised on dialogue and diplomacy along with restraint to deal with the situation in West Asia. The Prime Minister said the message from the second Voice of Global South summit is that the Global South wants its autonomy and is ready to take big responsibilities in world affairs.. He made the remarks at the concluding session of the second virtual summit of the developing countries that was hosted by India. Talking about participation of leaders from around 130 countries in the summit, Modi said the message that came out from it is that the Global South is ready to take big responsibilities in global affairs and that

it wants autonomy. The message from Voice of Global South Summit is that Global South wants its voice in global governance, Modi said in Hindi. He said India is proud to have the opportunity to put the voice of the Global South on the agenda of a forum like G20. "I am confident that the priorities of the Global South will be taken forward and strengthened during Brazil's G20 presidency," he said. Modi said India will keep working towards the cause of the Global South. Earlier, the prime minister apprised the leaders attending the summit about the achievements of India's G20 presidency that largely focused on addressing challenges facing the Global South or the developing nations. "For global prosperity, Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas (together with all, development for all) is needed. But we all are seeing that new challenges are emerging from the incidents in West Asia," Modi said. "India has condemned the horrific terrorist attacks in Israel on October 7. Along with restraint, we have also emphasised on dialogue and diplomacy. We strongly condemn



the deaths of civilians in the conflict between Israel and Hamas," he said. Prime Minister Modi also referred to his recent phone conversation with President of Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas last month. "After speaking to President Mahmoud Abbas, we have sent humanitarian assistance for the people of Palestine. This is the time when the countries of the Global South need to speak in one voice for the greater

global good," he said. In his remarks, Modi also called for cooperation under the framework of 'five Cs' which he explained as consultation, cooperation, communication, creativity and capacity building. "For 'one earth, one family, one future', let us all move forward together with five Cs," he said. "One earth, one family, one future" has been India's theme for its G20 presidency. The prime minister also men-

tioned forward movement at the G20 on several initiatives which would benefit the Global South. Modi also described the Voice of Global South as the most unique platform for the changing world of the 21st century. "Our priority was to make the G-20 inclusive and human-centric on a global scale. Our effort was that the focus of G-20 should be development of the people, by the people and for the people," he said. "It is with this objective that we organised the Voice of Global South Summit for the first time in January this year. In more than 200 G-20-related meetings held in different states of India, we gave prominence to the priorities of the Global South," he said. "The result was that we were successful in getting everyone's consent on the issues of the Global South in the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration," Modi said. Modi also talked about the African Union's entry into the G20 as a permanent member at the New Delhi summit of the grouping. "I cannot forget that historic moment, when the African Union was inducted into G20 as a permanent member with

India's efforts," he said. In a significant milestone under India's G20 presidency, the African Union in September became the new permanent member of the grouping of the largest economies of the world in the first expansion of the influential bloc since its inception in 1999. Listing achievements for the Global South under India's G20 presidency, Modi said unprecedented seriousness was shown this time on climate finance. There was consensus at G20 on providing finance and technology in easy terms to countries of the Global South for climate transition, he said. "India believes that new technology should not become a new source of widening the distance between North and South. Today, in the era of Artificial Intelligence (AI), there is a great need to use technology in a responsible manner. "To take this forward, an AI Global Partnership Summit is being organised in India next month," he said. Modi also talked about consensus at G20 on major reforms of multilateral development, sustainable finance and digital public infrastructure (DPI) framework.

"It has also been agreed to create a global DPI repository. Under this, India is ready to share its capabilities with the entire Global South," he said. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in his address called on the countries of the Global South to work towards self-reliance to mitigate vulnerabilities vis-a-vis economic concentrations, noting that the COVID-19 era was a stark reminder of the perils of dependence for basic necessities on far-away geographies. He also highlighted the achievements of India's G20 presidency and how it sincerely worked to address challenges facing the Global South or the developing nations. "The New Delhi Leaders' Declaration will be remembered for bringing back the G20 focus on the real and serious concerns of the Global South," Jaishankar said, adding that the document is a "comprehensive message" on promoting strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth. Without making any specific references, the external affairs minister said there continues to be a "resistance" for a greater role for the Global South in shaping solutions for the key issues of present times.

"As we look ahead, our vision of everyone's growth, with everyone's trust is far from accomplished. While change is the natural order, there continues to be a resistance for a greater role for the Global South in shaping solutions for the key issues of our times," he said. "But together, we need to continue putting greater emphasis on the need to take everyone along while we deliberate at multilateral and plurilateral forums," he said. Jaishankar said the Voice of Global South Summit can be greatly impactful by amplifying "our individual voices and projecting our shared interests for the emerging world order". "We also need to work towards self-reliance to mitigate our vulnerabilities vis-a-vis economic concentrations. "The Covid era is a stark reminder of the perils of dependence for basic necessities on far-away geographies," he said. "We need to not only democratise and diversify production, but build resilient and reliable supply chains and promote local solutions. Only then can the Global South secure its future," he added.

Alok Sharma appointed SPG director

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Senior IPS officer Alok Sharma was on Friday appointed the director of the Special Protection Group (SPG),

which is entrusted with the task of providing security to the prime minister. Sharma, a 1991-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, is currently additional director general in the SPG.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved his appointment as the SPG's director from the date of assumption of charge of the post and until further orders, an order issued by the personnel ministry said.

Desi industries have big role in making self-reliant, robust economy: Murmu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that India has embarked on the journey to achieve the goal of an inclusive and developed country, President Droupadi Murmu said on Friday the indigenous industries have a huge role in building a self-reliant, competitive and robust economy. She said the Government has taken several policy initiatives in the last few years and brought in reforms to encourage indigenous design, development and manufacturing of defence equipment. The president was addressing the officers of the Indian Ordnance Factories Service and probationers of the Indian Defence Accounts Service (IDAS), who had called on her at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here. "India has embarked on the journey to achieve the goal of an inclusive and developed nation. "You all know that the indigenous industries have a huge role in making a self-reliant, competitive and robust economy," she said. Campaigns and initiatives, such



as "Atmanirbhar Bharat", "Make in India", "Startup India" and "National Skill Development Mission", are some of the major programmes intended to serve this purpose, Murmu said. Initiatives, such as according priority to procurement of capital items from domestic sources under the Defence Acquisition Procedure-2020, simplification of the industrial licensing process, liberalisation of the foreign direct investment (FDI) policy, launch of Mission DeSpace, launching the SRIJAN portal to facilitate

indigenisation and establishment of two defence industrial corridors, are aimed at achieving self-reliance in the defence sector, she said. Murmu said the officers will be the movers and facilitators of indigenisation in defence systems and would be expected to work towards enhancing the country's defence-production capabilities. "We know that India's defence exports have risen from ₹686 crore in FY 2013-14 to nearly ₹16,000 crore in FY 2022-23. India's defence exports have reached more than 85 countries and India's defence industry has shown the world its capability in design and development," she said. Nearly 100 firms export defence products, the president pointed out, adding that India now exports a wide range of defence products, including aircraft like the Dornier-228, Brahmos missiles, PINAKA rockets and launchers, radars, simulators etc. The global demand for India's indigenous products, such as the LCA-Tejas, aircraft carriers, and MRO activities, is also increasing, she said.

Aerospace, Aviation in 2047 exhibition to kick off today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday will inaugurate a two-day international conference and exhibition on Aerospace and Aviation in 2047 organised by the the Aeronautical Society of India (AeSI) at Yashobhoomi Convention Centre here. Giving details of the event, defence ministry officials said here on Friday while the President is the Chief Guest, the Guests of Honour will include Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology and MoS, Prime Minister's Office Dr Jitendra Singh; Minister of State for Civil Aviation and Road Transport & Highways General (Dr) VK Singh (Retd) and Raksha Rajya Mantri Ajay Bhatt. This conference-cum-exhibition is being organised to commemorate 75 years of excellence of the AeSI. The inaugural session of the event will include the release of

Compendium on 75 years of aerospace and aviation journey in India as well as Vision Document 2047. The event will focus on India's journey in the field over the last 75 years, showcasing the achievements, technological advancements and the role of great visionaries. The event will be attended by 1,500 delegates including dignitaries, international experts, scientists, industrialists, academia, start-ups and students. About 200 industries and MSMEs, including more than 75 start-ups, will showcase indigenous capabilities at the exhibition. Many heads of organisations/departments will deliver visionary talks during the conference. The conference will consist of technical sessions with speakers from Safran, Rolls Royce, Lockheed Martin, MIT USA, Cranefield UK along with prominent Scientist/Technologist/Service officers from the Indian side.

Congress raps BJP India, Australia to review ties in two plus two dialogue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday accused the BJP Government of benefitting the Adani Group by relaxing norms for the Dharavi redevelopment project in Mumbai. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh alleged that as per reports the Maharashtra Urban Development Department — which had originally expressed its reservations about relaxing the rules — "has been compelled to issue a notification that removes the provision of indexation in Dharavi's real estate Transferable Development Rights (TDR) and made it mandatory for all Mumbai builders to buy the first 40 per cent of their TDRs from Adani."

"This has the effect of greatly increasing the value of TDRs accruing to Adani — and Adani alone — from the Dharavi project," he alleged. There was no immediate response from the Adani Group. In a statement, the Congress leader said the party had in its "Hum Adani ke Hain Kaun (HAHK) series" raised questions on the matter on February 27 and April 23 this year. "We asked the prime minister questions about how the Adani Group was allowed to bag the Dharavi Redevelopment Project in 2022 with a bid of only ₹5,069 crore, lower by ₹2,131 crore than the original winning bid in 2018. And this was after the original winning bidder was excluded," he said.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Australia will review the entire spectrum of their bilateral strategic and defence ties in two plus two dialogue here on Monday. Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Defence Minister Richard Marles will hold talks with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. Marles, who is also Australia's deputy prime minister, or Wong or both may watch the Cricket World Cup final between India and Australia in Ahmedabad on Sunday, it was learnt. "We are expecting Australia will be well represented at the

World Cup Final," a spokesperson at the Australian High Commission said when asked whether Marles or Wong or both will watch the match. The two sides are expected to focus extensively on further ramping up the overall defence and security ties and boost strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region in the "2+2" ministerial dialogue, sources said here on Friday. All the four ministers may hold a press conference on Tuesday. Both Australia and India are part of the Quad or Quadrilateral coalition that is focused on working towards ensuring a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific. The other two members of the Quad are

the US and Japan. Inaugural 2+2 ministerial dialogue between India and Australia was held in September 2021. India has such a framework for talks with a very few countries including the US and Japan. The latest edition of India-US foreign and defence ministerial dialogue took place in New Delhi on November 10. The bilateral defence and strategic ties between India and Australia are on an upward trajectory in the last few years. In June 2020, India and Australia elevated their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership and signed a landmark deal for reciprocal access to military bases for logistics support.

Dharmendra addresses Education Ministers' Session

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Education Dharmendra Pradhan on Friday spearheaded the Education Ministers' Session at the Second Voice of Global South Summit held in the national Capital. The summit, operating under the theme "Together for everyone's growth, with everyone's trust", addressed critical issues, particularly in the field of education. The session witnessed the participation of esteemed digni-

taries, including Dr Douglas Letsholathebe, Minister of Education of the Republic of Botswana; Datin Seri Setia Dr. Haja Romaizah binti Haji Md Salleh of Brunei Darussalam; Giorgi Amilakhvari of Georgia; Mohamed Ali Boughdiri of the Republic of Tunisia; Dr Reza Murad Sahraei of the Islamic Republic of Iran; Associate Professor Dr Phout Simmalavong of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and other distinguished leaders from various nations. In his opening remarks,

Pradhan extended a warm welcome to the participants, expressing immense pleasure in hosting the 2nd Voice of Global South Summit. He highlighted the significance of collaborative efforts in developing a resilient, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable education and skilling ecosystem. Pradhan highlighted India's pivotal role in leading discussions on these issues at the G20 Education Minister's Meeting and invited global perspectives to shape the discourse on making human resources future-ready.


Modi congratulates Pedro on being re-elected as Spain PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday congratulated his Spanish counterpart Pedro Sanchez on being re-elected and said he looks forward to further strengthening ties between the two countries. Spain's acting Socialist prime minister was chosen by a majority of legislators to form a new government in a parliamentary vote on Thursday. "Warm congratulations @SanchezCastejon on your re-election as the President of the



Government of Spain. "Looking forward to further strengthening India-Spain relations, fostering our bond of friendship and cooperation for a bright future," Modi said in a post on X.




Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

Whereas
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.
As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.
Date: November 18, 2023
Place: Delhi/ NCR
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Gauri Shankar/ Roshni/ LBMAT0000501111	Plot No 73 And 74, Khasra No 361, Radha Enclave Colony Phase II, Mauza Narhoti Androon, Tehsil & Distric Mathura, Uttar Pradesh/ November 16, 2023	June 16, 2023 Rs. 6,91,206/-	Mathura/ Delhi/ Agra

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.




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Date: November 18, 2023
Place: Delhi/ NCR
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Seema Singh/ Src Technosoft Private Limited/ Ravindra Pal Singh/ LBDEL00004218515	House No. GA-018, At Plot No.3 Builders Area, Sector P-6 GB Nagar Greater Noida/ Nov 14, 2023	July 29, 2023 Rs. 45,59,886/-	Delhi/ NCR & Moradabad
2.	Sanjay Gulati/ Ritu Gulati/ LBDEL00001992997	Flat No.1702, 16th Floor, Block-C, Type-E, Logix Blossom Zest, Plot No Gh02, Sector- 143, Noida/ Nov 14, 2023	July 31, 2023 Rs. 18,87,220/-	Delhi/ NCR

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.



Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, Plot No.23, Shal Tower 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh Delhi-110005

PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET
[See proviso to rule 8(6)]
Notice for sale of movable assets
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of **movable** Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described **movable** property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the **Physical possession** of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Mr. Karmvir Singh Sehrawat (Borrower) Nikko Rani (Co Borrower)- Lan No. LYDEL00027244098	MARUTI EECO FLEXI, Registration No.: DL1LT1628 Mfg: 2013	Rs. 6,50,104/- as on November 09, 2023	Rs. 30,000/- Rs. 30,000/-	December 01, 2023 from 11:00 AM to 01:00 PM	December 26, 2023 from 11:00 AM to 01:00 PM

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link - <https://auctions.cardekho.com/#/>) of our auction agency **Cardekho** The Mortgagors/ notice are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till **December 22, 2023 before 5:00 PM** else these secured assets will be sold as per schedule.
The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit their offer along with the earnest money deposit (refer column E) in a sealed envelope that mentions "Offer for purchase of property" **ICICI Bank Limited, Plot No.23, Shal Tower 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh Delhi- 110005** or to our marketing agent **Cardekho - Ginnarsoft Automobiles PVT LTD Tower-B, Emaar digital greens, 11th Floor Golf Course Ext Rd, Baharampur Naya, Sector 61, Gurugram, Ghata, Haryana 122001** on or before **December 22, 2023 before 5:00 PM**. The marketing agency has also been engaged as auctioneer for proper conduct of auction. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalized/Scheduled Bank in favour of "**ICICI Bank Limited**" payable at **Delhi**.
For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact **ICICI Bank Limited on 8584874809/9372730494/8126013708 or Cardekho to 7701827194**.
Tenders which are acknowledged by the Bank/e-auction vendor official and registered before the cut-off time with complete details shall only be considered for auction.
The Authorized Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons.
For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/n4p4s
Date : November 18, 2023
Place: Delhi/Ncr
Authorised Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Nag Nathaiya celebrated with traditional gaiety

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Internationally famous Nag Nathaiya was celebrated at Tulsi Ghat with traditional gaiety and great enthusiasm here late on Friday afternoon. Thousands of devotees, including women and children, watched the rare scene of Lord Krishna standing on the hoods of Kaliya Naag. It was the moment when entire areas at Tulsi Ghat and adjoining ghats echoed with the slogans in favour of Lord Krishna and Har Har Mahadev. The festival of Nag Nathaiya began around 4 pm with Lord Krishna playing ball with his 'sakhas' (friends). During the play the ball fell into Kalia Dah and 'sakhas' (friends) insisted on taking back the ball. Along the river at Tulsi Ghat, a tree of kadamba was installed. When the 'sakhas' continued insisting on taking the ball back, Lord Krishna climbed on the kadamba tree by saying 'lehu gend main lyawat jai'. Meanwhile, the Vyas team rented the air with Naradiya tune 'Yah *kahi Natwar Madan Gopala kudi pare jal mein Nandlala*' and Lord Krishna jumped into Kaliya Dah (river). Lord Krishna went into deep water.

The devotees watching the scene forgot that it was 'leela'. Tulsi Ghat has turned into Braj and devotees as Brajwasis for a while. But after a few minutes, Lord Krishna appeared while dancing on the hoods of Kaliya Naag and the entire place was echoed with



Famous Nag Nathaiya festival being celebrated at Tulsi Ghat in Varanasi on Friday.

slogans like Bhagwan Krishan ki jai and Har Har Mahadev. The scene when Lord Krishan appeared from the deep water on the hoods of Naag, was rare and devotees watched unblinkingly and the entire atmosphere turned devotional at Tulsi Ghat for a while.

Mahant of Sankat Mochan Mandir Prof Vishambhar Nath Mishra garlanded Lord Krishna. Royal head of Banaras Estate Kunwar Anant Narayan Singh presented 'ginni' (coin) as per tradition. According to Prof Mishra, Goswami Tulsidas started this festival over 450

years ago and since then it is celebrated each year. An elaborate security arrangement was made to ensure peaceful celebration and also avoid any untoward incident. Not only Tulsi Ghat but also adjoining ghats were crowded with devotees in thousands. According to Prof Mishra, for this famous festival one green kadamba tree is brought from a forest area near Sankatmochan temple and to compensate for the same, 100 trees are planted there every year. Mayor Ashok Tiwari and several other dignitaries were present.

BHU's 103rd convocation on Dec 16

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Banaras Hindu University (BHU) will hold its 103rd convocation on December 16. The convocation ceremony will take place at Swatantrata Bhawan, from 9.30 am onwards. Prof Ajay Kumar Sood, Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India, will deliver the convocation address as the chief guest of the ceremony. Prof Sood is also the Chairperson of the Prime Minister's Science, Technology & Innovation Advisory Council. He is also a National Science Chair Professor at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. A Doctorate in Physics from IISc Bangalore, Prof Sood's contribution to the academics and scientific research has been acknowledged by many awards, including the Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian award of India. He has also received the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize, the GD Birla Award for Scientific Research, the Millennium Gold Medal of the Indian Science Congress Association, Sir CV Raman Award of the UGC, Homi Bhabha Medal of the Indian National Science Academy and several other coveted awards and felicitations.

The 103rd convocation at Swatantrata Bhawan will witness distribution of gold medals for the academic session 2022-23. The 102nd convocation of the university took place on December 10 last year.

Four-day Dala Chhath begins

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Women thronged the markets to purchase sugarcane, variety of fruits and other articles as with the Nahay Khay (bathing-eating) event, the four-day famous Dala Chhath festival began here on Friday. Besides, efforts are being made to keep the ghats clean. Meanwhile, a good number of women reached various ghats to take a holy dip in the sacred water of the Ganga before starting their festival preparations.

The tough 36-hour long 'nirjal vrat' will start on Saturday after 'kharna'. The Chhath-related articles are being sold on roadsides at various places in almost all the main markets, including Sigra, Lanka, Luxa, Godowlia, Chetganj, Maidagin, Jagatganj and many places in trans-Varuna areas including Shivpur, Bhojubi, Orderly Bazar, Pandeypur and Pahadia.

In recent times, the festival has become very popular in the



Women purchasing articles on the first day of Chhath Puja in Varanasi on Friday.

city as it is seen that lakhs of people flock to the ghats during the puja. According to information, in view of the high sale of fruits during the festival, hundreds of trucks of apples and bananas reached Pahadia Mandi, the biggest fruit market of Purvanchal (eastern UP), a day ago. However, the prices of various

fruits have jumped up sharply from 20 to 30 per cent. Besides, preparations for the festival are in full swing. Intensive efforts are going on in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) to make the Surya Sarovar ready for the festival. The first 'arghya' of the Chhath Puja will be offered to Surya Bhagwan at the sunset on November 19

while second and last on the next day at the time of sunrise which will mark the end of the festival. Earlier, the Divisional Commissioner (DC) Kaushal Raj Sharma and Municipal Commissioner Akshat Verma had instructed the agencies involved in keeping the ghats clean to ensure it prior to the festival.

Officials review preparations for Chhath, Dev Deepawali

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Commissioner of Police (CP) Ashok Mutha Jain and District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam inspected the Ganga ghats and reviewed the preparations for Chhath and Dev Deepawali at Dashashwamedh Ghat here on Friday. The CP and DM instructed the officials to ensure better cleanliness of the ghats before the start of the puja. While reviewing the preparations, the DM instructed the officers concerned to complete the works of levelling/barricading of the unpaired ghats and ensure proper cleaning of permanent changing rooms built on the ghat side. He directed the departments



CP AM Jain and District Magistrate S Rajalingam inspecting preparations at Assi Ghat in Varanasi on Friday.

concerned to construct additional temporary changing rooms for devotees as per

requirement and ensure timely completion of works. He said all street lights installed along

the ghats should be checked and repaired immediately. Besides, signage boards should be installed outside mobile toilets so that devotees did not face any problem.

The CP and DM inspected Assi and adjoining ghats and gave necessary directions to the officials. The DM said lighting arrangements should be made properly at all ghats and there should not be any problem. He said arrangements for ambulances should be made during this festival.

The CP directed the police officers to ensure that proper parking system. He also asked the Police department, NDRF and Water Police to remain alert and continue patrolling during the festival.

BHU to institute scholarship for students

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Banaras Hindu University (BHU) will institute an annual scholarship for students of MA (Jain Darshan). The university has received a donation of ₹ 5 lakh to estab-

lish Jain Kumar Samaria Jain Darshan Scholarship for the purpose. Prof Jain Kumar Samaria, an alumnus of BHU (MD, Respiratory Medicine, 1982) handed over a cheque of donation to Vice-Chancellor Prof Sudhir Kumar Jain. Prof Samaria

was accompanied by his family members. The scholarship of ₹25,000 per annum will be offered to a second year student of MA (Jain Darshan) at the Faculty of Sanskrit Vidya Dharma Vigyan (SVDV) on merit-cum-means basis. The donation has been

made under the Pratidana (donation) initiative launched by the university to power the growth and development of BHU and making more resources available for students, strengthening research facilities and improving teaching-learning ecosystem.

Postal Business & Financial Inclusion festival organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The 'Postal Business and Financial Inclusion' festival was organised at Aurai in Bhadohi district on Friday. Speaking as the chief guest, Postmaster General (PMG) of Varanasi Range Krishna Kumar Yadav said that along with letters and parcels, the Postal department is also delivering all the government's public welfare schemes and their benefits to the people. "In the changing environment, the Postal department is playing an important role in financial inclusion, Digital India and Antyodaya," he said.

On the occasion the PMG also distributed passbooks and policy bonds to the beneficiaries of various savings schemes, Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana, Mahila Samman Savings Certificate and Postal Life Insurance. He also encouraged the postal employees who did excellent work by honouring



Postal Business and Financial Inclusion festival being held at Aurai in Bhadohi district on Friday.

them. Postal Superintendent Vinay Kumar said that more than 8,000 savings accounts were opened in the postal fair.

The PMG said that post offices have been made multipurpose by providing all the services under one roof.

"Many people-oriented facilities like savings, insurance, IPPB, Aadhaar, passport, railway ticket, common service centre, Ganga water, QR code based digital payment are available in post offices. Even today, post office savings schemes are most popular due to attrac-

tive interest rates and people have been making safe investments in them from generation to generation," he said, adding that Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana, started under Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, is playing an important role for the secure future of girls. Vinay Kumar,

Superintendent of Post Office, Varanasi West Division, said that Bhadohi district has always been at the forefront in connecting people with postal services. "Public relations are being done and campaigns are also being run to make people aware about various postal schemes," he said. Block Pramukh (Aurai) Brij Mohan Mishra said that the common people have an unbreakable relationship with the post offices. Ghosia Nagar Palika Chairman's representative Ibrar Ahmed said that the Postal department has added new dimensions by starting various schemes for daughters, women and even farmers. Manager Dwarika Nath Dubey and Principal Ashok Kumar Mishra of Kashi Raj Mahavidyalaya Intermediate College Aurai said that through such events people, especially the young generation, get more and more information about postal services.

38th edition of Indira Marathon on Nov 19

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Prayagraj district administration is busy preparing for the 38th edition of All-India Prize Money Indira Marathon scheduled to be held in the Sangam city on November 19.

Top runners, including past champions who have won the earlier editions of the marathon, are expected to participate in the 38th edition.

Talking to media District Magistrate Navneet Singh Chahal said the route of the 42.19 km run, which will be organised jointly by Athletics Federation of India, UP Sports department and Prayagraj district administration, has not been changed and the runners will follow last edition's marathon route. The run will start from near the historical Anand Bhawan at 6.30 am and will pass Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad University, divisional commissioner's residence, NCC headquarters, Army Red Eagle stadium, before reaching the Traffic

Police Line, Mayohall crossing, Dhobi Ghat, AG office building, UP Bar Council office, Indira Gandhi crossing, Polo Ground crossing, High Court, GT Road, Ambekar crossing, All Saints' Cathedral, Subhash crossing, Custom office crossing and CAV Inter College New Yamuna bridge trisection in Bhairana and Rewa road. "The runners will have to turn back from HP petrol pump at Dadupur-Rewa road and head back to Hanuman temple crossing in Civil Lines and enter Chandrashekhar Azad Park from its gate number 1, finally concluding at Madan Mohan Malaviya Stadium," said the DM. The winner of both the men's and women's category will take home a cash prize of ₹2 lakh each, while the first runner-up in both categories will receive a cash reward of ₹1 lakh each. The second runners-up of both categories will get ₹75,000 each. Besides, 11 consolation prizes each in men's and women's category worth ₹10,000 each will also be

awarded to those who narrowly miss a podium finish, bagging positions fourth to 14th, the DM said. UP Minister of State for Sports and Youth Welfare (Independent Charge) Girish Yadav will be the chief guest of the opening and the closing ceremony of the marathon, he added. In all 16 booths, including seven for water and nine for snacks, will be set up along the route for the runners. The police will remain deployed at 54 specific spots all along the route. Around 1,000 volunteers and five ambulances will also be deployed to meet any eventuality, the DM said. He said the work of repairing the roads along the route for the race has been completed. "Colours will be sprinkled on participants on the way of the marathon, the exact place (of sprinkling the colour) and the specific colour has been kept confidential," said Chahal. Regional sports officer Vimla Singh said students of different schools will present a cultural programme at the closing ceremony of the event.

Marigold exported to UAE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Extending the range of agriculture products for earning foreign currency, a consignment of about 400 kg of marigold flowers have been exported to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the first time and it was sent from Lal Bahadur International Airport, Babatpur here recently. The Chairman of Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) Abhishek Dev virtually flagged off the consignment. Along with marigold, samples of rose flowers have also been sent with a hope that the local flower farmers will also get the export demands of rose in the coming months.

Earlier, the farmers of Varanasi and Purvanchal (eastern UP) had already exported various varieties of fruits, vegetables and rice to different countries but now the fragrance of the flowers of Kashi will spread rapidly in foreign countries. As Varanasi is also

called as a 'City of Temples' where huge quantities of flowers are offered daily, a good number of farmers are engaged in floriculture. As the local flower farmers produce good quantities of marigold they have now received positive support from both the central and state governments double their income.

APEDA Chairman said that Farmers Product Organisations (FPOs) are being involved in the export of agricultural products and their positive effect is also visible. DGM of APEDA's regional office in Varanasi Dr CB Singh said 400 kg of marigold flowers have been sent in 200 special boxes. "For the first time, marigold flowers from Varanasi farmers are being exported to Dubai. Along with this, samples of rose flowers have also been sent," he said, adding that be it festive season or weddings, everyone wants decoration and now Dubai will be decorated with Indian flowers on festivals and other occasions.

Unique initiative to address grievances of passengers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

In a bid to improve passenger satisfaction, the North Central Railway (NCR) under the guidance of its General Manager Satish Kumar and under the leadership of Principal Chief Commercial Manager (PCCM) Prabhat Ranjan has come up with a unique initiative to address passenger grievances in a quick time frame. War rooms have been created in each division to cater to the passenger complaints being received on RailMadad portal.

The Indian Railway as a part of its digital initiatives had launched the completely digitised complaint management system in the form of an app RailMadad - An app to expedite and streamline passenger grievance redressal. This RailMadad app is a mobile app to register complaints by passengers through mobile phone/web. It relays real time feedback to passengers on the

status of redressal of their complaints- the passenger gets an instant ID through SMS on registration of complaint followed by a customised SMS communicating the action taken thereon by Railway. These war rooms created at divisional offices normally receive passenger complaints mainly related to security, followed by punctuality, watering, medical help, electrical issues, cleanliness, parcel issues, ticketing, passenger amenities and other miscellaneous issues. All these complaints are related to either one or more department and these war rooms have representatives from all the departments concerned including RPF, Engineering, Electrical, Commercial, Mechanical, Operating and commercial at one place. This makes the complaints handling easy and reduces any issue of inter-departmental hassles. This unique first-of-its kind initiative of bringing all concerned under one roof has resulted in

faster resolution of grievances and providing solution to the customer on a real time basis. The NCR as a zone was ranked 15th in grievance redressal in June this year prior to setting up of these war rooms has become a front runner in just four months and reached fifth position in October. Now not only almost 100 per cent of complaints received through RAIL-MADAD are being promptly dealt with but the first response time (FRT) during October stood at 12 minutes compared to 58 minutes in June. FRT is an indicator of efficiency in handling medical and security assistance during emergencies. The average pendency time remained 21 minutes against IRs average of 48 minutes and while the average disposal time has been only 33 minutes against IRs average of 2.30 hrs and it's a commendable improvement over the average disposal time of 1.37 hrs in June 2023. A total of

15,241 complaints have been received in October out of which 99.94 per cent of them have been closed with an overall satisfactory rating as per Railway Board guidelines. In NCR these complaints are received through the Rail Passenger Helpline 139, RailMadad website, social media forums, RailMadad app and other means like SMS to 139, e-mail, CPGRAMS etc. These war rooms functioning at divisional control rooms are being monitored live at the top level and are personally visited including surprise inspection by senior officials, including PCCM. A passenger travelling in train no 12310 Rajendranagar -Tejas Rajdhani in A2 coach on November 12 on Diwali day requested for help and the Prayagraj division war room team swung into action. The desired help was provided at Kanpur Central station. Another passenger travelling by Train no 11107 lodged

a complaint regarding unavailability of bed roll at his berth. His concern was resolved with in 10 minutes with the active intervention of Jhansi division RailMadad war room. The GM expressed satisfaction over the NCR's performance and said we have to keep improving it further. He also praised the team dealing with grievances under the leadership of PCCM.

SPECIAL TRAINS: In view of people returning to their work after Diwali and huge crowd going home in Bihar and Purvanchal on Chhath the Railways has started operating 200 Chhath and Diwali special trains passing through NCR. They will take people of Bihar and Purvanchal from metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Gujarat and Kolkata to their respective destinations. Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) of NCR Himanshu Shekhar Upadhyay said "The geographical position of NCR is

such that if one has to go to Bihar and eastern UP from northern or western part of the country, the train passes through it only. In view of huge crowd, Railway Protection Force (RPF) has been put on alert". Special checking campaigns are going on in trains and stations and dog squad team is also working. Additional ticket checking team has also been deployed at the station and extra counters have been opened.

The RPF launched a special checking campaign at Prayagraj Junction late on Thursday evening and vehicles were also checked. The GM went to Prayagraj Junction and talked to passengers of Jogbani Chhath Special train and took feedback about the facilities. The GM also inspected the passenger facilities and cleanliness at Prayagraj Junction. He talked to passengers and took their feedback. More than 20 Chhath special trains have been operated in just two days.

FIRST COLUMN

OUR SACRED BOND WITH NATURE

Ancient Indian texts pay tributes to Nature and emphasise the interdependence



SWAMI CHARANASHRIT

India, a land of diverse cultures and rich traditions, has a profound connection with nature that transcends time. The Indian scriptures, comprising a vast body of religious and philosophical texts, echo a deep concern for the environment and advocate a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. This article explores the themes of environmental consciousness and reverence for nature embedded in the fabric of Indian scriptures.

Vedic Wisdom:
The Rigveda, one of the oldest sacred texts in Hinduism, acknowledges the divine essence within nature. It describes various elements of nature, such as rivers, mountains, and plants, as deities worthy of worship. The hymns in the Rigveda emphasise the interconnectedness of all living beings and stress the importance of preserving the balance in the natural order.

Upanishadic Philosophy:
The Upanishads, philosophical treatises that form the basis of Vedanta, delve deeper into the understanding of the self and its relationship with the cosmos. They advocate the concept of "Brahman," an ultimate reality that encompasses everything in the universe. This interconnected worldview promotes a sense of responsibility towards nature, viewing it as an extension of the divine.

Bhagavad Gita:
In the Bhagavad Gita, a revered scripture within the Indian epic Mahabharata, Lord Krishna imparts spiritual wisdom to Arjuna. The Gita emphasises the concept of "dharma" or righteous duty, including the stewardship of the environment. Krishna underscores the sacredness of nature, urging individuals to act responsibly and with respect for the delicate balance of the ecosystem.

Jainism and Ecology:
Jainism, an ancient Indian religion, places a strong emphasis on non-violence (ahimsa) and compassion towards all living beings. Jain scriptures advocate a lifestyle that minimises harm to nature, promoting vegetarianism and environmental conservation. The idea of interconnectedness is central to Jain's philosophy, emphasising the interdependence of all life forms.

Buddhism and Environmental Ethics:
The teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, include principles that align with environmental ethics. Buddhism emphasises mindfulness and awareness, encouraging individuals to cultivate a deep connection with the natural world. The concept of interdependence (pratityasamutpada) in Buddhism recognises the intricate web of relationships between all elements of existence, promoting a sense of responsibility towards the environment.

Hinduism and the Worship of Nature:
Several Hindu festivals and rituals are dedicated to nature worship. For example, festivals like Navratri celebrate the divine feminine energy present in nature, and rituals like "prithvi puja" (worship of the Earth) underline the sacredness of the environment. These practices foster a sense of reverence and responsibility, encouraging followers to protect and preserve the Earth.

The concern for nature in Indian scriptures is not just a cultural or religious tenet but a profound philosophy that underscores the intrinsic connection between humans and the environment. The ancient wisdom encapsulated in these scriptures provides a timeless guide for fostering a sustainable and harmonious relationship with nature. As the world grapples with environmental challenges, the teachings of Indian scriptures offer valuable insights, reminding us of the sacred bond that unites all living beings with the Earth.

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

NPAs: Setting the record straight

The Modi Government has made unstinted efforts to make the defaulters pay up and also ensured that no new NPAs are created



UTTAM GUPTA



As per the information shared by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in reply to the RTI question, scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) had written off non-performing assets (NPAs) - an acronym for loans that have gone bad - worth over Rs 10,57,000 crore in the last five years. This amount is often cited by the opposition in particular, the grand old party (GOP) to lambast Modi - government for having given what they term as 'loan waiver' to big industrialists and businessmen.

Has Modi granted favours to the big-wigs?
To address this, we need to answer two fundamental questions. When does a loan become an NPA? How does the bank deal with it? A loan account becomes an NPA when interest and/or instalment of principal remain overdue for a period of more than 90 days. The borrower could land in such a predicament under three different scenarios:

First, the bank officials have conducted due diligence, carefully assessed the viability of the project or venture for which the loan is considered, convinced themselves about the credibility of the borrower and kept track of the utilization of the funds, functioning of the enterprise, its profitability, generation of cash and so on. The chances of such a loan account becoming NPA are minimal; if at all it happens it could be due to circumstances totally beyond the control of the borrower say, for instance, the impact of the Covid pandemic.

Second, the officials have granted loans in a cavalier fashion without conducting due diligence or assessing the project/venture's viability and haven't put in place mechanisms to track the utilisation of funds, functioning of the enterprise and so on. There is a greater chance of such a loan turning into an NPA.

Third, the bank's top brass in utter disregard for due diligence acts with mala fide intent under what is termed a "quid pro quo" arrangement. Put simply, it approves and disburses loans in exchange for bribes. In this scenario, it is almost certain that the loan would become NPA as it was taken with the sole intention of not returning it.

Replying to the debate on the President's address during the opening of the budget session of the parliament in February 2018, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi stated that there had been a massive proliferation of loans given by the banks on the directions of the ruling political establishment to favoured industrialists and businessmen. During 2008-2014, loans worth Rs 3500,000 crore were given. The bulk of these loans were given in the second and third categories. Therefore, it was quite likely these would become NPA.

This is corroborated by the RBI data on the addition of new NPAs as a percentage of the opening balance of NPAs in that year between 2009-10 and 2015-16. In 2009-10, 2011-12 and 2015-16, the addition of new NPAs was higher than their opening balance. In the remaining years 2010-11, 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15, the addition of new NPAs was at least 90 percent of the opening balance.

After 2015-16, this ratio has consistently fallen and it was around 1/3rd in 2020-21 and 2021-22. The impact in the case of public sector banks (PSBs) was more pronounced where the ratio was even lower



FOLLOWING PRUDENTIAL ACCOUNTING PRACTICE AND AS PER RBI GUIDELINES, THEY WROTE OFF THESE LOANS. IT IS A MANDATORY REQUIREMENT TO REFLECT ON THE BANK'S TRUE FINANCIAL HEALTH

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

at 22 per cent during 2021-22. It clearly demonstrates that under the Modi - regime, banks in particular, PSBs were more careful in giving loans (category 1) resulting in a much lower ratio.

There is another point of differentiation between the UPA - regime (2008-2014) and Modi (2014 onward). Whereas, under the former, banks kept NPAs under the carpet by using techniques such as 'evergreening' of loans - fancy nomenclature for the bank giving more loans to enable the borrower to service the previous loan - thus making the loan account look normal, under the latter they were forced to 'truthfully' reflect NPAs in the balance sheet (BS).

Modi got it done even for the loans given under UPA by asking the RBI in 2015 to conduct an asset quality review (AQR) of all SCBs to identify NPAs. As a result, their gross NPAs scaled to a high of Rs 1036,000 crore as of March 31, 2018.

How did the banks deal with these NPAs?
Following prudential accounting practice and as per RBI guidelines, they wrote off these loans. It is a mandatory requirement to reflect on a bank's true financial health. It isn't a loan waiver (the opposition/GOP want the public to believe that it is) as the bank continues to chase the defaulter including legal courses to recover it.

To enable banks to pursue their efforts on the fast track, in 2016, the government enacted the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) superseding subsisting laws. In 2017, it amended the Banking

Regulation Act (BRA) giving RBI the power to force banks to act if they don't do it on their own. On February 12, 2018, RBI issued a circular containing the specifics of how it was to be done.

The government has made life for willful defaulters (borrowers who can pay back yet decide not to) pretty tough. They are not sanctioned any additional facilities by banks or other FIs, and their unit is debarred from floating new ventures for five years. Additionally, they and companies that have them as promoters/directors are debarred from accessing capital markets to raise funds. Furthermore, under IBC, such promoters can't remain in control of the entity.

As per the information given by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) in Parliament, during the last nine years, SCBs have undertaken an aggregate recovery of Rs 10,16,617 crore of NPAs. Out of this, the Central government gave around Rs 300,000 crore as budgetary support to shore up the capital of PSBs during 2016 - 2021. Furthermore, in the budget for 2021-22, it committed another Rs 200,000 crore by way of a sovereign guarantee for the security receipts (SRs) to be issued by NARCL where the majority shareholding is vested in PSBs.

After adjusting for Rs 500,000 crore being the contribution of the government, banks still recovered a substantial amount of Rs 516,617 crore from the defaulters. The recovery would have been much more but for the judicial bottlenecks in the insolvency proceedings under the IBC. As such the

decisions of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) - the designated authority for such matters - are subject to appeal in the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), the High Court and the Supreme Court (SC) which leads to delays as big defaulters invariably go for appeal. That apart, following a bunch of petitions by defaulting borrowers, in April 2019, the SC declared the RBI circular dated February 12, 2018 - this was the cornerstone of the insolvency process shepherded by the banking regulator - unconstitutional.

As a result, the RBI was forced to come up with a revised circular dated June 7, 2019, that gave too much leverage to the lenders/banks. It has created a scenario where they are neither under any compulsion nor have any interest in referring the NPA for resolution under IBC.

Still, the IBC framework has brought about a fundamental change in the behaviour of the borrower.

By instilling a sense of fear that continuing default could result in his losing control over the firm, it has forced a large number of them to clear all their dues. Besides, a series of governance reforms implemented in PSBs have galvanized banks to promptly recognize and report stressed assets and take stringent measures for their recovery. To conclude, far from letting defaulting industrialists and businessmen go off the hook, the Modi - government has made unstinted efforts to make them pay up and also ensure that no new NPAs are created.

Empowering women to be harbinger of climate change

Training of rural women as entrepreneurs and imparting them with the knowledge to adapt to a changing environment is crucial for climate action

With floods, cyclones and heat waves becoming more frequent, the world is witnessing adverse and devastating impacts of climate change. Even though climate change affects everyone, it does not affect everyone equally. Vulnerability to climate change is aggravated by inequity and marginalization associated with gender, ethnicity and other social and economic factors. Women are disproportionately impacted by climate change owing to their socio-economic status, lack of resources and absence of participation in public decision-making. Even though the discourse around the negative impacts of climate change has gained significant traction, conversa-



UPMANYU PATIL

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tions on the critical role communities and vulnerable groups like women play in climate action need to be mainstreamed as well. Women have been at the forefront of environmental conservation and have the expertise to use renewable energy sources, which can help combat climate action. One such group of women known as Sakhis are championing the demand for clean energy technology specifically for the rural areas, communities that have limited awareness and access to modern energy services.

Under the initiative, Women's Entrepreneurship in clean energy programme initiated by Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) in districts of Maharashtra and Bihar, Sakhis are at the core of the pro-

gramme, aided by multi-sector partnership providing access to technology, finance and markets. These women are not just torchbearers of clean energy transitions, they are symbols of empowerment connecting all vital dots, including women's entrepreneurship, driving awareness and ensuring last-mile delivery of sustainable energy products like solar lamps, advanced cook stoves, solar water heaters, enabling public private partnership by curating local solutions keeping in mind the needs of the grass root communities.

The demand for clean & renewable energy technology and its products, solutions, and their adoption, continue to lag behind in rural India due to a lack of awareness and access.

"Empowering and creating strong networks of women clean energy entrepreneurs has significantly enhanced awareness, outreach, and enabled access to clean energy information and solutions for the last mile", says Vandana Khandekar, a fellow Sakhi, grassroots leader and entrepreneur from Solapur district Maharashtra. She started her journey by being a member of the group, receiving training on Entrepreneurship Development and Women-Led Climate Resilient Farming. Overcoming her personal challenges, Vandana is now one of village leaders sensitizing community members about organic farming, vermicomposting, promoting clean energy solutions like biogas plants), with

the objective of promoting zero-waste farming and increased financial savings within small and marginal farming households. Vandana has not only guided 200 women farmers in implementing one-acre farming, improving household health and nutrition, along with increasing earnings through the sale of organic vegetables locally. She has also been instrumental in getting 20 biogas plants and 8 vermicompost beds installed in households across her village. Vandana's journey is not just a personal transformation but also a testament to women's critical role in developing inclusive climate solutions.

Many more women like Vandana in various parts of the country are making their

homes and communities more sustainable and resilient. The program has been pivotal in building the capacity of these Sakhis, running public awareness programs, and community meetings, providing public platforms to connect these entrepreneurs to technology providers, financial institutions. More than this, they have played an integral role in overcoming historical societal inequalities in energy systems. Resources and products tailored to community needs are showing clear benefits in deploying renewable technologies, improving efficiency, reducing expenses, and generating local livelihood opportunities. Additionally, the adoption of these energy-efficient & socially beneficial products (like LED bulbs, solar lamps, induction cook stoves, and bio compost) has played a pivotal role in the reduction of energy-related carbon dioxide emissions - contributing to a broader climate action approach.

Empowering women, and placing them at the centre of clean energy transitions is not only improving people's lives but also garnering increased attention as effective agents towards more inclusive systems. Training and capacity building of rural women as entrepreneurs, equipping them with the knowledge to adapt to changing environmental conditions, scaling financial resources and providing technical support to women-led initiatives are crucial strategies for enabling them to lead the charge on climate action.

UN stops delivery of food and supplies to Gaza

Communications blackout hinders aid coordination

AP ■ RAFAH

The United Nations was forced to stop deliveries of food and other necessities to Gaza on Friday and warned of the growing possibility of widespread starvation after internet and telephone services collapsed in the besieged enclave because of a lack of fuel. The communications blackout, now in its second day, largely cuts off Gaza's 2.3 million people from one another and the outside world — and paralyses the coordination of aid, which humanitarian groups were already struggling to deliver because of the fuel shortage.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, was unable to bring in its aid convoy on Friday, said spokesperson Juliette Touma. With no immediate prospect for Israel allowing in more fuel, it was unclear how long the situation would continue.

"An extended blackout means an extended suspension of our humanitarian operations in the Gaza Strip," Touma told The Associated Press.

Israeli forces, meanwhile, have signalled they could expand their offensive toward Gaza's south even while pressing operations in the north. Troops have been searching the territory's biggest hospital for traces of a Hamas command centre the military alleges was located under the building.

They have shown what they said were a tunnel entrance and weapons found inside the compound but not yet any evidence of the command centre, which Hamas and staff at Gaza City's Shifa Hospital deny existed.

The war, now in its sixth week, was triggered by Hamas' October 7 attack in southern Israel, in which the militants killed more than 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and captured some 240 men, women and children.

On Friday, the military said it found the body of another

hostage, identifying her as Cpl. Noa Marciano. Marciano's body was recovered in a building adjacent to Shifa, the military said, like that of another hostage found Thursday, Yehudit Weiss.

More than 11,400 Palestinians have been killed in the war, two-thirds of them women and minors, according to Palestinian health authorities. Another 2,700 have been reported missing, believed buried under rubble. The count does not differentiate between civilians and militants, and Israel says it has killed thousands of militants.

AID DRIES UP

Since the war began, Gaza has received only 10 per cent of its required food supplies each day, and dehydration and malnutrition are growing with nearly all residents in need of food, said Abeer Etefa, a Mideast regional spokeswoman for the UN's World Food Program.

"People are facing the immediate possibility of starvation," she said Thursday from Cairo.

The breakdown of the communications network only worsened the situation since it's needed for electricity generators that run everything from communication systems to water treatment plants and sewage pumps. Israel has barred fuel shipments into Gaza since the beginning of the war, but permitted a limited shipment to UNRWA earlier this week for trucks delivering food after the agency's fuel reservoir ran dry.

CONDITIONS AT SHIFA

Speaking from Shifa Hospital on Friday, Dr. Ahmad Mukhalalti told Al-Jazeera television that there was no electricity to run ventilators to provide ICU patients with oxygen, and that of the 36 infants there, most are suffering from severe diarrhea because there is no clean water to give them. He

Thousands of bodies buried in rubble in Gaza

Deir Al-Balah (Gaza Strip): The wreckage goes on for block after devastated block. The smell is sickening. Every day, hundreds of people claw through tons of rubble with shovels and iron bars and their bare hands.

They are looking for the bodies of their children. Their parents. Their neighbors. All of them killed in Israeli missile strikes. The corpses are there, somewhere in the endless acres of destruction.

More than five weeks into Israel's war against Hamas, some streets are now more like graveyards. Officials in Gaza say they don't have the equipment, manpower or fuel to search properly for the living, let alone the dead.

Hamas, the militant group behind the deadly October 7

attack that killed about 1,200 people in Israel, has many of its bases within Gaza's crowded neighbourhoods. Israel is targeting those strongholds.

But the victims are often everyday Palestinians, many of whom have yet to be found.

Omar al-Darawi and his neighbours have spent weeks searching the ruins of a pair of four-story houses in central Gaza. Forty-five people lived in the homes; 32 were killed. In the first days after the attack, 27 bodies were recovered.

The five still missing were al-Darawi's cousins.

They include Amani, a 37-year-old stay-at-home mom, who died with her husband and their four children. There's Aliaa, 28, who was taking care of her aging parents. There's another Amani, who died with

her 14-year-old daughter. Her husband and their five sons survived.

"The situation has become worse every day," said the 23-year-old, who was once a journalism college student. The smell has become unbearable.

"We can't stop," he said. "We just want to find and bury them" before their bodies are lost in the rubble forever.

More than 11,400 Palestinians have been killed, two-thirds of them women and minors, according to Palestinian health authorities. The U.N. humanitarian affairs office estimates that about 2,700 people, including 1,500 children, are missing and believed buried in the ruins.

The missing have added layers of pain to Gaza's families, who are overwhelmingly

Muslim. Islam calls for the dead to be buried quickly — within 24 hours if possible — with the shrouded bodies turned to face the holy city of Mecca. Traditionally, the body is washed by family members with soap and scented water, and prayers for forgiveness are said at the grave site.

The search is particularly difficult in northern Gaza, including Gaza City, where Israeli ground forces are battling Hamas militants. Hundreds of thousands of people have fled southward, terrified by the combat and pushed by Israeli warnings to evacuate. But even in the south, continued Israeli airstrikes and shelling mean nowhere is safe in the tiny territory.

The Palestinian Civil Defense department, Gaza's

primary search-and-rescue force, has had more than two dozen workers killed and over 100 injured since the war began, said Mahmoud Bassal, the department spokesman.

More than half of its vehicles are now either without fuel or have been damaged by strikes, he said.

In central Gaza, outside the northern combat zone, the area's civil defense director has no working heavy equipment at all, including bulldozers and cranes.

"We actually don't have fuel to keep the sole bulldozer we have operating," said Rami Ali al-Aidei.

At least five large bulldozers are needed just to search a series of collapsed high-rise buildings in the coastal town of Deir al-Balah, he said. **AP**

Biden signs temporary spending bill

San Francisco: President Joe Biden has signed a temporary spending bill a day before a potential government shutdown, pushing a fight with congressional Republicans over the federal budget into the new year, as wartime aid for Ukraine and Israel remains stalled.

The measure passed the House and Senate by wide bipartisan margins this week, ensuring the government remains open until after the holiday season, and potentially giving lawmakers more time to sort out their considerable differences over government spending levels for the current fiscal year.

Biden signed the bill in San Francisco, where he is hosting the summit of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation economies.

News of the signing came late at night. The president signed the bill at the Legion of Honor Museum, where he held a dinner for APEC members.

The spending package keeps government funding at current levels for roughly two more months while a long-term package is negotiated. It splits the deadlines for passing full-year appropriations bills into two dates: January 19 for some federal agencies and February 2 for others, creating two dates when there will be a risk of a partial government shutdown.

The two-step approach was championed by new House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Republican, and was not favoured by many in the Senate, though all but one Democrat and 10 Republicans supported it because it ensured the government would not shut down for now. Johnson has vowed that he will not support any further stopgap funding measures, known as continuing resolutions. He portrayed the temporary funding bill as setting the ground for a spending "fight" with the Senate next year. **AP**



Leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, from left, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Peru President Dina Boluarte, and US President Joe Biden, among others, pose for a family photo during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit Thursday in San Francisco. **AP/PTI**

Muizzu takes office as new Maldivian prez

PTI ■ MALE

Mohamed Muizzu, an engineer-turned-politician, took oath as the eighth President of the Maldives on Friday at a ceremony attended by a multitude of foreign dignitaries, including India's Union Minister Kiren Rijju. The 45-year-old Muizzu took the oath of office at the Special Assembly of the People's Majlis held at Republic Square.

Chief Justice Muthasim Adnan administered the oath of office to Muizzu. At the ceremony, Hussain Mohamed Latheef also took oath as the 10th vice president of the Maldives.

Muizzu was accompanied by his spouse Saajidha Mohamed. Among those from the local top leaders who attended it were former president Ibrahim Mohamed Solih of the outgoing administration and two other former presidents, Mohamed Nasheed and Dr Mohamed Waheed.



Wickremesinghe and First Lady Maithree Wickremesinghe; Minister for Information of Bangladesh, Hasan Mahmud; Pakistan's Federal Minister of Information & Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs, Murtaza Solangi, and Vice President of Seychelles, Ahmed Afif. Special Envoy of the President of China and State Councillor Shen Yiqin too was present.

The ceremony was well attended by several other leaders from South Asia, diplomats, and even some current and former presidents from all over the world.

As per the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives, Minister of Justice of UAE, Abdullah bin Sultan bin Awad Al Nuaimi; UNESCAP Under-Secretary-General Armida Salsajha Alisjahbana; Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Patricia Scotland KC, Mehmet Nuri Ersoy were among those who attended.

PTI ■ BEIJING/ SAN FRANCISCO

After a display of rare bonhomie at their meeting on Thursday, US President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping have fiercely courted investments from the leaders and CEOs attending the Asia-Pacific summit to entice foreign capital.

Facing a doubting task of reviving a once buoyant economy with the steady outflow of foreign companies and supply chains Xi, in his address at the APEC CEO summit in San Francisco pledged to tear down foreign investment barriers and promised to invite foreign capital with "heart-warming" measures.

"No matter how the international situation evolves, China's resolve to foster a market-oriented, law-based and world-class business environment will not change," Xi said in written remarks to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) CEO Summit on Thursday.

China's policy of provid-

ing equal and quality services to foreign investors will not change, he said.

"We will strive to tear down the barriers to the flow of innovation factors, deepen reform of the digital economy, and promote free and orderly flow of data in compliance with the law," Xi, who held a surprisingly cordial and fruitful summit with Biden, said.

Their summit sparked speculation of a subtle shift in US-China power dynamics as the two largest economies in the past few years were at loggerheads to gain the upper hand, especially in the Indo-Pacific region.

Xi, 70, promised that China would implement more "heart-warming" measures, such as improving the policies on entry and retention of foreign nationals in China and removing choke points in financial, medical, e-payment and other services.

Allaying fears, he also pledged to improve the protection of foreign investors' rights and interests, further shorten the negative list on

foreign investment, fully ensure equal treatment for foreign investors and continue to strengthen intellectual property rights protection.

His address, which was full of promises, came as foreign companies continued to leave and downsize their investments in China amid diminished confidence, while concerns rose about heightened national security scrutiny.

Xi's pitch for foreign capital came as China posted its first deficit in foreign investment.

China's quarterly balance sheet for international payments, grabbed headlines this month when it fell into the red — the first time China has recorded an investment deficit since the data started being recorded in 1998.

Zhou Xin, a columnist for the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post, said that analysts cited the deficit of USD 11.8 billion for the third quarter as a sign of battered foreign investor confidence in the world's second-

largest economy.

"A deficit means money from investors is leaving the country through ways that include repatriating profits to head offices outside China instead of reinvesting in domestic operations," Zhou said in his recent column in the Post.

In a broad sense, this suggests that de-risking efforts by the US and its allies are starting to have an effect, possibly weakening China's economic standing. This is not a welcome sign for China, he said.

Addressing the APEC CEOs meeting, Biden also made a strong pitch for investments from Asia Pacific promising that the US is committed to high standards in trade and to partnerships that will benefit economies across the Pacific.

We're not going anywhere, Biden, 80, said and downplayed the fierce competition with China, stating that the US was de-risking and diversifying but not "decoupling" from Beijing. Asserting America's Asia-Pacific cre-

dentials, Biden said Xi asked him during their talks on Wednesday "why I-we are so engaged in the Pacific. It's because we're a Pacific nation. And because of us, there's been peace and security in the region, allowing you to grow. He didn't disagree. By the way, it was a very good, straightforward meeting."

"We aren't going anywhere. For decades, America's enduring commitment to the region has been a springboard that's enabled growth — transformative growth, ensured the open flow of commerce, and lifted millions of people out of poverty," Biden said.

He said the US companies had invested some USD 50 billion in fellow Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation economies in 2023, including in clean energy technologies, aviation and cybersecurity.

The United States has deep ties with our fellow APEC economies. More than 60 per cent of US exports go to fellow APEC economies, he said.

Powerful quake shakes southern Philippines

Manila (AP): A powerful undersea earthquake shook the southern Philippines on Friday, causing ceilings in shopping malls to plunge to the ground as shoppers screamed. There were no immediate reports of injuries, and no tsunami warning was in effect. The magnitude 6.7 quake was located 26 kilometers (16 miles) from Burias at the southern tip of the Philippines, the US Geological Survey said. It was centered at a depth of 78 kilometers (48 miles), it said. Videos posted on social media showed ceilings falling at two large malls as pillars swayed and people covered and shouted in fear. The SM City General Santos mall and Robinsons Gen San mall announced temporary closures. There were no reports of injuries.

Japan, China agree on constructive relationship

AP ■ TOKYO

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed on Friday to build a stable and constructive relationship but achieved only a vague agreement on easing a dispute over a Chinese ban on Japanese seafood, officials said.

Kishida told reporters after a 65-minute meeting with Xi on the sidelines of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco that they agreed to "find ways to resolve the dispute through meetings and dialogue in a constructive manner" and would convene a meeting of scientific experts. He gave no details.

Kishida had demanded that China immediately lift its ban on Japanese seafood, in place since the crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant began discharging treated radioactive wastewater into

the sea on August 24. The ban has badly hurt Japanese exporters of scallops and other seafood.

Japan says the wastewater is much safer than international standards and that the International Atomic Energy Agency has concluded the environmental and health impact of its release is negligible. China calls the discharge "nuclear-contaminated water."

Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said China and Japan agreed to find a way to resolve the Fukushima water issue through consultations and negotiations in a constructive manner. Xi, calling the discharge a global health and marine environment issue, told Kishida that Japan should take domestic and international concerns seriously and handle them in a responsible and constructive manner, CCTV said in an online report.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning, speaking Friday in Beijing, said all countries have the right to ensure food safety and protect public health.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno praised the talks as "extremely meaningful" because Kishida and Xi "confirmed their mutual goal of building constructive and stable Japan-China relations from a wide perspective."

But a series of disputes dominated the talks. Kishida asked Xi to remove all marking buoys that Beijing has placed inside Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone in the East China Sea, and to quickly release a Japanese businessman who was formally arrested in October on spying allegations.

Kishida said he raised "grave concern" about China's increased military activity around Japan, including joint exercises with Russia. He

stressed the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, where China regularly dispatches military ships and planes to threaten Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own territory.

Kishida also held talks on the sidelines of APEC with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, and briefly met with Biden and discussed the Middle East, Ukraine, the Indo-Pacific, China and North Korea, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said. The three leaders also held a separate meeting together.

Yoon's office said the three leaders talked for about 10 minutes about security and economic cooperation. Biden expressed gratitude to Yoon and Kishida for "easing his burden as he performs his duties as the president of the United States," Yoon's deputy national security director, Kim Tae-hyo, told South Korean reporters.

1.3 mn Afghans to go back from Pak

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

About 1.3 million Afghans are expected to return to their country of origin from Pakistan, the UN health agency warned, weeks after authorities began expelling foreigners living in the country illegally.

Thursday's warning by the World Health Organisation came amid such expulsions, despite the onset of cold weather and widespread criticism from international and domestic human rights groups.

Since November 1, police in Pakistan have been going door-to-door to check migrants' documentation after a deadline for migrants without papers to leave or face arrest. Most of those affected are Afghan nationals.

Pakistan hosts millions of Afghans who fled their country during the 1979-1989 Soviet occupation. The numbers swelled after the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in



Immigrants, mostly Afghans, go through data verification process at a counter of Pakistan's National Database and Registration Authority in Karachi on Friday. **AP/PTI**

August 2021. Pakistan says the 1.4 million Afghans who are registered as refugees need not worry, as their status has been extended until December.

The crackdown has forced about 340,000 Afghans in recent weeks to leave Pakistan after spending years, officials said on Friday.

Many Afghans who have

been in Pakistan for decades say they should be given more time, as they have no home in Afghanistan.

Afghans say they do not know how they will start a new life from scratch.

An estimated 1.7 million Afghans were living in Pakistan illegally when the crackdown was launched.

Ukrainian marines claim multiple bridgeheads across Russian barrier

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine's marine corps said on Friday it has secured multiple bridgeheads on the eastern bank of the Dnieper River in the Kherson region in fighting it described as having left nearly 3,500 Russians killed or wounded and dozens of ammunition depots, tanks, armoured vehicles and other weaponry destroyed.

The Marine Infantry Command's claims are the first to come directly from the Ukrainian military about advances across one of Russia's most significant strategic barriers. Earlier this week, Andriy Yermak, head of the president's office, confirmed for the first time that Ukraine had established a foothold on the eastern side of the river.

The wide river is a natural dividing line along the southern battlefield and Moscow's forces have used it since leaving the area around the city of Kherson in November 2022 to prevent Ukrainian troops from advancing further toward Russian-annexed Crimea.

Western officials with knowledge of intelligence, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive information, said on Thursday that Ukraine has portions of three brigades across the river and was expected to make small gains as Russians have so far been unable to repel them.

"The Ukrainians have seen an opportunity there and taken it," one official said. "What we've not seen is the Russians being able to push them back from that position."

The Associated Press could not independently confirm the Ukrainian reports that it has established a foothold on the eastern bank of the Dnieper River or its battlefield claims.

Ukraine provided no timeline for how long it took to establish its position on the eastern bank. Its forces have crossed the river in small groups since the summer to create a foothold near the

Russian lawmakers approve budget with record for defense spending

London (AP): The lower house of Russia's parliament, the State Duma, approved a federal budget Friday that increases spending by around 25 per cent in 2024 and devotes a record amount to defense. The budget for 2024-2026 was developed specifically to fund the Russian military and to mitigate the impact of "17,500 sanctions" on Russia, State Duma Chairman Vyacheslav Volodin said.

Under the spending plan, the country's largest ever, defense spending is expected to overtake social spending next year for the first time in modern Russian history.

The development comes as the Kremlin is eager to shore up support for President Vladimir Putin before a March presidential election.

Record low unemployment, higher wages and targeted social spending should help the Kremlin ride out the

domestic impact of pivoting the economy to a war footing but could pose a problem in the long term, analysts say.

The budget "is about getting the war sorted in Ukraine and about being ready for a military confrontation with the West in perpetuity," Richard Connolly, an expert on Russia's military and economy at the Royal United Services Institute in London, has said.

"This amounts to the wholesale remilitarization of Russian society," he said.

The Russian Communist Party voted against the budget, criticising what it described as "low pensions" and not enough financial support for elderly people, Russian state news agency Tass said.

The budget will now go to the Federation Council — the upper chamber of Russia's parliament — for approval and eventually to Putin for signing. "In these difficult condi-

tions, we have managed to adopt a budget that will not only allocate the necessary funds for our country's defense, but which will also provide all the required funds to guarantee the state's social obligations," State Duma First Deputy Chairman Alexander Zhukov said, according to Tass. Russia's Finance Ministry said it expects spending to reach 36.66 trillion rubles (around USD 411 billion) in 2024, with a predicted budget deficit of 0.8 per cent of Russia's gross domestic product. Part of the Russian budget is secret as the Kremlin tries to conceal its military plans and sidestep scrutiny of its war in Ukraine. Independent business journalists Farida Rustamova and Maksim Tovkaylo said on their Telegram channel, Faridaily, that around 39 per cent of all federal spending will go to defense and law enforcement in 2024.

Ukraine, and the European Union has said it can't deliver the munitions it promised. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in a meeting with British Foreign Secretary David Cameron on Wednesday lamented that the divided attention on two wars in the world had not helped his cause.

Cameron, a former UK prime minister who was appointed to the post in a surprise announcement this week, was in Kyiv on his first diplomatic trip to show his support for Ukraine. But the visit came with no additional promise of military funds.

Ukraine said its troops killed more than 1,200 Russian soldiers and wounded more than 2,200 in a series of operations to establish its position on the eastern riverbank. It said it destroyed 29 ammunition stores, two dozen tanks, four dozen armoured combat vehicles, 89 artillery systems, watercraft, command posts and other vehicles.

Ukraine did not disclose the number of its own casualties. When news of Ukraine's advances across the river were reported earlier in the week, the Moscow-appointed governor for the Russia-occupied part of the Kherson region, Vladimir Saldo, said Ukrainian forces were facing a "fiery hell" in fighting in the village of Krynky and were being destroyed "on a large scale".

Saldo said on Telegram that Ukraine had lost up to two battalions crossing the river and trying to maintain their hold on the east bank. Those claims could not be independently verified.

Pak ex-army chief's granddaughter walks out of Lahore jail, re-arrested

PTI ■ LAHORE



The granddaughter of a former Pakistan Army chief and a leader of ex-prime minister Imran Khan's party who was arrested for her alleged involvement in the May 9 violence was re-arrested on Friday soon after she was released from jail here.

Khadija Shah, Gen Asif Nawaz Janjua's granddaughter and a fashion designer by profession, was detained for a period of 30 days under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) ordinance as soon as she came out of Lahore's Kot Lakhpat Jail in Punjab province. "Her release may cause a law-and-order situation in the province," the Punjab police said. Shah had been in jail for the last six months in connection with attacks on the Lahore Corps Commander House and the plaza owned by the son of former army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa here.

At least 10,000 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders and workers were arrested across the country for allegedly attacking and setting ablaze the state and military installations including the army's headquarters in Rawalpindi and the ISI building in Faisalabad city on May 9 following the cricket-turned-politician's arrest in a corruption case by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB).

Shah got bail in all four terrorism cases and the anti-ter-

rorism court of Lahore on Friday ordered her immediate release. However, as she walked free from jail, a heavy contingent of police reached outside the Kot Lakhpat Jail and arrested her in a public order ordinance. The Lahore deputy commissioner has issued her detention order.

Meanwhile, Shah has been booked in another terrorism case related to the May 9 violence in Peshawar. The re-arrest of May 9 suspects has become a new normal in Pakistan as PTI President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi and dozens of other leaders are among those who secured bail in a number of terrorism cases related to the "Black Day" violence but re-arrested as soon as they walked out of jail.

Earlier, Shah had written an open letter from jail seeking "empathy and humanity" for the party's 19 women prisoners including herself. Shah said she had been incarcerated for

over four months for "peacefully participating" in the May 9 protest. "Each PTI woman prisoner at Kot Lakhpat Jail Lahore has borne unimaginable punishment," she said. Writing about the plight of 18 "innocent women" imprisoned alongside her, Shah said: "These women prisoners have no access to the world and are unable to share their plight; their families desperately struggling to balance the demands of life without them."

"The women incarcerated with me have suffered unbearable circumstances, and they are waiting for the world to take notice and speak for them. These 18 women in captivity are not just 18 women. They are 18 homes, 18 families, and countless lives completely shattered and at a standstill. I want to share the tragedy that is unfolding with each passing day to elicit the empathy and humanity that must exist in us all," the letter read.

Pakistan military appeals against apex court order

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan government on Friday filed an intra-court appeal in the Supreme Court against the apex court verdict nullifying the trial of civilians by the military courts.

Attorney General Mansoor Awan filed the appeal a day after the Sindh caretaker government and Balochistan Shuhada Forum filed appeals against the five-member bench judgment of October 23, praying to set it aside. The Supreme Court had on October 23 declared the trial of civilians in military courts as "null and void" and ordered authorities to conduct the hearing of the cases of former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Imran Khan's supporters arrested for their involvement in the May 9 violent protests in ordinary criminal courts.

"Pending the decision on

Appeal the operation of the Impugned Order/Judgment may graciously be suspended. Any other relief that this Hon'ble Court deems fit and proper may also be granted," the federal government stated in the appeal.

Separately, the provincial governments of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan as well as the Defence Ministry filed appeals against the judgment declaring as null and void the trial of civilians by the military courts.

Earlier on November 13, the Senate adopted a resolution urging the apex court to reconsider its verdict that nullified the military trials of civilians arrested after May 9 violent demonstrations. Two days later, scores of senators from three major political parties in Pakistan staged a protest in the Senate against what they described as the hasty passage of the resolution and called for its immediate

withdrawal. The government had identified over 100 civilians involved in attacks on military installations and handed them over to army authorities for trial under military regulations.

The decision to use military courts was taken by the government of Shehbaz Sharif, who has since completed his term in August and handed over to a caretaker government to oversee the general elections to be held on February 8. However, the court ordered that their trial should be held under civil laws in ordinary courts, which was considered a setback for the government which was pushing for strict punishment for those involved in attacks on military buildings. Hundreds of Khan's supporters had stormed military and government installations, and even torched a general's house, following the former prime minister's brief arrest by the Punjab Rangers on May 9.

Pak economy still fragile; support from IMF to continue: Minister

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's caretaker Finance Minister Shamshad Akhtar has said Pakistan's economy continues to remain fragile despite improvements and the cash-strapped nation would have to go for more IMF loans for some time, a media report said on Friday.

Akhtar also emphasised that Pakistan needs strong financial reforms to strengthen its economy, the Dawn newspaper quoted her as saying. "The next International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme is very necessary for some time as the economy has returned to stability that was still very fragile. Until we are able to increase exports and domestic resources, we will need another programme," Akhtar said. Her remarks came a day after the Pakistan government and the IMF concluded a review of the ongoing USD 3 billion stand-by agreement with a staff-level agreement, opening the way for Pakistan to get USD 700 million in the second tranche. She said there was no more refuge from undertaking long-standing reforms. "The country will not survive without this. Probably, we will have to go

into another EFF [Extended Fund Facility]. We will remain engaged with the IMF," she said but hastened to add that this may be premature to talk about. Akhtar said her priority was to immediately start working on the last USD 1.1 billion tranche under the current facility so that the new government should not face any difficulty, but "if we get time, we will also discuss this [new programme] as well". She also outlined key aspects of the IMF agreement, affirming the government's commitment to regular tariff adjustments, including a planned gas price hike in January to prevent the accumulation of circular debt in both the gas and power sectors. The electricity and gas rates would be "continuously revised" and their costs controlled besides transferring their management to the private sector as soon as possible and institutionalising ongoing campaigns against power and gas theft, she said.

She said Pakistan would also need to adhere to the market-determined exchange rate completely, remain responsive through adequate monetary policy adjustment, particularly to core inflation, and bring four more state-owned enter-

prises in line with the financing and governance template of the newly approved SOE law.

Akhtar also tried to allay concerns regarding the external financing gap and expressed confidence over the achievement of the tax collection target. She said the government would remain committed to fiscal consolidation for macroeconomic stability and balanced growth. She said that unlike in the past, no prior action was required by the IMF management this time before approving the staff-level agreement, taking total releases under the USD 3 billion programme to USD 1.9 billion and leaving USD 1.1 billion for the next and final review.

Addressing the postponement of the new USD 1.5 billion international bond, Akhtar cited high interest rates and costly market conditions as key factors.

"I have decided to postpone the new (international) bond. It is going to be expensive. Interest rates are very high. So, we cannot go to the international market," she said, adding that the government would repay the USD 1 bn bond that would be maturing in April next year.

'Imran will take legal action against senior State Dept official in US'

Islamabad (PTI): Imran Khan will register a case in the US against State Department official Donald Lu if the jailed former prime minister doesn't get justice from Pakistani courts, his sister Aleema Khan has said.

Khan, the 71-year-old chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party is currently detained in Adiala jail in Rawalpindi on judicial remand in the cipher case.

The purported cipher (secret diplomatic cable) contained an account of a meeting between US State Department officials, including Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South & Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu and Pakistani envoy Asad Majeed Khan last year. Khan, who served as prime minister of Pakistan from August 2018 to April 2022, is accused of misusing the contents of the cipher to build a narrative that his government was ousted due to a conspiracy hatched by the US, a charge repeatedly denied by Washington. The PTI chief's sister made the comment in a press conference after meeting him in the Adiala Jail, Geo News reported on Friday.

"Chairman PTI said if he does not get justice from Pakistani courts, then they would file a case against Donald Lu in US courts," Aleema was quoted as saying in the report. She added that the party believes that the US embassy in Pakistan was involved in the conspiracy to topple Khan's government.

On Tuesday, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) issued a stay order against Khan in the case, seeking information about the "circumstances" that prompted the trial to be conducted in a high-security Rawalpindi prison. Aleema said that the IHC issued a stay order, and those clauses were added in the case that can lead to a death sentence or life imprisonment.

"We should be told what crime was committed by the PTI chairman that such clauses were added. Rana Sanaullah (Pakistan's former federal minister for interior) registered a case against the PTI chairman [we] should get justice in Pakistan," she said.

Hasina says global leaders' trust deficit allows unrest

Dhaka (PTI): Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Friday said the "trust deficit" among nations and the lack of respect for international laws have led to the ongoing war in Ukraine and the carnage in Palestine, urging global leaders to be united to put an end to the conflicts.

"These conflicts call for an urgent need to create genuine trust and mutual respect among the warring nations and involved international actors," Hasina said during the virtual address of two-day 2nd Voice of Global South Summit hosted by her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi.

The Bangladesh premier particularly expressed her profound concern at the "tragic, inhuman existence of the hapless Palestinians in the face of merciless carnage" and said: "It is time for all of us to unite as one world and demand the end of the conflict". The summit titled "Together for Everyone's Growth with Everyone's Trust" drew participants from 125 countries.

Hasina joined the event virtually from her Ganobhaban official residence here. She regretted that Global South was being exposed to hardships and new challenges as "there have now appeared sanctions and counter-sanctions" due to trust deficit. "In this critical time, the world must unite as one and strengthen 'Everyone's Trust' to achieve 'Everyone's Growth', the premier said.

Hasina said the mutual trust and enhanced global unity appeared more crucial as "our world is plagued with unbearable poverty, undesirable inequality, intolerable terrorism, and the catastrophic threat of climate change".

The premier appreciated Prime Minister Modi for convening the "2nd Voice of the Global South Summit 2023" and for "constantly raising the voice of the Global South all through the G20 Presidency".

Hasina said the Global South was poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of this hemisphere as "we are often vulnerable to various socio-economic challenges".

Remove names of Pak doc's kin from exit control list: Top court

Peshawar (PTI): A top Pakistani court has ordered to remove from the Exit Control List the names of the wife and children of Dr Shakil Afridi, incarcerated since 2011 for helping the CIA track down al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden in Pakistan's garrison city of Abbottabad. A single-member bench of the Peshawar HC issued the order on Thursday on a writ petition filed by Imrana Shakil, Afridi's wife. The exit control list (ECL) is a list of people prohibited from leaving Pakistan for varied legal reasons. Arif Jan Afridi, petitioner's counsel, informed the court that his client has been arrested on spying charges for the USA and sentenced to 23 years imprisonment by different courts in Pakistan. "No crime has been proved against my client Imrana Shakil. Neither has she been arrested yet. Names of Imrana Shakil and her children have been placed in the ECL merely on the basis of some reports," the counsel said.

कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता, केन्द्रीय भण्डार, उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, जल भवन, 'बी' ब्लॉक, नेहरू कालोनी, देहरादून									
ई-निविदा सूचना									
पत्रांक: 623/ई-निविदा /2023-24									
उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान की ओर से केन्द्रीय भण्डार, देहरादून द्वारा निम्न कार्य हेतु ई-निविदा, दृ-बिड सिस्टम (नकली की बिड एवं कॉमिशन/बिड बिड) आधार पर निम्नानुसार आवान्ति की जाती है।									
निविदा सं.	कार्य विवरण	वरोधक वनारशि रा. ई-निविदा पत्र डाउनलोड करने की तिथि एवं समय	ई-निविदा अपलोड करने की तिथि एवं समय	ई-निविदा सूचना प्र. सं. 7 अनुसार मूल पत्र भिजाने में जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	ई-निविदा सूचना प्र. सं. 7 अनुसार मूल पत्र भिजाने में जमा करने की तिथि एवं समय	राजकीय बिड खोले जाने की तिथि एवं समय	निविदा की कैदा	टि-बिड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय	दिनांक: 16.11.23
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
9/ 23-24	वॉरिंक दूर अनुबन्ध पर, ISI Marked Plain Ended M.S. ERW Line Pipe conforming to IS: 1978/1982 Grade YST-210 (Replaced by BIS as IS/ISO 3183/2007 GRADE-L-210, PSL-1) or its latest amendment(s) की आपूर्ति	12,85,000.00	21.11.2023 from 11:00 a.m.	06.12.2023 from 11:00 a.m. to 13.12.2023 upto 5:00 p.m.	14.12.2023 upto 5:00 p.m.	15.12.2023 at 11:00 a.m.	120 days	29.11.2023 at 11:00 a.m.	
अर्हता: Only manufacturers of ISI Marked Plain Ended M.S. ERW Line Pipe having BIS license for IS: 1978/1982 Grade YST-210 (Replaced by BIS as IS/ISO 3183/2007 GRADE-L-210, PSL-1) or its latest amendment(s) who are registered or manufacturers who have applied for registration in Uttarakhand Jal Sansthan, Jal Bhawan, 'B' Block, Nehru Colony, Dehradun, before date of invitation of tender notice, for this tender.									
10/ 23-24	वॉरिंक दूर अनुबन्ध पर, ISI Marked Plain Ended M.S. ERW Casing Pipe conforming to IS: 4270/2001 Grade FE-410 or its latest amendment(s) की आपूर्ति	3,45,000.00	21.11.2023 from 11:00 a.m.	06.12.2023 from 11:00 a.m. to 13.12.2023 upto 5:00 p.m.	14.12.2023 upto 5:00 p.m.	15.12.2023 at 11:00 a.m.	120 days	29.11.2023 at 11:00 a.m.	
अर्हता: Only manufacturers of ISI Marked Plain Ended M.S. ERW Casing Pipe conforming to IS: 4270/2001 Grade FE-410 or its latest amendment(s) who are registered or manufacturers who have applied for registration in Uttarakhand Jal Sansthan, Jal Bhawan, 'B' Block, Nehru Colony, Dehradun, before date of invitation of tender notice, for this tender.									
ई-निविदा से सम्बन्धित सार्वजनिक जानकारी एवं शर्त उत्तराखण्ड की वेबसाइट www.uktidenders.gov.in एवं सिंगल लिंक वेबसाइट http://ujls.uk.gov.in पर ऑन लाइन दर्ज/प्राप्त की जा सकती है। मूल पत्र संवेदन्य, अधिलेखी अनिवार्य									

PUBLIC NOTICE				
It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Renu Devi W/o. Mr. Om Prakash Shrivastava who is purchasing the Built-up Private Flat No. 102, First Floor (Back Side), without notice rights, area measuring 55 Sq. Yards i.e., 48 Sq. Mtrs., built on Property No. R2M-292-B (Old Plot No.1061), out of Kharsa No.58/18/1, situated in revenue estate of Village Palam, Delhi State Delhi, colony known as Raj Nagar-I, Palam Colony, New Delhi-110077, from Mr. Vikram Kumar S/o. Mr. Suresh Chaudh, who is owner of the aforesaid property vide Sale Certificate dated 06.08.2023, which is registered vide Document No. 5382, at Sub-Registrar's Office, New Delhi, on 12.08.2023; and same to be finance & mortgage by Shubham Housing Development Finance Co., Ltd. to complete the requirements of BANK/NFCC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim / right / title / interest / creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, as the address mentioned below, about the objections, within 07 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc. Lucern Legal LLP, Plot 528-529, (Basement) Uday Park, New Delhi-110049, Contact# 811-4946316				
PUBLIC NOTICE				
It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Raj Kumar who has purchased the Freehold Residential house area measuring 40 Sq. Yds, i.e., 33.44 Sq. Meters, out of Kharsa No. 116/1, situated in the area of Village Chotpur, Pargana & Tehsil Dadri, District Gurgaon, Haryana, U.P. from Mr. Manvi S/o. Uday Pal Vide Sale Deed dated 24.07.2020, having all the rights, Noida, as Doc. No. 4567, in Book No. 1, Vol. No. 11461, Page No. 393-420, dated 24.07.2020 and same to be financed by Unimmed Housing Finance Pvt. Ltd. Original Sale Deed dated 21.10.2010, executed by Mr. Ram Prasad S/o. Tikaram and Mrs. Vinesh W/o. Mr. Ram Prasad in favour of Mr. Kailash Yadav S/o Late Mr. Vijay Pal duly regd. on SR-II, Noida, as Doc. No. 7231, in Book No. 1, Vol. No. 12378, Page No. 393-420, dated 24.07.2020, having all the rights, Noida, as Doc. No. 12605, she confirmed to our client that she is not having the below documents pertaining to the property in question for that she has lodged online FIR dated 27/11/23				
Original Sale Deed dated 17.08.2011 executed by Smt. Anita in favour of Smt. Sneha Arora (Docno. 12378)				
Original Sale Deed dated 07.05.2012 executed by Smt. Sneha Arora in favour of Sh.Rahul Arora (Docno. 12378)				
All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, family arrangement, maintenance, bequest, partnership, possession, lease, sublease, tenancy, license, lien, charge, pledge, easement or otherwise howsoever, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 14 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned.				
Kamal Kant Gupta (Advocate) Unit No. FF-2, First floor, Mahaluxmi Metro Tower Sec-4, Vaishali, Gzb., U.P., Mob. 9810083351				
COURT NOTICE				
CITATION (BY ADVERTISEMENT) (Chapter XXX, Rule-21) IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT ALLAHABAD ORIGINAL JURISDICTION TESTAMINARY AND INTERDICTORY JURISDICTION TESTAMENTARY CASE NO. 46 OF 2023 IN THE MATTER OF THE GOODS OF Late Umesh Kumar Aggarwal, son of late Radehy Shyam Aggarwal resident of C-237, Surya Nagar, Ghaziabad-201011				
Rajender Prasad Aggarwal				
WHEREAS an application has been made by Rajender Prasad Aggarwal, son of late Radehy Shyam Aggarwal, resident of A-350, Surya Nagar, Ghaziabad- 201011 (Uttar Pradesh) for the probate of the will (or Letters of Administration to the estate) of Late Umesh Kumar Aggarwal deceased, who died at Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital G Road Shahrada New Delhi Dilshad Garden East Delhi India 110095, on 19.04.2021 AND WHEREAS, the 21 day of December, 2023 has been fixed for hearing of the said application. THIS CITATION is issued calling upon all persons claiming to have any interest to come and see the proceedings if they think fit before the grant of probate (or Letters of Administration). Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this 07th day of November, 2023.				
Rkans Varma Advocate Joint Registrar High Court, Allahabad				
SIDH AUTOMOBILES LIMITED				
CIN : L34102DL1985PLC020156 Registered Office: R-13, S/F GREATER KAILASH-I NEW DELHI, DELHI - 110048, INDIA Email: sidhindia1985@gmail.com , Website: www.sidhgroup.in				
STATEMENT OF UNAUDITED STANDALONE FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND HALF YEAR ENDED ON 30 th SEPTEMBER, 2023 (Amount in Rs. Lakhs)				
Statement of Unaudited Standalone Financial Results for the Quarter And Half Year Ended on 30 th September, 2023				
Particulars	Quarter Ended 30-09-23 (Unaudited)	Quarter Ended 30-09-22 (Unaudited)	Year Ended 31-03-23 (Audited)	
Total Income from operations (net)	4.05295	4.1025	16.3885	
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	0.68705	0.13232	1.15976	
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before Tax, (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	0.68705	0.13232	1.15976	
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after Tax, (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	0.68705	0.13232	1.15976	
Total Comprehensive Income for the period (Comprising Profit/(Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax))	0.68705	0.13232	1.15976	
Equity Share Capital	296.23	296.23	296.23	
Reserves (excluding Revolution Reserve)	0	0	0	
Earnings Per equity Share (of Rs.10/each) (for continuing and discontinuing operations)				
(a) Basic:	0.02	0.00	0.04	
(b) Diluted:	0.02	0.00	0.04	
Notes:				
1. The above result was taken on record by the Board of Directors in the meeting held on 16 th day of November, 2023.				
2. The above is an extract of the detailed format of Unaudited Standalone Financial Results for the Quarter and Half Year Ended on 30 th September, 2023 filed with the Stock Exchange under Regulations 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligation and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015.				
3. The full format of the Un-Audited Annual Financial Results are available on the Stock Exchange website (www.bseindia.com) and Company's website i.e. www.sidhgroup.in				
For and on behalf of the Board of Directors				
SIDH AUTOMOBILES LIMITED				
Sd/- (HARI MOHAN GUPTA) DIRECTOR DIN: 03158551				
Date : 16.11.2023 Place : Delhi				

Pharma industry can grow to \$200 bn in value terms by 2030: Pharma Secy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The domestic pharmaceutical industry has the potential to grow by 4-5 times to around USD 200 billion in value terms by scaling up manufacturing and enhancing exports, a senior government official said on Friday. He noted that to reach a size of USD 200 billion by 2030 from around USD 50 billion currently, the industry needs to grow in double digits year-on-year while reducing dependence on imports and focussing on expanding exports. "The age of smart medicine is dawning upon us. The new therapies that will come to the fore in the next 20 to 30 years would deliver smart therapies virtually for every difficult illness that we know of today. We have to be ready for that age," Department of Pharmaceuticals Secretary Arunish Chawla said at a CII event here. He said the government is helping the industry with various policy initiatives, including production-linked incentives. "At USD 50 billion in 2020, we were a little over 10 per cent of our manufacturing sector. By 2030 we need to be 20 per cent of the manufacturing sector in India," Chawla noted. To reach the goal, the industry needs to grow in double-digit year-on-year, he added. "We need to select and target a few sectors where we are still import dependent. We need to redesign policy framework and do it in such a way that, in ten years, we will become exporters in all these segments," Chawla said. He noted that the government is working together with industry and academia in order to help the industry reach USD 200 billion by 2030. "We are already exporting in most sectors, and we hope, the way new technologies are coming up and the way our academic institutions, our laboratories and our industries are working together in the research and development sector, we hope that we will be an exporter of nearly all most major medical technology products," Chawla said. He noted that silos need to be broken between academia, laboratories and industry. A shift is required from publications to patents and a mechanism for research-oriented sponsored degrees from industry is the need of the hour to foster innovation, he added. The country must utilise its technical resources, demographic dividend, skilled manpower, forward-looking government policies and economies of scale to become a world leader in pharmaceuticals, Chawla said.



'Banks can open current account for export proceeds in addition to rupee vostro accounts'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday permitted banks to open additional current account for exports proceeds in addition to special rupee vostro accounts with a view to provide greater operational flexibility to exporters. To provide greater operational flexibility to exporters, banks maintaining special rupee vostro account as per the provisions of the RBI circular dated July 11, 2022 are permitted to open an additional special current account for its exporter constituent exclusively for settlement of their export transactions, RBI said in a notification. In July 2022, the RBI had asked banks to put in place additional arrangements for export and import transactions in Indian rupees in view of increasing interest of the global trading community in the domestic currency. "In order to promote growth of global trade with emphasis on exports from India and to support the increasing interest of global trading community in INR, it has been decided to put in place an additional arrangement for invoicing, payment, and settlement of exports/imports in INR," it said. India has been trying to promote rupee trade following the Russia-Ukraine war and the sanctions imposed by the West. In July 2022, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decided to allow the settlement of India's international trade in rupee. Accordingly, authorised Indian banks must open and maintain special rupee vostro accounts of the partner trading country's banks. These accounts keep the foreign bank's holdings in the Indian counterpart in rupees. When an Indian trader wants to make a payment to a foreign trader in rupees, the amount will be credited to this vostro account.

Sensex, Nifty decline on selloff in banking, financial stocks

PTI ■ MUMBAI

In a volatile trade, equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined on Friday, dragged down by heavy selling pressure in banking, financial and energy stocks amid mixed cues from global markets. However, lower global crude prices and fresh foreign capital inflows helped the indices restrict the losses, as per traders. Shares of bank and NBFC firms fell sharply after the Reserve Bank tightened norms for consumer credit as it asked them to assign a higher risk weight for unsecured personal loans, a move aimed at making the lenders more cautious about such advances.

After two sessions of gains, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 187.75 points or 0.28 per cent to settle at 65,794.73. During the day, it fell 342.74 points or 0.51 per cent to 65,639.74. The Nifty skidded 33.40 points or 0.17 per cent to 19,731.80. "The RBI's action to raise risk weights for unsecured loans dampened banking stocks and caused a temporary disruption in the broader indices' resurgence. Despite this, a positive undercurrent prevails, buoyed by the conclusion of a robust earnings season. "Investors are awaiting eurozone



inflation data later today. Sharp drop in oil prices and the moderation of US yield will help the market to sustain buoyancy in the short-term," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. Among the Sensex firms, State Bank of India fell 3.64 per cent, followed by Axis Bank (3.03 per cent). Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, Infosys, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Wipro, and Reliance Industries were among the other laggards. On the other hand, Larsen & Toubro, Hindustan Unilever, Power Grid, Asian Paints, Nestle and Mahindra & Mahindra were the major gainers. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.36 per cent, and midcap gained 0.27 per cent. Among the indices, bankex fell 1.48 per cent, oil & gas dropped 1.35 per cent, financial services

declined 0.83 per cent, and IT dipped 0.10 per cent. Consumer Discretionary, FMCG, healthcare, industrials, capital goods and realty were among the gainers. On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark jumped 890.05 points or 1.37 per cent, while the Nifty climbed 306.45 points or 1.57 per cent. "Selling in banking and oil & gas stocks led the fall in key benchmark indices, even as most of the global indices ended on a higher note. Investors booked profit in banking stocks on concerns that RBI's new norms on personal loans would hurt lending growth going ahead.

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RBI's tighter regulatory risk weight to hit banks' capital adequacy by 60 bps: S&P

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank's decision to tighten norms for consumer credit by raising risk weight for unsecured personal loans is likely to hit banks' capital adequacy by 60 basis points, S&P Global Ratings said on Friday. The move will curtail riskier bank lending to consumers and is expected to squeeze the non-bank sector in particular. The RBI on Thursday increased

risk weights on unsecured personal loans, credit cards, and lending to nonbank finance companies (NBFCs) by 25 percentage points. This will likely lead to higher lending rates, lower credit growth, and increase the need for capital raising among weak lenders, S&P Global Ratings said, adding that higher risk weights will ultimately support asset quality. "Slower loan growth and an increased emphasis on risk management will likely support asset

quality in the Indian banking system. "However, the immediate effect will likely be higher interest rates for borrowers, slower loan growth for lenders reduced capital adequacy, and some hit on profits. We estimate that the Tier-1 capital adequacy of banks will decline by about 60 basis points. Finance companies will be worse affected as their incremental bank borrowing costs will surge, in addition to the capital adequacy impact," S&P Global Ratings

credit analyst Geeta Chugh said in the statement. These changes will not have any immediate effect on India's financial sector ratings, and this will also not affect the risk-adjusted capital ratio for the rated banks and finance companies, the agency said. Unsecured personal loans and credit card debt have risen rapidly in the past few years in India. Such loans have grown 26 per cent in the 12 months ending September 2023.

This type of loan, along with consumer durable lending, represented about 9.8 per cent of total loans in the banking system as of September 22, 2023. Small-ticket personal loans of less than Rs 50,000 are particularly at higher risk. Reported delinquencies (90-plus days past due) for this type of lending was 5.4 per cent as of June 2023, according to credit bureau Transunion Cibil. While these small borrowers are often highly leveraged and may

have other lending products, loans below Rs 50,000 comprise only 0.3 per cent of total retail loans. Financial technology firms are more exposed to these loans, as around 80 per cent of their personal loans are in this customer segment, the rating agency said. Notwithstanding the risk of a potential buildup of imbalances in some categories of retail loans, the delinquency rate of 90-plus days past due is at acceptable limits for this prod-

uct category, it added. Specifically, as of June 30, 2023, the delinquency rate was 1.6 per cent for credit cards and 0.8 per cent for unsecured personal loans. "NBFCs face a double-whammy of higher risk weights on their unsecured loans and on bank lending to NBFCs. This will squeeze the reported capital adequacy of nonbanks and push up their funding costs," said S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Deepali Seth Chhabria.

Online sellers seek FDI in inventory-based model of e-commerce for export purposes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The e-commerce industry has suggested the government permit foreign direct investment (FDI) in inventory-based model of online trade only for export purposes, a senior government official said on Friday. At present, the country's FDI policy does not permit foreign direct investment in the inventory-based model of e-commerce. It is allowed only in firms that are operating through a marketplace model. Director General of Foreign Trade (DGF) Santosh Kumar Sarangi said that they are working on several steps to promote exports through e-commerce medium. He said that the e-commerce stakeholders have asked the department for the promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT) to relook at the FDI policy on this issue. "For export purposes, if these (rules) could be revisited is something that we are request-

ing the DPIIT to examine and explore... And this could be one step forward for creating the e-commerce export zones that DGFT and its team has been working on," Sarangi said here at a conference on e-commerce exports. Talking about steps they are working on to promote exports through e-commerce medium, he said many of these exporters even the smaller ones are subjected to a mandatory GST regime, so the directorate is working with the Department of Revenue (doR) to see if there could be a scheme like 'composition levy scheme' for smaller players so that this mandatory GST could be waived till they attain a certain threshold of export value. "Similarly, exports through e-commerce many a time are not getting benefits like duty drawback or DGFT schemes like Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) or Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies

(RoSCTL). So we are now working with Express Cargo Clearance Systems (ECCS) and postal bill of exports to ensure that the shipping bills flow directly so that these kinds of exports also get covered under these kinds of schemes," he said. He added that the DGFT is also working with the Department of Post to ensure that Dak Niryat Kendras and foreign post offices (FPOs) get strengthened and expanded. The Department of Post has the objective to open 1,000 such Kendras which will work on a hub and spoke model with the FPOs and they are trying to ensure that the export consignments are reached at the quickest possible time, get the customs clearance and are sent abroad. The department is working with the US Postal services as well as postal services of other countries to provide a full online tracking mechanism for the e-commerce export consignments, he added.

Hair transplant market size expected to grow to \$560 million by 2032: Expert

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The hair transplant market is estimated to grow to USD 560 million by 2032, a steep rise from USD 180 million last year, amid growing popularity, especially among celebrities, a top expert said. "The global hair transplant market is massive and growing at a rapid pace," Dr Pradeep Sethi Scientific Director of World Follicular Unit Extraction Institute told PTI. To put into perspective how fast the industry is growing in India, in 2022 it was estimated at USD 180 million and is expected to reach around USD 560 million by 2032, he added. Sethi, who runs Eugenix Hair Sciences in Gurugram, said he has over 40 per cent patients annually either from the US, or Europe. He said a research by Custom Market Index suggests that the hair transplant market is likely to grow at a CAGR of about



12 per cent between 2023 and 2032 and is also the fastest-growing vertical in the medical tourism structure across the globe. India accounts for a majority of all hair transplant operations and has surpassed the market in Turkey, he pointed out. In India, more than half of the patients are attended by Trichology Clinics, followed by hospitals and dermatology clinics, he said. Several studies suggest that men have been more concerned about hair loss than women and such researches

have made it possible for marketers to meet the rising demand among male population due to lifestyle issues and daily necessities, he noted. Figures suggest that Delhi-NCR, Jaipur, and Mumbai are at the top spots with the highest successful transplants which also see overseas patients from Australia, the US, Africa, and EU countries, he stated. Some prominent international celebrities who got hair treatment from Eugenix Hair Sciences include Andrew Leipus, physiotherapist of the Indian cricket team during the 2000s, English cricketer Nick Compton, South African cricketer Morne van Wyk, Ravi Shastri, Mohammad Azharuddin and World Cup sensation Mohammed Shami. Bhajan Samrat Anup Jalota, Arun Govil, Amir Bashir are some of the other prominent names who got their hair transplant done at Eugenix Hair Sciences.



India's forex reserves drop USD 462 mln to \$590.321 bln

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's forex kitty decreased by USD 462 million to USD 590.321 billion for the week ended November 10, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had increased by USD 4.672 billion to USD 590.783 billion. In October 2021, the country's forex kitty had reached an all-time high of USD 645 billion. The reserves took a hit as the central bank deployed the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments since last year. For the week ended November 10, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 108 million to USD 522.004 billion, according to the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by Reserve Bank of India. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves were down by USD 608 million to USD 45.515 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by USD 36 million to USD 18.011 billion, the apex bank said.

Eight Indians, PIOs in inaugural Time 100 Climate list

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Eight Indians and Indian-origin persons, including World Bank President Ajay Banga and co-founder of Ola Electric Bhavish Aggarwal, have been featured in 'Time magazine's first-ever list of the world's most influential leaders driving business to real climate action. 'Time 100 Climate' list, which includes CEOs, founders, philanthropists, musicians, policymakers and government officials from across the world, comes ahead of the 2023 UN Climate Change Conference scheduled to take place in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from November 30. Along with Banga and Aggarwal, Rajiv J Shah, presi-

dent of The Rockefeller Foundation; Geeta Aiyer, founder and president of Boston Common Asset Management, Jigar Shah, director of the US Department of Energy Loan Programmes Office; Manoj Sinha, CEO and co-founder of Husk Power Systems; Seema Wadhwa, executive director for environmental stewardship for Kaiser Permanente and Amit Kumar Sinha, managing director and CEO of Mahindra Lifespaces, are also on the list. Banga, 64, who began his five-year term as World Bank Group president in June, is ushering in a new mission for the institution: eradicating poverty while fighting climate change, according to Time. "If you can't breathe and you



can't drink clean water, there's very little point in eradicating poverty," he said at the 2023 World Bank Group-IMF Annual Meetings in Morocco. India is the world's most populous country, and it is likely to

be the most vital to transition to sustainable transportation. Some 70 per cent of the vehicles on India's roads are mopeds and scooters, and Aggarwal, 38, is leading the path to electrifying them, the magazine said. This

year, Ola launched its most affordable electric scooter ever, priced at INR 79,999 (about USD 960). Rajiv Shah's The Rockefeller Foundation works to ensure that all initiatives and investment strategies are focused through a climate lens. This year, the Rockefeller Foundation partnered with the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet to launch the Coal to Clean Credit Initiative. The aim is to develop a new carbon finance standard to spur a just transition away from coal-fired power plants to renewable energy in emerging economies, the magazine said. "Wealthy countries not only need to fulfil the climate commitments they made to lower-income countries but also go

beyond those commitments. In 2009, high-income countries pledged to deliver USD 100 billion per year by 2020 to developing countries for mitigation and adaptation measures. They fell USD 16.7 billion short of that pledge in 2020 alone," Rajiv Shah, 50, said. Aiyer's Boston Common Asset Management is a woman-led, employee-owned sustainable investment firm with nearly USD 5 billion in assets under management. The firm prioritises investment in climate change mitigation and uses shareholder engagement to push portfolio companies toward more sustainable business practices. "I hope the efforts to address and reverse biodiversity loss and invest in earth renewal gain trac-

tion. Ecosystems across the world are on the brink of collapse and millions of plant and animal species are at risk, including humans," she said. Mahindra Lifespaces, the real estate and infrastructure development arm of Indian conglomerate company Mahindra Group. Incomes are projected to rise, and India could see 400 million new urban dwellers by 2050, a shift that will require massive growth in new building stock. This will increase pressure to develop sustainably-a challenge Amit Kumar Sinha is rising to meet. Since 2013, Mahindra Lifespaces says it has had an entirely green portfolio, prioritizing water efficiency, passive energy design, renewables, and more, Time said.

AT 86, SUBRAMANIAM WINS 4 GOLD

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

KSubramaniam has defied 86 years of age to lap up four gold medals at the Asian Masters Athletics Meet in the Philippines. "In the event held last week, Subramaniam, better known as Subbu in the athletics fraternity, got the top podium spot in long jump, triple jump, high jump and javelin throw in the 85-plus category. "Subbu's life has been about athletics and he developed love for the sport as a teenager. He hails from Pollachi, a small town in Tamil Nadu. "Now well into his 80s, Subbu still takes athletics seriously. He trained extensively before travelling to the Philippines for the Asian Masters. Another testa-



ment of his undying passion was that he travelled for the competition all by himself. "Tamil Nadu Sports Minister Udhyanidhi Stalin duly acknowledged Subbu's feat in a post on social media earlier this week and the octogenarian is likely to be felicitated by the state government soon. "My hearty congratulations to Chennai's K Subramaniam (86) for clinching FOUR Gold medals in the 22nd Asian Masters Athletics meet held at Tarlac, Philippines. "The octogenarian has proved that age is no deterrent to achieving big in sports. The Government of Tamil Nadu takes pride in the senior athlete's victory. Let his stellar performance continue in future tournaments," wrote Stalin on X.



Fair start for Aditi

AP ■ NAPLES (FLORIDA)

Three birdies in a five-hole run in the middle of the round enabled India's Aditi Ashok to get to a start of 2-under 70 in the season-ending CME Group Tour Championship on the LPGA. "Aditi, who had a fine run in the first half of the season, before tapering off somewhat is tied 32nd after the first round. "She is seven shots behind the first round leader, Nasa Hataoka, a six-time LPGA Tour, and Ruoning Yin, a two-time winner in 2023. The two leaders carded 63 each. "Rain measuring more than four inches in Naples a day ahead of the first round saw softer fairways and shortened holes at Tiburón Golf Club. "The 63s from Hataoka and Yin was just one birdie away from tying the 18-hole scoring record of 62 set by Lydia Ko in 2016. "Aditi, who came close to her first win on the LPGA at the JM Eagle Championships earlier this year, had five birdies against three bogeys. "Despite bogeys on the second and the fourth, Aditi worked her way up with five birdies to be 3-under after 17 before dropping a shot on 18th.

"Her play was steady enough as she found 12 of the 14 fairways and 14 of the 18 greens in regulation and needed 29 putts with some putts stopping short. "Hataoka was the first to claim her spot at the top after going bogey-free with nine birdies. The Japanese golfer only needed one hole before stepping on the gas with three-straight birdies from the second. "Two more birdies on Nos. 6 and 8 set her up at 5-under at the turn. She started off the back nine holes with back-to-back and added more on 13 and 17 to take the lead. "Yin started with early birdies on second and third before firing off three in a row to end her front nine on holes from the sixth. "At 5-under heading into the back, Yin added another birdie on the 12th and then there were back-to-back birdies on 14 and 15 and a final one on 17 to tie Hataoka atop the rest of the field. "Three-time Tour winner Minjee Lee sunk a 10-foot birdie putt on No. 18 to put her into solo third at 64 and ahead of Anna Nordqvist (65). "Five players round out the top five, with Georgia Hall, Alison Lee, Hye-Jin Choi, Yu Liu and Patty Tavatanakit all shooting 6-under 66s.

Solid start for Avani

AP ■ PALMA (SPAIN)

Amateur Avani Prashanth and Diksha Dagar of India got off to good starts at the Mallorca Ladies Golf Open, the penultimate event of the 2023 Ladies European Tour, occupying the tied fifth and 12 spots respectively. "Saying that her goal this week is to win and avoid going to the Final Stage of the Qualifying School for which she has already made the grade, Avani said, "The main goal for this week is to win and if I play my best golf then I think I can get that done."



double bogey on the ninth for a round with four other birdies for 1-under 71 at tied 12th place. "Diksha bogeyed first and double bogeyed ninth. She got her birdies on fifth, seventh, 12th and 17th. "Diksha, currently second on the LET's Race to Costa del Sol which is the LET's Order of Merit, with a decent finish could move to the top of the standings with one more event to go. No Indian golfer has won the LET's Order of Merit and it could a major step for Indian golf. "Leader Napoleaoava, 27, who won the 2023 Amundi German Masters, holds a two-stroke lead after an exciting first day when the scores and conditions were ideal for scoring. The Czech player made seven birdies in an opening round of six-under-par 66 to show the way at Golf Son Muntaner. "Anne-Lise Caudal of France, Anne van Dam from the Netherlands and local star Nuria Iruroz of Spain are in a share of second place on four-under-par, with amateur Avani and Alexandra Forsterling of Germany a stroke further back in a share of fifth position.

Former girlfriend drops lawsuits against Woods

AP ■ FORT LAUDERDALE

Tiger Woods' ex-girlfriend has dropped her lawsuits against the golf superstar and the trust that owns his Florida mansion, saying she never accused him of sexual harassment even though her attorney has made that claim. "The attorney for Erica Herman filed a one-paragraph notice in state court last week saying she was voluntarily dismissing her \$30 million lawsuit against the trust "with prejudice," meaning the claim cannot be reasserted later. She had claimed that Woods promised she could live at the 30,000-square-foot (2,800-square-meter) beachfront mansion until 2026 but kicked her out unexpectedly last year. "In dismissing this action, Erica Herman states that she was

never a victim of sexual harassment or sexual abuse at the hands of Tiger Woods or any of his agents and it is her position that she has never asserted such a claim," wrote attorney Benjamin Hodas, who claimed on multiple occasions that Woods had sexually harassed his client. "A separate lawsuit against Woods was rejected by a judge in May, and court records show an appeal of that decision was dropped this week. Nothing in court documents indicates a settlement was reached on either lawsuit, though that could have been done privately. "Hodas did not return a call and email seeking comment Thursday. Woods' attorney, JB Murray, declined to comment. "Herman was Woods' girlfriend from 2015 until October 2022, moving into his \$54 million

mansion north of Palm Beach in 2016. She managed his Palm Beach County restaurant before and during the first years of their romantic relationship, and she signed a nondisclosure agreement in 2017 that barred her from discussing their relationship publicly. It also required her to take any legal disagreements with Woods to private arbitration and not court. "Hodas claimed in a May court hearing that Herman didn't remember signing the document but that if she did it was under duress, having been told she would be fired from the restaurant if she didn't. "Hodas argued the nondisclosure agreement was unenforceable under a new federal law that says such contracts can be voided when sexual abuse or sexual harassment occurred. He contended that Woods' alleged

threat to fire her was harassment. "A boss imposing different work conditions on his employee because of their sexual relationship is sexual harassment," Hodas wrote in a May filing. "Circuit Judge Elizabeth Metzger rejected Herman's attempt to quash the nondisclosure agreement later in May, calling her allegations "vague and threadbare." "Herman has had the opportunity (to) provide factual specificity for any claim relating to sexual assault or sexual harassment, however, she has not done so," Metzger wrote. "Forbes Magazine estimates Woods' net worth at USD 1.1 billion. In 2017, Woods had put the mansion into the Jupiter Island Irrevocable Homestead Trust, an entity he created that has only himself and his two children as beneficiaries.

Nadal will reveal his comeback plans soon

AP ■ MADRID

Rafael Nadal is sure he'll be returning to competition after missing nearly all of 2023 with a hip injury that required surgery. And now he says he'll be revealing his comeback plans soon. "Nadal wrote Thursday on social media: "I confirmed yesterday I'll be back" and punctuated that message with a smiling emoji. "Stay tuned," he continued in the Instagram post, which included a photograph of him about to hit a backhand. He said that in the coming days he will "decide and announce with my team when and where" everyone can expect to see him in action. "Next season begins in late December, with the year's first major tournament, the Australian Open, scheduled to

begin main-draw matches on January 14. "For the world of tennis, no doubt that it's amazing news that he'll be back," Novak Djokovic said at the ATP Finals in Turin, Italy. "Nadal, whose 22 Grand Slam singles titles rank second to Djokovic's 24 for the most among men, has not played on tour since last January, when he hurt his hip flexor during a loss to Mackenzie McDonald in the second round of the Australian Open. "In May, a little more than a week before the start of his beloved French Open, Nadal announced that he would miss the tournament he's won a record 14 times and wasn't exactly sure when he might return to play. "He said then he hoped to compete in 2024, which he expected to be his final season.



"You never know how things will turn out," Nadal said at a news conference at the time, "but my intention is that next year will be my last year." "He wound up having arthro-

scopic surgery in June in Barcelona. "Dating to the end of 2022, the 37-year-old Spanish left-hander has lost seven of his past nine matches, including going

1-3 this season. "With Roger Federer, who won 20 majors, having announced his retirement in 2022, and Nadal missing much of this year, Djokovic

was the only member of the so-called Big Three of men's tennis who was active throughout 2023 - and the 36-year-old from Serbia was dominant, particularly at the Grand Slam tournaments. He won the Australian Open, French Open and US Open and reached the final at Wimbledon. "I think it would be nice for the sport to have at least one more match between Nadal and me. That's the biggest rivalry in terms of the amount of matches played that this sport ever had. Hopefully that can happen," Djokovic said. "He's a big warrior. He's somebody that really never gives up. With all the injuries that he had, keeps going. That's definitely something that you have to respect and admire about him and his spirit.

Serena, Ruby to be inducted into National Women's Hall of Fame

AP ■ NEW YORK

Serena Williams and Ruby Bridges will be inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame next year, the hall has announced, adding the tennis great and civil rights icon to a previously announced list of women to be honoured during Women's History Month in March. "The 2024 inductee class has broken barriers, challenged the status quo, and left an impact on history," the Hall of Fame said in its announcement on Thursday. "Eight other honourees were announced in the spring. Williams and Bridges became available after the date and location of the ceremony were changed, a spokesman said. "Williams, 42, is a 23-time Grand Slam tennis champion who holds the record for the longest player ranked No. 1. She retired from tennis last year and earlier this month became the first athlete to win the Fashion Icon award from the Council of Fashion Designers of America. "Bridges, 69, was a 6-year-old first-grader when she became one of the first Black students at racially segregated schools in New Orleans in 1960. In 1963,



painter Norman Rockwell recreated the scene in the painting, "The Problem We All Live With." "The Ruby Bridges Foundation she established 24 years ago promotes tolerance and change through education. "Neither Williams nor Bridges could immediately be reached for comment. "Others in the class include Peggy McIntosh, 88, an activist known for her explorations of privilege; Kimberlé Crenshaw, 63, who helped develop the academic concept of critical race theory, the idea that racism is systemic in the nation's institutions, and Judith

Plaskow, 76, regarded as the first Jewish feminist theologian for calling out an absence of female perspectives in Jewish history. "Also to be inducted are Loretta Ross, 69, founder of the National Centre for Human Rights Education in Atlanta, and Allucquère Rosanne "Sandy" Stone, a transgender woman born in 1936 and considered a founder of the academic discipline of transgender studies. "Three women will be inducted posthumously: Dr. Patricia Bath (1942-2019), an early pioneer of laser cataract

surgery and the first Black woman physician to receive a medical patent; Dr. Anna Wessels Williams (1863-1954), who isolated a strain of diphtheria that helped in its treatment; and Elouise Pepion Cobell, known as "Yellow Bird Woman" (1945-2011), who started the first bank established by a tribe on a reservation in Browning, Montana. "For the first time, the induction ceremony will be broadcast nationally in prime time from New York City, according to the Hall of Fame. The previous 30 ceremonies have taken place at venues around Seneca Falls, the upstate New York site of the first Women's Rights Convention, where the National Women's Hall of Fame is located. "The 2024 class of inductees are scientists, activists, performers, and athletes who are the changemakers of today and inspiration for the women of tomorrow," Jennifer Gabriel, the Hall of Fame's chief executive, said in a statement. "Their dedication, drive, and talent got them here, and we're thrilled to honor them on the national stage." "The public nominates women to be considered for the Hall of Fame.

Hungary qualifies for Euro 2024

AP ■ MADRID

Hungary qualified for its third straight European Championship after an own-goal in stoppage time in a game marred by violent clashes outside an empty stadium in Bulgaria. "Bulgarian fans on Thursday threw makeshift bombs, stones and plastic bottles at the police, which responded with a water cannon after trash cans were set on fire in the capital of Sofia. Local media reported several protesters were injured. "Thousands of Bulgarian supporters were protesting the management of the Bulgarian soccer federation, which they blame for the national team's poor results. Fans were made more upset with the decision to play the match against Hungary in an empty stadium. "The Bulgarian national team hasn't qualified for a major tournament in nearly two decades. It was coming off humiliating losses to Albania in a friendly and to Lithuania in qualifying, prompting fans to call for a nationwide protest and demand for the resignation of officials. "Bulgaria looked set to earn its first qualifying victory until defender Alex Petkov put the ball in his own net seven



minutes into added time in the 2-2 draw. The point gave Hungary what it needed to secure its spot at Euro 2024 in Germany. "Martin Adam put Hungary ahead in the 10th minute before the hosts rallied with goals by Spas Delev in the 24th and Kiril Despodov off a penalty kick in the 79th. "Both teams finished the match with 10 men after Bulgaria's Valentin Antov was sent off with a second yellow card in the 37th and Hungary's Milos Kerkez saw his second yellow in the 57th.

"The result left Hungary two points ahead of Serbia after seven matches in Group G. Third-place Montenegro had eight points ahead of its home game against Lithuania later Thursday. Serbia will also secure its spot in next year's tournament if Montenegro fails to beat already-eliminated Lithuania. "Last-place Bulgaria stayed with two points. "Led by Italian coach Marco Rossi, Hungary had already missed a chance to qualify in the previous match at Lithuania, when it drew 2-2

after going two goals down. "Already sure of its spot at Euro 2024, Spain defeated Cyprus 3-1 to remain in first place in Group A. "Lamine Yamal, Mikel Oyarzabal and Joselu each scored first-half goals to give Spain a two-point lead over second-place Scotland, which drew 2-2 at Georgia. "Scotland also had already qualified. It picked up the draw at Georgia with a goal from substitute Lawrence Shankland three minutes into second-half stoppage time. "Scott McTominay scored the other Scotland goal in the 49th. Khvicha Kvaratskhelia put the hosts on the board in the 15th and 57th minutes. "Georgia stayed in fourth place, two points behind Norway. "Austria opened a two-point lead over Belgium in Group F by beating last-place Estonia 2-0. Konrad Laimer and Philipp Lienhart scored first-half goals for the Austrians, who have played a game more than Belgium. "Both Belgium and Austria had already qualified for Euro 2024. "Third-place Sweden lost 3-0 at fourth-place Azerbaijan, which played a man down from the 57th minute because of a straight red card to Bahlul Mustafazade.

NO NEED TO DO ANYTHING DIFFERENT IN FINAL: RAVI



PTI ■ CHENNAI

India will be overwhelming favourites in the upcoming World Cup final against Australia, the team's former head coach Ravi Shastri said on Friday while urging the hosts to stick to their game plans. On the sidelines of an event in the city, Shastri spoke on India's approach in the title clash saying they do not need to do anything different. "I think they will be relaxed. They are playing at home, and it's a very experienced side. And they don't need to do anything different. "The way they have played.... It will be around the way they had left in the last game. They should be holding that cup very soon.

"India will win the World Cup. They will start as favourites in the final. They have played outstandingly well," Shastri said. Despite having beaten Australia in the league stage, India will be under pressure against the five-time world champions, who have a great record in ICC finals. But Shastri believes that if the Men in Blue are able to stay calm and soak in the pressure, then they can emerge triumphant. "They just need to be composed and calm, handling and soaking in the pressure. You (India) don't want to be over-excited just because it's a final. "You (India) know what your roles are, and the good thing is this team doesn't depend on one or two players. There are



eight or nine players performing game after game, so that's a brilliant sign," he said. The former India all-rounder also praised in-form seamer Mohammed Shami for his outstanding display in the tournament in which he leads the

bowling chart with 23 wickets, including picking seven wickets in the semifinal against New Zealand in Mumbai. He believes Shami will have a significant role to play in the final in Ahmedabad on Sunday. "The very first ball, if he (Shami) is sprinting in, (I wish) good luck to the batters. The seam presentation, the way the ball lands.... What he has done in this World Cup is to consistently hit the right lengths," he said. "Even in Mumbai, he was troubling the batsmen with his skills. Not many got the ball to move around, but he got to do it and got the outside edges. "I say this is the best Indian bowling attack. When you look at the variety and skill set, it's amazing."

Shami spells sorcery

ASAD ■ NEW DELHI

As we approach the finale of the Cricket World Cup at the Narendra Modi stadium in Ahmedabad on Sunday, India's awe-inspiring performance has captivated audiences, leaving them marveling at the team's cricketing prowess. If batting legend Virat Kohli's heroics in surpassing his idol Sachin Tendulkar's 49 centuries in ODIs captured the spotlight, Mohammed Shami's bowling performance, instrumental in bringing the World Cup trophy within India's reach, garnered praise from many quarters. Shami's golden arm crafted a spellbinding spectacle at the Wankhede Stadium semifinal on Wednesday helping India vanquish New Zealand, securing a resounding 70-run win. In a mesmerising display, he orchestrated the single-handed demolition of New Zealand, claiming 7 wickets for a mere 57 runs, leaving the cricketing world in awe of his exceptional fast bowling abilities. Ashish Nehra's benchmark, set in 2003 with six wickets against England in World Cup by any Indian, was finally eclipsed by Shami's performance. Shami's golden arm, symbolising mastery and finesse, has catapulted him into the realm of cricketing sorcery. Every wicket he claims becomes a captivating chapter in the magical saga of the sport. This feat is particularly noteworthy at a time when cricket pundits have been expressing concerns about rules favouring batsmen, placing bowlers at a disadvantage. Many lethal pace bowlers have found themselves conceding substantial runs and appearing as mere shadows of their former selves. Shaheen Afridi, Haris Rauf, Mitchell Starc and



Trent Boult find themselves among the handful who have borne the brunt of batters. Yet, the Indian fast bowling duo of Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj has showcased exceptional abilities, with the indomitable pacer Shami leading the charge from the forefront. Mohammed Badaruddin, Shami's childhood coach, said, "You watch any of his dismissals, he does not bowl all that wobble seam deliveries or he does not hit the pitch hard... His seam is always up and has a perfect release. He can skid the balls off the surface at a good pace from the same slot — tough for batters to pick which one will come in or go out. These are natural abilities and he is willing to work hours on his skills — ability and hard work is certain to bring success." In the semi-final, with New Zealand appearing comfortable pursuing the challenging 398-run target set by India,

Kane Williamson and Daryl Mitchell stood firm at the crease, posing a formidable threat. It was a turning point in the game as India encountered adversity, with bowlers grappling to rein in the flamboyant batters. The blitzkrieg by the opposition, led by Williamson and Mitchell, who put together a partnership of 181 runs for the third wicket, instilled a sense of unease among Indian fans, fostering the fear that the match might be slipping from India's control. The Black Caps needed 179 more off 18 overs, a task that, in contemporary cricket, is not deemed impossible. It was precisely at this crucial moment of the game, in the 33rd over, that Shami entered the scene, decisively altering the course of the match in favour of India. His impactful bowling dismantled the New Zealanders' formidable batting order, bringing it down like a house of cards, starting with the

dismissals of Williamson and Tom Latham in one over. Shami's ability to take wickets with seemingly magical precision has added an ethereal quality to the art of fast bowling. Initially an unexpected contender in the original playing 12, Shami seized the opportunity following Hardik Pandya's injury and has been delivering jaw-dropping performances with unwavering intensity ever since his debut match. Shami's journey has been nothing short of a sensational surge, igniting the cricketing arena with his remarkable skills and determination. Shami has said there is nothing extraordinary in his bowling, adding he just focuses on stump-to-stump length and putting the delivery in "a zone" to get wickets. Shami, despite sitting out four games, will make his way to Ahmedabad for the final against Australia as the top wicket-taker in the World Cup, with tally of 23 wickets in six matches. "Shami is a special bowler, and he is bowling really well. It was tough to get him into the team because of team combination. But he was in a great mind-space even when he was not playing," said India's batting coach Vikram Rathour. Since Shami came into the side, he took 5/54 against New Zealand in Dharamshala, 4/22 against England in Lucknow, 5/18 against Sri Lanka in Mumbai, 2/18 against South African in Kolkata and 7/57 in the semi-final against the Kiwis in Mumbai. With the World Cup within the grasp of the Men in Blue, fans eagerly await seeing Shami once again weave his spellbinding magic with the ball against the formidable Australian side, steering India towards the pinnacle of cricketing glory.

No real weaknesses in Indian team: Hazlewood

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Bracing up for the World Cup final against India, a team he describes as one without "any real weaknesses", Australian pacer Josh Hazlewood says he saw a "few cracks" while rattling their top-order in their tournament opener. Australia, who lost that game in Chennai by six wickets after reducing India to 3/2 in the second over, set up a big-ticket title showdown against the formidable hosts with a nervy three-wicket win over South Africa here on Thursday. In the tournament build-up, the two teams were engaged in a three-match ODI series with India winning 2-1. "We got one in the series, lost that 2-1, but no, we've played them a lot of times. We know them inside out, same with them. "They're a quality team, they've been on a march the whole tournament, no real weaknesses in their team, so, yeah, look forward to playing them on Sunday," Hazlewood said of India after the win over South Africa. The pacer added, "I guess we saw a few cracks when we played them in Chennai chasing a small target, we were lucky enough to get a couple early." India bowled out Australia for



199 in their first game in the showpiece. It will be a repeat of the 2003 World Cup final which a batting-heavy Australia won in a lopsided contest. Hazlewood, who rocked the South African batting along with fellow new ball bowler Mitchell Starc, hoped they would recreate their magic against India in the final in Ahmedabad on Sunday. Hazlewood and Starc got plenty of early movement and bounce with the new ball to leave South Africa reeling for 24/4 after the first 13 overs, setting the tone for their win. "I think there was enough there on the wicket. It looked like every time they went to play a shot, we got a wicket.

They sort of had to knuckle back down and try and see it out," Hazlewood told reporters. "Yeah, Starc and I have bowled together for a long time now, we know each other's games, and we both play well on the same night, which is pleasing. "Hopefully, we can do that on Sunday as well, but... Yeah, there's a little bit in the wicket which we probably haven't had, in the previous games, or in a couple here and there, but it was nice to get the ball on," he added. Hazlewood credited Starc for keeping it simple against South Africa. The left-arm quick returned with brilliant figures of 10-1-34-3, while Hazlewood bagged 2/12 from his eight overs with three maidens. "You don't try and chase it too much either. You know there's enough there, you've just got to put the ball in the right area, but easier said than undone sometimes. "Starc keeping it simple... Don't go over-attacking. We know that they've sort of got six front-line batters, and Marco's (Jansen) had a great, great tournament at seven, so if we can make early in-roads, we know they're set up for the back-end as well. "So early wickets just put them on the back foot, and we're lucky enough to do that tonight (Thursday)," he said.

KL the Keeper of India's fortunes

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

There was an Instagram reel by a social media influencer that went viral last year, when the interviewee was asked to decipher an incomplete footage of a DRS call. Without having a look, he says "out hai sir" and then asks the interviewer to shift the focus of the photo and there stood Mahendra Singh Dhoni behind, taking another immaculate call in what has come to be known as the 'Dhoni' Review System (DRS). But in this World Cup, it won't be a misnomer if KL Rahul gets the DRS moniker in his name and we call it the 'Decision 'Rahul' System'. At least on five occasions over the course of the World Cup, the Indian wicket-keeper prevented an excited bowler or his skip-

per from raising a "T" for the umpire. A lot of moving parts have come together in the tournament and one of the important cogs in the wheel is Rahul, whose 386 runs at near 99 strike-rate and 77 average has slipped under the radar because of Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Mohammed Shami's brilliance but he has been that calming influence which is a pre-requisite of every team. Magnificent when in full flow and completely lousy other times, a picture of calm when in form but ready to play a dishevelled stroke now and then, Rahul has been an enigma in Indian cricket for close to a decade. For someone with Test centuries in Sydney, Lord's and Centurion, a man of his calibre could be termed an "under-achiever" as



he is no less compared to a Rohit or Kohli, when it comes to the talent quotient. But between spells of brilliance, there has been those lulls which, also by his own admission, let self doubts creep in but in this World Cup, if anyone has been a symbol of assurance, it is Rahul, the keeper.

regular keeper till a few years back, this effort has been phenomenal. What has also stood out is Rahul's judgement of DRS calls. The reason for that is his perfect footwork behind the stumps as he has a perfect idea of where the ball finishes, says former India keeper Deep Dasgupta. "DRS is not just a wicketkeeper's call only. The wicketkeeper can neither gauge the impact nor the height. The impact (whenever pitched within stumps) is generally a bowler's call or the skipper standing at mid-on or mid-off. "The guy stationed adjacent to square leg umpire needs to check the height while the keeper with his movement would get an idea where the ball finishes," Dasgupta explained the whole process.

We want to take on the best: Starc

PTI ■ KOLKATA

We want to take on the best," Mitchell Starc asserted after five-time champions Australia set up a mouth-watering World Cup summit showdown with tournament hosts India. Heading into the final with a perfect 10 wins, India have been the team to beat in the World Cup, and Australia are relishing the challenge of

crossing swords with the formidable home side. Australia on Thursday prevailed over South Africa by three wickets in a see-saw contest at Eden Gardens. "We want to take on the best," Starc said at the post-match media interaction. "They've been the best in the tournament so far and we both find ourselves in the finals. So that's what World Cups are about. It's why we

play the game. "We certainly come up against a team that have obviously led from the front through the tournament and they're undefeated," Starc said. Both teams had crossed swords in their opening fixture of the tournament in what turned out be a one-sided affair with India winning by six wickets after bowling them out for a paltry 199 in Chennai.

It'll be fitting for India to win WC, says SA coach

PTI ■ KOLKATA

A disappointed South Africa coach Rob Walter will not watch the World Cup final after his team once again failed to make the cut, but said it would be "fitting" for the tournament's "best" team, India to win the coveted trophy on Sunday. India have been invincible in the ongoing showpiece, storming into the World Cup final on the back of 10 consecutive wins. The hosts will take on record five-time champions Australia in the summit clash in Ahmedabad. "To be honest, there's one per cent chance I'll be watching (final). And to be even more brutally honest, I actually don't care," Walter said after South Africa's bitter three-wicket loss to Australia in the second semifinal here on Thursday. Walter, however, was quick to add that it would be fitting for India to lift the trophy at home. "But obviously, because of the



World Cup being in India, it's always great for the home nation to win the World Cup," he said. "I've got a lot of friends in the Australian change room, so I probably have a soft spot for a couple of them, especially the coach. "But just seeing the support when we last played here against India and the way the fans rallied around the team, and the great hope and inspiration of winning a World Cup at home, I think it would only be fitting for India to win," Walter said.

Hotel room tariff in Ahmedabad, airfares shoot up ahead of final

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Hotel room tariff in Gujarat's Ahmedabad and airfares to the city have skyrocketed in view of the soaring demand from people who want to witness the cricket World Cup final match between India and Australia to be played at the Narendra Modi Stadium here on the coming Sunday. As the fever for the world cup final is reaching its peak, hotel room tariffs for the night of the

match have gone up as high as Rs 2 lakh in top five-star hotels in the city, while other hotels have also increased their rates by five to seven times. "There is enthusiasm for the world cup final not only in India, but people from abroad including places like Dubai, Australia and South Africa want to come to watch the match," President of Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Association of Gujarat Narendra Somani said. "There are 5,000 rooms in three

stars and five star hotels in Ahmedabad, while the number for entire Gujarat is 10,000. The capacity of the Narendra Modi Stadium is over 1.20 lakh people and we expect that 30,000 to 40,000 people will come from outside to watch the match," he said. As the demand for hotel rooms is high, their rates are also increasing, he said, adding that the rooms which were available at nominal rates earlier have touched anywhere between Rs 50,000 and Rs 1.25 lakh.



"People tend to book the flight tickets first before booking