OPINION 6

TOMORROW'S WORLD

BELONGS TO CHILDREN

US LAWMAKERS FOR WITHHOLDING | FLURRY OF IPOS; 5 FIRMS GEAR UP

ASSISTANCE TO PAKISTAN TO RAISE ₹7,300 CR NEXT WEEK

WORLD 9

MONEY 10

DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

> Late City Vol.33 Issue 320 *Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

ATP FINALS: DJOKOVIC CHASING SEVENTH TITLE 11 SPORT

NEW DELHI, MONDAY NOVEMBER 20, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

HOPE LOSES India bows out of World Cup again Versus Australia

SWARN KUMAR ANAND NEW DELHI

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

From the initial overs, the formidable Australian bowling trio of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazelwood, and Pat Cummins orchestrated a ruthless collapse in the Indian batting lineup. Despite the elegance displayed by opener Rohit Sharma, whose boundaries propelled the run rate to an impressive 8 in the first 10 overs, the Indian innings spiraled into despair.

The departure of opener Shubman Gill, courtesy of a questionable shot selection, set the stage for a tumultuous middle-order performance. Shreyas Iver succumbed to the

relentless aggression of the Australian attack, leaving the Indian batting line in disarray. Although Virat Kohli contributed with the bat, his innings lacked the dependability associated with the cricketing maestro. cricketing maestro. KL Rahul adopted a cautious

approach, facing a 107 balls to score just 67. The fragility of India's batting, despite intermittent brilliance, was apparent on the scoreboard.

As India's innings concluded at 240, a palpable sense of despondency hung in the air. The target, while not insurmountable, posed a formidable challenge for India to defend against the powerhouse Australian batting lineup. It felt as if India had conceded the match, with Australian players visibly exuding confidence as they walked onto the field to chase down the total.

Australia's innings commenced with a blistering start, notching up 23 runs within the first two overs. However, the Indian bowlers displayed resilience. Mohammed Shami provided a breakthrough, dismissing David Warner in the second over, injecting a glimmer of hope into the Indian camp.



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

Jasprit Bumrah followed suit by dismissing Mitchell Marsh in the fifth over and Steven Smith in the seventh over, a pivotal moment that seemed poised to moment that seemed poised to turn the tide in India's favour. However, despite the early breakthroughs by the Indians, the Australians dominated the Indian bowling lineup until the very end of the match, leaving the Indian fielding unit lacking in its usual finesse and the hopes of Indian supporters hanging by a thread.

Despite dramatic fluctuations in fortune during the first 15 overs of its batting, Australia showcased their mettle in the tense battle. The hopes of a vast Indian audience were eventually crushed as Australia, with unwavering resilience and strategic brilliance, secured victory

The final match had held deeper significance for Indian fans beyond the immediate battle on the field. It was a chance for redemption, an opportunity to avenge the heartbreak of the 2003 World Cup final loss to Australia. The wounds of that defeat had lingered for two decades, and as Team India seemed to capitulate to the

moment of despair. At the onset of the match, the vibrant sea of blue, embodying the ardent Indian supporters, painted a tapestry of sheer euphoria. Flags waved tri-umphantly, chants reverberat-ed through the air, and the sta-

of redemption turned into a

dium echoed with a celebration that transcended geographical boundaries. Each fallen wicket was met with a thunderous roar, shaking the very foundations of the arena, while every run scored by Australia elicit-ed a polite applause, thinly veil-ing an undercurrent of unwavering confidence. However, the initial wave of euphoria soon proved to be misplaced as Travis Head (137 runs in 120 balls), backed by Marnus Labuschagne, showcased exceptional prowess against the Indian bowling attack, steering his team to a resound-

ing victory.

In the end, the hopes of the nation were shattered, and the dream of rewriting history came crashing down. The Australian juggernaut rolled on, leaving Indian cricket with a bitter taste of defeat in a match that will be etched in the resilient Aussies, the moment annals of cricketing heartbreak



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

Free Israelis to end war: US McGurk said Biden had dis- to the release of four of the cap-

AGENCIES WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden's main adviser on the Middle East said there would be a "significant pause" in the Israel-Hamas war if hostages held by militants in Gaza are freed Hamas terrorists seized about when they surged across Gaza's militarised border into southern Israel to kill around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, according

to Israeli officials. In response, Israel is carrying out a relentless bombardment and ground offensive of targets in the Gaza Strip which has so far killed 12,300 people, according to the Palestinian territory's

Hamas government. "The surge in humanitarian relief, the surge in fuel, the pause... will come when hostages are released," Brett McGurk told a security confer-

ence in Bahrain. Release of a large number of hostages would result in "a significant pause... and a massive surge of humanitarian relief," he cussed the issue on Friday evening with the ruler of the Gulf nation of Qatar, which is leading mediation efforts toward a ceasefire and release of the captives.

The White House said Biden and Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim oin Hamad Al-Thani discussed "the urgent need for all hostages held by Hamas to be released without further delay".

Two days earlier Biden had said he was "mildly hopeful" of reaching a deal to free the hostages, believed to include about 10 US citizens.

French President Emmanuel Macron also discussed the hostages with al-Thani and Egyptian leader Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on Saturday, his office said. Macron said immediately freeing the captives, of whom eight are French, was "an absolute priority for France".

The three leaders also talked about strengthening their coordination to deliver aid to civilians in Gaza, Macron's office

So far efforts by Qatar have led

tives. A fifth hostage, a soldier, was rescued in an Israeli oper-

had recovered the bodies of two women hostages in Gaza. McGurk said on Saturday that the situation in the besieged Palestinian territory

Israel's Army said this week it

rific" and "intolerable". Israel has refused to heed calls for a ceasefire before all the hostages are released.

Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, who also attended the Bahrain conference, said it was "unacceptable" to link humanitarian pauses to release

of hostages of nostages.

Meanwhile EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell reflected on the future of Gaza, saying, 'Hamas cannot be in control of Gaza anymore".

The Palestinian Authority, based in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah, "told me they are ready and willing to take this responsibility" with the help of the international community, said Borrell

He added that Arab countries

should also play a role in any future configuration, both political and economic, for Gaza. Meanwhile, Israel said Yemen's Houthi rebels seized an Israelilinked cargo ship in a crucial Red Sea shipping route on Sunday, raising fears that regional tensions heightened over the out on a new maritime front.

Iran-backed rebel movement in Yemen that threatened earlier on Sunday to target Israelilinked vessels in the Red Sea. Last month, Houthi rebels were suspected of sending missiles and drones over the crucial shipping lane of the sea.

There was no immediate com-

ment from the Houthis, an

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said 25 crew members of various nationalities, including Bulgarians, Filipinos, Mexicans and Ukrainians but no Israelis, had been on board the hijacked Bahamas-flagged ship.

Netanyahu's office condemned the seizure of the Galaxy Leader, a vehicle carrier, as an "Iranian act of terror".

Curbs on vehicles lifted as Delhi NCR air improves

STAFF REPORTER ■

NEW DELHI

 $T^{\text{he restrictions imposed to}}_{\text{combat air pollution, as}}$ part of Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP-4), have been lifted in the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR).

This decision comes in response to a noticeable improvement in air quality conditions in the region.

The measures outlined in GRAP-4, such as prohibiting the entry of environmentally harmful vehicles from other states, requiring 50 per cent of employees to work from home, and suspending in-person classes for primary school students, were implemented on November 5.

The Centre removed stringent curbs, including a ban on construction work related to linear projects and the entry of vehicles, including polluting trucks into Delhi, in view of the dip in air pollution levels due to favourable wind speed and direction.

These measures constitute the final stage — Stage IV — of the Centre's air pollution control plan called the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP).

The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas (CAQM), a statutory body responsible for formulating strategies to combat pollution in the region, asked Delhi and NCR states to revoke all emergency measures, under which only CNG, electric and BS VI-compliant vehicles from other states are allowed to enter Delhi, with exemptions granted to those involved in essential services. All medium and heavy goods vehicles not engaged in essential services were also banned in the capital under Stage IV

of GRAP, according to the latest CAQM order. The pollution control body stages I, II and III of GRAP, including a ban on non-essential construction work, mining, stone crushers and diesel generators will continue.

The air quality forecasts by the India Meteorological Department/Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology do not indicate any steep degradation in the overall air quality of Delhi-NCR in the coming days, the CAQM said.

Recent findings from a joint project by the Delhi Government and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur found that vehicular emissions accounted for about 45 per cent of the capital's air pollution on Friday. This reduced to 33 per cent on Saturday.

Secondary inorganic aerosols particles such as sulfate and nitrate that are formed in the atmosphere due to the interaction of gases and particulate pollutants from sources like power plants, refineries and said all other curbs under vehicles — are the second



major contributor to Delhi's

in the city over the last few

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

marily wind direction and

Delhi's air quality index stood at 290 at 7 am. The 24-hour average AQI, recorded at 4 pm

average AQI, recorded at 4 pm every day, was 319 on Saturday, 405 on Friday and 419 on Thursday. Neighbouring Ghaziabad (280), Gurugram (234), Greater Noida (236), Noida (268) and Faridabad (327) also recorded "poor" to "very

poor" air quality.
An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', 401 and 450 'severe' and above 450

'severe plus'. Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Sunday said although the air quality in Delhi has shown improvement in the past two days, people should remain vigilant and adhere to pollution control measures. Rai also recalled that the progress made just before Diwali due to rain and favourable meteorological conditions was compromised by people bursting firecrack-

"Despite the recent improvements, it's crucial to stay cautious and follow all air pollu-

tion control measures, the Minister told reporters.

Rai confirmed that other restrictions under stages I, II, and III of GRAP, including a ban on non-essential construction, mining, stone crushers and diesel generators will continue. The ban on BS III petrol and BS IV diesel vehicles will also continue, he

said. "We will reassess these restrictions if the situation continues to improve," the Minister said. The air quality predictions by the India Meteorological Department and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology suggest no significant deterioration in the overall air quality of Delhi-NCR in the upcoming days, according to the CAQM.

Bengal Advocate General resigns

ontroversy has erupted fol-Clowing the resignation of Bengal Advocate General SN Mookherjee who in the wake of putting in his papers blamed the State for not taking his advice and also dropped circuitous suggestions that some people in the Government were asking him to defend the

Mookherjee who is the son of former Union Minister and BJP leader Satyabrata Mookherjee told a Bengali television channel after days of submitting his resignation that though he had nothing against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the State should not stand by the corrupt.

In a loaded statement Mookherjee said, "I have nothing against the Chief Minister personally and will gladly stand for her if need be ... but my point is a State Government cannot defend the corrupt in the court," apparently indicating that he was indeed under pressure to defend the corrupt politicians. With scams exploding one after the other in its face and



a number of senior ministers and legislators already behind the bar the Trinamool Congress government has been fighting charges of corruption with its back against the wall. Mookherjee who was the fourth Advocate General to resign his post during Banerjee's tenure said that he was seldom consulted on important legal matters like creation of the panel of lawyers. "I was seldom consulted before creating the panels of lawyers ... often my advice was ignored ... I thought it was time I resigned from my

Congress reacted to Mookherjee's statements the Opposition was prompt to react saying a senior and hones advocate would never take such issues lying down. CPI(M) central committee member Sujan Chakrabarty said that, Mookherjee had taken a "correct decision because no senior counsel worth one's salt will defend the corrupt people," by his state-

ment it was clear that he was "under pressure from the people in power to defend the corrupt ministers and TMC leaders who are presently in jail." The CPI(M) leader also said that the former AG's statements left no doubt that the Government was pressuring him to defend the corrupt and that massive corruption had indeed taken place in the past

Former Tripura Advocate General and CPI(M) MP Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya said, "as AG is a constitutional post he cannot be pressured to defend the corrupt people ... he may have taken this decision to save the dignity of the profession.

'Railways should provide service to common people'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

 $B_{\text{Mamata Banerjee has once}}^{\text{engal Chief Minister}}$ again attacked the Centre for converting the Indian Railways into a money-spinning rather than a serviceproviding branch of the Government.

At a time when there were allegations that dynamic pricing of train tickets was sucking the passengers dry in the festival season Banerjee said instead of using the Railways to spin money the Government should concentrate on safety and security of passengers.

Saying that dynamic pricing system has often seen the train fares surpassing the air fares she said to was "sad to find that railway passenger fares are steeply increasing and even in Suvidha trains the fares are sometimes higher than airfares!! Where will common people go in case of emergencies?!"



Writing on the X handle Banejee said that, "fare hike must be curbed and reduced! And attention must be given to safety and security issues.' Banerjee who was twice the Railway Minister earlier said how she had during her tenure concentrated both on profit and services but "nowadays the Government is ignoring safety and security and concentrating on making profit only ... The Railways should be used to provide service to the common people who do not afford to take flights."

She had earlier blamed the government for keeping lakhs of posts vacant compromising the passenger security.

Kerala, TN opposition to amendment to tourist permit rules hurting operators

Two neighboring States have come together in their opposition to a statute enacted by the Centre and the victim in this case is a physically challenged entrepreneur. Gireesh from Pathanamthitta in Kerala launched a daily luxury bus service to Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu based on the amendment made by the Government of India in the All India Tourist Permit Rules allowing tourist operators to ply buses from one State to another after paying tax to the Central Government. Bus operators describe the amendment as a welcome move similar to the National Permit allotted to trucks.

But the Kerala Government headed by the CPI-M had other ideas. The comrades felt that the State stands to lose a hefty amount in the form of road tax the buses have to pay. Though theses buses ply in roads built by National Highway Authority of India, the State is of the view that the service provider should pay the Government of Kerala the tax which is due to it.

Robin Motors owned by Gireesh commenced service on Saturday but the motor

authorities and police came together and subverted the schedule under the guise of checking. Though Gireesh had accompanied the bus to sort out issues which are likely to crop up, the State authorities paid scant regards to his pleas.

Though the motor vehicles department seized the bus, the High Court ordered its release and said that the State Government has no authority to do so," said Gireesh. Things took an interesting turn on Saturday and Sunday as the civil society came out in the open and challenged the officials who were out to disrupt the services

By Sunday, the CPI-M led Government in Kerala approached the DMK-headed Tamil Nadu Government with a plea to seize the bus and save the Marxists from the dilemma," Gireesh told The Pioneer. He said the mmoral support offered by the people have energized him to take the bureaucrats by the horn.

Gireesh's is not an isolated incident. Last Monday saw Shaji George, a British citizen hailing from Thiruvalla staging a demonstration in front of the local government body office

Shaji had invested crores in building a Club House and Resort for which permission was granted by the local self government authorities. But the same body refused to allocate building number to the Club House which literally sabotaged Shaji's dreams of opening the same in time. Though he pleaded with the authorities, it all fell on deaf

Shaji, who was upset over the callous attitude of the officials, protested in front of the local self-government office. The police were summoned by the authorities and Shaji was thrown out of the office. "This investor. Officials should be humane and they should know the money and efforts put up by us in getting this project realized," Shaji told this news-

Tĥiruvalla saw Prasad, a farmer, committing suicide last week because of the State Government's refusal to part with the money which the latter owed him. Agriculture Minister and Finance Minister blamed the Narendra Modi government at the Centre for Prasad's suicide.

29 Myanmar soldiers who crossed over to India sent back

wenty-nine Myanmarese soldiers, who fled L to Mizoram following intense gunfights with militia group People's Defence Force (PDF), were sent back to their country on Sunday, an offi-

With these, a total of 74 Myanmar army personnel, who crossed over to India after their camps were overrun by militia groups in the recent gunfight, have been escorted back to their country, she said.

These 29 soldiers had entered Mizoram on November 16 after their camp at Tuibual in Myanmar's Chin state, a few km from the international border, was overrun by Chin National Defence Force (CNDF) -- a local militia group affiliated with the PDF

"These soldiers were airlifted by defence authorities to Moreh in Manipur. From Moreh, they went to Tamu, the nearest Myanmarese town," the official told PTI.

Incessant rains disrupted the process, which prolonged their stay in India, she added.

The Myanmarese soldiers came on foot to Saikhumphai in Mizoram's Champhai district near Tiau river, the natural boundary between India and Myanmar, and were received by the Assam Rifles and state police, the official said. They were in the custody of Assam Rifles before they were sent back to their country, she said.



Mizoram after their camps were overrun by PDF, were sent back to their country.

At present, the situation along the India-Myanmar border is peaceful and there are no reports of any clashes since November 15, offi-

Around 5,000 civilians also crossed over to Mizoram after the fighting started in the neighbouring country last week. The majority of them have returned to their country, a police officer

Mizoram shares a 510-km-long porous border with Myanmar.

The northeastern state has provided shelter to more than 31,000 people from Myanmar, who fled after the military junta seized power in a

Rescue operation challenging: Gadkari

PTI UTTARKASHI (UTTARAKHAND)

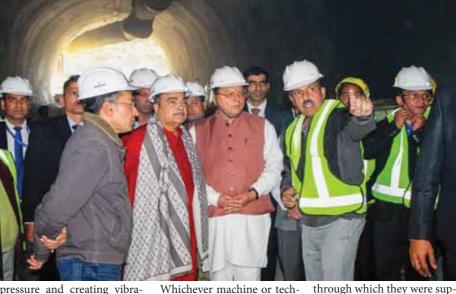
Whatever is required to save the 41 trapped workers will be done and keeping the morale of workers and their family members high should be everyone's collective responsibility, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Sunday as he reviewed the rescue operation at the partially collapsed Silkyara tunnel. The Minister for road trans-

port and highways, who was accompanied by Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, said the rescue operation is challenging as the soil strata in the Himalayan region is not uniform.

It is soft at some places and hard at other places which makes any mechanical operation difficult, he said.

Horizontal drilling with the American auger is the quickest method in the given circumstances to reach the trapped workers, Gadkari said.

"American auger was working alright when it was drilling through soft soil. It faced some problems after it encountered some hard obstacle that led to



pressure and creating vibrations following which it was stopped for safety reasons," he said at a press conference in Silkvara.

"We are working on six options simultaneously. The PMO is also closely monitoring the operation. Our biggest priority is to save all those who are trapped and as soon as possible. Whatever is needed will be

Whichever machine or technical assistance is required will be provided, he said.

'Keeping up the morale of the trapped workers and their family members should be everyone's collective responsibility at the moment," he said.

He said the trapped workers are being constantly provided oxygen, electricity, food, water and medicines.

"Fortunately, there is light inside because the electricity is on. There is a pipeline, and thus water is available. There is a 4inch pipe, which was used for compression. Through that, we are sending food from day 1," he said. Jain, in a video brief update on

being provided to the 41 workers trapped for the past seven

the rescue operation, further said there is water and electricity in two km portion inside the tunnel, which is the finished part of the 4.531-kilometre two lane bi-directional tunnel at Silkyara in Uttarkashi. Experts from different fields have been pooled in and asked to suggest whatever methods can be applied to ensure the safe and early evacuation of the trapped workers, Gadkari said.

Preparations are on to start vertical drilling through the hill above the tunnel, he said, adding every possible method is being tried for their speedy

evacuation.

Gadkari said tunnels at a cost of approximately Rs 2.75 lakh crore are being built by the Centre in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and

ITBP jawan killed in Naxal IED attack cremated in Samba



PTI SAMBA/JAMMU

An Indo-Tibetan Border Police jawan who lost his life in a Naxal attack in Chhattisgarh was cremated with full honours in his village near the International Border in Samba district on Sunday. The body of Head Constable Joginder Kumar, 45, reached his village, Abtal Katalan, in

Ramgarh sector late Saturday Kumar died in an Improvised Explosive Device explosion near Bade Gobra Village while escorting a polling party after the conclusion of the second phase of the Chhattisgarh

assembly elections on Friday.

Officials, including Samba Commissioner Abhishek Sharma and Senior Superintendent of Police Benam Tosh, as well as political leaders from almost all parties attended the wreath laying ceremony of the soldier. Hundreds of people, some carrying the national flag and chanting patriotic slogans, turned up to bid farewell to the soldier who was cremated by his nine-year-old son amid a guard of honour and a gunfire

salute by an ITBP contingent. Earlier, the village youngsters took out bike rallies and candle light marches from Abtal Katalan village to Samba town, a distance of over 10 kms, to pay Kumar their tributes.

Kumar's father and elder brother are retired army men, while his two younger brothers are serving in the ITBP and Central Industrial Security Force. "We have gathered in Kumar's village to pay our last respects to the braveheart who laid down his life while performing election duty ... We stand with his family at this hour of grief and will ensure all necessary support from the district administration," DC Sharma said.

Rakesh Kumar, Commandant of the 47th battalion ITBP, said Joginder Kumar was a dedicated member of the force.

"Our battalion was originally based in Arunachal Pradesh and was moved to Chhattisgarh for poll duty. After the conclusion of elections, an IED went off claiming the life of the jawan whose sacrifice for the nation will be remembered reporters after the funeral.

AAP criticises Delhi LG for House finches flock with protecting Chief Secretary

STAFF REPORTER

Criticising the Lieutenant Governor for protecting Chief Secretary, the AAP government said this is a brazen attempt on the part of the LG to protect his favourite officers, namely the Chief Secretary and Divisional Commissioner.

"If they have done nothing wrong, why is LG obstructing an enquiry against them? The Vigilance Minister's report was prompted because of a whistleblower complaint and media reports highlighting CS's role in the scam, yet the LG has chosen to launch a political attack on the government itself. In all fairness, all available evidence should be forwarded to CBI to enable them to conduct an impartial enquiry", it said in a statement.

The AAP government said that it is a matter of fact that Chief Secretary's son is an employee and a Director in beneficiary company. "We are surprised that the LG

finds nothing unusual in the fact that a 30 year old son of CS is a director in a web of companies, many of which are registered at the same address, have same email ID and have same set of people as directors working in diverse sectors like infrastruture, healthcare, waste management, real estate

Interestingly, most of these companies have their business footprint in Delhi, where CS is the head of bureaucracy and strangely, the companies forever," the officer told | become beneficiaries of several govt contracts and



largesse. LG thinks this is all normal and CS has no role in it?," it said.

"It is also a matter of fact that the CS changed and appointed Hemant Kumar as the new DM Southwest soon after becoming CS. It is wrong to say that CS on

his own recommended enquiry against the DM. The exorbitant compensation award by DM was given on 15.05.2023. It was during the joint visit of Union Minister (Transport), Nitin Gadkari and the LG on 18.05.2023 that the Union Minister and NHAI strongly raised their objections. Left with no option and to save their skin, the CS and Div Com recommended enquiries soon after. Under which law does an accused go scot-free just because he orders an investigation into the crime?," it

The statement said the enquiry itself was compromised because the CS, being the Chief Vigilance Officer, presided over the Vigilance investigation while himself

having close connections with the beneficiaries of this scam. This is a clear case of 'conflict of interest' and a violation of of Para (c) of Section 11.7 of the Vigilance Manual. Further, the enquiry sought to hide the true scale of the scam by valuing it at Rs 312 Crore instead of Rs 850 Crore as was brought out in the Minister's All these important facts have

been conveniently ignored by Why is the LG so eager and

impatient to give a clean chit to his favourite officers without an enquiry?
'Regarding LG's objection that

only he has the power to refer any matter to CBI, the matter is already registered with CBI and now, any citizen, who has any evidence in that case, can send the same to CBI.

We the Hon'ble LG to allow an impartial enquiry by CBI into the matter and not prejudge the matter and protect certain individuals because of his fondness for them", it

healthy mates when sick: Study

plied food earlier, an alternative

larger-diametre pipeline has

also been inserted up to 42

metres through the rubble so

that food like roti, vegetables

and rice apart from light food

could also be supplied to them,

Road, Transport and Highways

Secretary Anurag Jain also said

that multivitamins, antide-

he said.

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Unlike many social animals who passively or actively isolate themselves when sick, the house finches commonly found in your backyards behave uniquely: They prefer to flock together with their health mates, in fact even more so than healthy birds, a study has found. The research also sheds light on how social animals behave when sick.

This particular behavior was uncovered by Marissa Langager, from the Department of Biological Sciences in the College of Science after she extensively studied the habit of these birds when they fell sick. In particular, the study recently published in the Ecology and Evolution journal found that they not only prefer to move with the healthy birds but also want to eat together with their

Langager, whose research interests are social behavior and disease ecology said that "the recent pandemic years of isolating and quarantining have shown us that social distancing to avoid getting sick can also have detrimental aspects for group living animals.

She continued, "the costs of going solo may be particularly high for sick animals especially if they rely on their healthy groupmates to help them find food or avoid predators. Ultimately, this might be the reason that finches become even more social when sick, inadvertently putting their healthy flock mates at risk because bird feeders, where house finches like to gather to feed, are a major means of



spreading disease."

Langager's study, "Let's stick together: Infection enhances preferences for social grouping in a songbird species" has coauthors James S. Adelman, University of Memphis, and her advisor Dana Hawley.

House Finches (Haemorhous mexicanus) are charming, small songbirds which are a delight to birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts. Their vibrant colors and melodic songs make them a popular species among backyard bird 'Since all social animals —

including humans — get sick, it is important to understand the costs and benefits of group living more broadly," she said. "We may be able to use this information to predict disease spread in social animals. And it can also help us understand when and where we might expect healthy animals to evolve the ability to avoid sick groupmates who remain in the group at risk to their healthy groupmates

Because of the unexpected results of the study, Langager wanted to know more about

what exactly might be leading the sick finches to increased preferences for eating with a social group and is exploring this further in her doctoral dissertation.

"Maintaining social relationships can take a lot of energy for the birds I study. So if these birds are putting forth the energy to keep hanging around their social groups even when they are sick, it is most likely because of the benefit to them," she said.

Langager has devised several experiments that will test whether group membership impacts a sick bird's behavior by changing how it responds to a predator and affecting its ability to successfully forage for food.

"I have always been interested in the social behavior of animals, and Dr. Hawley's lab focusing on various aspects of disease ecology using a gre-garious species of bird has afforded me a number of opportunities to study their social interactions. It is the obvious and perfect place for me to conduct my research,"

Chhath celebrated with religious fervour

akhs of men and women Lacross Delhi, NCR paid tributes to the setting sun on Sunday as part of Chhath, the festival which has now gained fame far and wide.

Chhath devotees, those who observe grueling 36-hour fast, stood in waist-deep water, some choosing deep vessels atop roofs but many others walking long distances to reach ghats of rivers, lakes or ponds. Many men carried wicker baskets on their heads, heavy with items used in the ritual worship while the more adventurous ones chose to cover the distance prostrating on their bare

visited ghats to join Chhath puja with people of purvanchal. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva along with office bearers Dinesh Pratap Singh snf Neeraj Tewari on Sunday visited Chhath ghats at ITO, Mandawali, CBD ground, Sheikh Saraito joined Chhath puja with people of purvanchal. Most BJP leaders took part in Chhath puja in the areas.

Leader of the Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri joined Chhath puja at Badarpur, Meethapur, Moladbund, and Jaitpur in his constituency.

MP Manoj Tiwari joined Chhath puja in north east con-



Sonia Vihar, Ghonda, Jhadoda

Chhath devotees with his bha-

MP Ramesh Bidhuri greeted

Harkesh Nagar and other ghats. Dr. Harsh Vardhan met Chhath devotees at several places in his constituency including Yamuna Bazar, Pitampura, Wazirpur, Model Town.Gautam Gambhir joined Chhath pujas at various places from ITO to Sarita Vihar and greeted the devotees. Delhi BJP General Secretary Kamaljeet Sehrawat joined Chlark puja at Pochchanpur, Rana Enclave and Dwarka while other General Secretaries Harsh Malhotra at Geeta Colony and Yogendra Chandolia at Holambi Kalan. Delhi BJP Vice President Dinesh Pratap Singh and Poorvanchal Morcha President

Neeraj Tiwari set up special

pujas at Laxmi Nagar and Sarojini Nagar ghats with family and friends.

Speaking on the occasion, Sachdeva said that Chhath is a festival of nature worship. In Chhath the devotees worship & pray both the setting & rising sun which gives a social message that we should stand by friends both in their success and in hard times.

Sachdeva said BJP government in 1994 started setting up Chhath ghats on Yamuna Bank as per purvanchal tradition but its regrettable that the Arvind Kejriwal government has during the last few years denied them their traditional Puja way and forced them to worship at artificial ghats. It is

government has not constructed a sufficient number of artificial Ghats nor provided proper facilities at Ghats.

The four-day Chhath festival began on Friday. On the first day, the devotees bathe in the ghats and take part in the rit-uals. On the second day, the worshippers observe 'kharna' and distribute the offerings among the family members. On the third day, they 'arghya' (prayers) to the setting Sun, while on the last day, the devotees offer prayers to the rising Sun. It is estimated that more than 20 crore people are performing Chhath Puja across the country, which includes men, women, youth and children.

Retail markets register record ₹8,000 cr trade during Chhath

RAJESH KUMAR NEW DELHI

 $A^{s \ India \ is \ about \ to \ touch \ \$}_{4 \ trillion \ economy, \ retail}_{markets \ have \ witnessed \ a}$ record trade of over Rs 8,000 crore during the four day Chhath puja which began from Nahay-Khay (bathe and eat), and will end on November 20 with araghya (prayers) to the rising sun. Besides this, trade bodies are forecasting a business worth 4.25 trillion rupees (\$51 billion) during a 23-day period from November 23 to December 15. In addition, an estimated six lakh weddings are expected to incur expenses around 25 lakh rupees (\$30,000). Data from the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), shows every year the trade of festivals, pilgrimage and weddings amounts to Rs 25 lakh crore which is almost 20% of the total retail trade of the Country. The Confederation of All India

Traders (CAIT), which is releasing the sales figures of every festival this year, while releasing the sales figures of Chhath Puja on Sunday disclosed that retail markets have witnessed a record sale of over Rs 8000 crore for the Chhath puja festival this year. Data showed that fruits, flowers and vegetables were sold on a large scale for the Chhath Puja. Besides, clothes, sarees, garments, make-up items, food grains, flour, rice, pulses and other food items, vermillion, betel nuts, small cardamom



and puja items, coconut, mango wood, earthen stove, desi ghee and other such items were largely purchased by the people ahead of the Chhath festival across the country.

The four-day Chhath festival began on Friday. On the first day, the devotees bathe in the ghats and take part in the rituals. On the second day, the worshippers observe 'kharna' and distribute the offerings among the family members. On the third day, they 'arghya' (prayers) to the setting Sun, while on the last day, the devotees offer prayers to the rising Sun. It is estimated that more than 20 crore people are performing Chhath Puja across the country, which includes men, women, youth and children. CAIT Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal said that apart from Bihar and Jharkhand, this festival is also celebrated with great enthusiasm in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Orissa, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh besides other States as

Bihar earn their livelihood by working in large numbers.

"After Chhath Puja, now the series of festivals will end on 23rd November when Tulsi Vivah will be celebrated on a large scale across the country and from the same day the wedding season will also start in the country," he said.

Khandelwal further stated that In Delhi alone, more than 3.5 lakh weddings are expected to take place in this season, which is likely to generate a business of about Rs 1 lakh crore (\$12 billion) in Delhi itself." As India's wedding season

unfolds, an array of wedding budgets will shape the business landscape. Around 50,000 weddings are anticipated to fall within the luxury category, with spending exceeding 1 crore rupees (\$120,000) each, while another 50,000 will have budgets of 50 lakh rupees (\$60,000) per wedding.

In addition, an estimated six lakh weddings are expected to incur expenses around 25 lakh rupees (\$30,000). The majority of the celebrations, approximately 1.2 million weddings, will adhere to a budget of around 10 lakh rupees (\$12,000), while an additional one million weddings are likely to have expenses of about ?6 lakh (\$7,200) each.

According to CAIT, every year the trade of festivals, pilgrimage and weddings amounts to Rs 25 lakh crore which is almost 20% of the total retail in all these states, people of trade of the Country

LG refuses to consider Atishi report on Bamnoli land acquisition

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has refused to consider a report of Vigilance Minister Atishi alleging "prima facie com-plicity" of Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar in the Bamnoli land acquisition matter, saying it seems to be "completely based" on the Minister's preconceived assumptions and presumptions.

Sources from the Raj Niwas said in a file noting on the government's submission of the report to him, Saxena has said the report "could very well go on to hamper the ongoing investigation, instead of facilitating it"

'I have received the 'Preliminary Report' on 'Complaints', submitted by Hon'ble Minister (Vigilance) and endorsed by Hon'ble Chief Minister.

It is surprising and unfortunate, to say the least, that this report, which deals with sensitive vigilance-related matters and has been marked to my Secretariat in confidential cover, is already in public domain and its digital/electronic copies are freely available and details thereof have been widely reported in the media," he has said in the file. Noting that selective text from the report has been purportedly leaked to the media, the LG has said it appears "prima facie that the whole motive of this supposed inquiry was



to start a media trial and politicise this whole issue", even as it is before the Supreme Court.

"One is forced to wonder whether the same doesn't amount to creating a public perception prejudice, aimed at influencing the Hon'ble courts," he has added.

Saxena has also pointed out that the matter is already being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). "Since the matter is already under investigation by CBI as approved by me based on recommendations of the Chief Secretary and the Divisional Commissioner, it is my considered view that the recommendation ... Before me for consideration is prejudiced and devoid of merit and therefore, cannot be agreed to," he has said. Kumar has denied any wrong-doing and alleged that "mudwas taken for corruption. The 670-page report of the vigilance minister was submitted to the LG by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's office on Wednesday.

The report has demanded Kumar's suspension and claimed that the scale of 'undue benefits" in the matter is more than Rs 897 crore. The 19-acre land in question was acquired by the National Highways Authority of India in 2018 for the construction of the Dwarka Expressway. The compensation for land acquisition was raised from Rs 41 crore to Rs 353 crore but the report has claimed that the "scale of undue benefits" in the deal was over Rs 897 crore. The vigilance minister's report was an outcome of an inquiry into a complaint that alleged that the chief secretary's son was employed by a person who was relative of benefited landowners in Bamnoli.

City wears deserted look

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The buzz had reached its L crescendo as roads in Delhi and NCR wore a deserted look during the cricket world cup final between India and Australia on Sunday as people stayed glued to their television. Ahead of the World Cup match, thousands of excited fans across the country offered prayers at religious places as they cheered for team India's victory.

This makes the World Cup special is not just the intense competition on the field but the way it has become a community event that binds the diverse tapestry of the country. Social media platforms are ablaze with discussions, memes, and hashtags dedicated to the match.

The whole country seems to be doing just one thing — watching the World Cup. The match isn't just a game; it's a shared experience that unites millions, making them feel like part of something much larger than themselves.

Much before 2 pm, not only people but also all types of vehicles went off the road that resembled curfew like locdown situation in Delhi and its suburb. The national capital, known for its snarling traffic, was the best place to go on a long drive from about noon till 10 pm as traffic was less due to holiday and Chhath puja and people stayed glued to their television.

"Most markets in Delhi on Sunday wore a deserted look or either closed. There were a holiday-like atmosphere in the

market. Traders in markets such as Khan Market, Lajpat Nagar, Sarojini Nagar, Greater Kailash, Karol Bagh, Rohini, and Pitampura among other areas have made arrangement of LED screens for passersby to enjoy the match," said traders

There was no traffic jam or heavy traffic in major roads ahead of the world cup match. Its just looklike a lockdown like situation," said Vipin Vohra who went to South Delhi from Mayor Vihar on Sunday after-

Eateries and pubs across major metropolitan cities have made special preparations to welcome an army of cricket fans eager for the shining trophy to come "home". While some have curated quirky menu items, others have come up with irresistible offers.

Ahead of the world cup match, thousands of excited fans across the country offered prayers at religious places as they cheered for team India's

In Maharashtra's Pune, fans performed a special aarti at Shree Siddhivinayak temple for team India's victory. In a video shared on social media, people can be seen holding placards of Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, and Sachin Tendulkar. Special prayers were offered at Scindia Ghat in Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi for India's victory where fans waved the Indian flag and held placards of the cricket team players. Holding photos of the Indian players, a group of people offered prayers at the Madurai Ganesha tem-

ple in Tamil Nadu.

3 hurt as DTC bus overturns

STAFF REPORTER

Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus Aoverturned in northwest Delhi's Rohini on Sunday morning, injuring three people, police

The cause of the accident was not known immediately. In a video circulating on social media, the bus

is seen lying on a roadside with a shattered windshield and people are gathered around it. The DTC bus overturned near Sector 15, Rohini. After receiving information about the accident, police teams rushed to the spot,

Three people, including the bus driver and the conductor, were injured in the accident. They



An investigation has been launched into the

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Sunday said Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)has a pivotal role in democratising higher education and contributing to India's aspiration to become the world's third-largest economy by nurturing a skilled and capable workforce.

He praised IGNOU for embodying the principles of inclusivity outlined in the National Education Policy 2020,

calling it the "People's University." Saxena was addressing at the 38th foundation day ceremony of the open university. He was the chief guest of the event.

slinging" is being done by people with "vested interests"

The event commenced with a floral tribute at the statue of former Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi, led by Nageshwar Rao, Vice Chancellor IGNOU, alongside key university officials, Pro-Vice Chancellors, School Directors, faculty members and the entire IGNOU fraternity. During his foundation day address, Saxena applauded IGNOU as a beacon of knowledge and academic excellence in



the field of inclusive education and distance learning.

He emphasised the university's role in delivering flexible, learner-centric, cost-effective, and high-quality education with a commitment to equity and

Government made all neces-

sary arrangements to ensure a successful Chhath Puja.

Ministers and MLAs of the government inspected sever-

al Chhath ghats, assessed

preparations, and provided

Highlighting the significance of the National Education Policy 2020, the LG emphasised its transformative nature and its alignment with global agendas, particularly the UN Sustainable

Development Goals-2030. Saxena underscored IGNOU's potential to address educational challenges through innovative approaches and urged the university to leverage emerging areas such as Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, robotics and Virtual Reality to achieve global standards.

He further advocated for a holistic approach to education, stressing the importance of student upskilling, vocational education, and a balanced focus on both curricular and extracurricular activities for comprehensive student development.

arrived at Laxmi Bai Nagar.

There, he joined his brothers,

sisters, and mothers from

Purvanchal to offer Arghya to

Lord Surya and perform the

The Chief Minister shared a

clip of his worship and inter-

action with the devotees on

worship of Chhathi Maiya.

83 more shops get nod to operate 24x7

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has granted permission to 83 more shops and commercial establishments in the city to operate round the clock. Once approved by the lieutenant governor, these shops and commercial establishments will be able to operate 24 hours, according to an official statement.

With this, the total number of shops and commercial establishments operating round the clock in the national capital has gone up to 635, the statement said, adding that from 1954 to 2022, only 269 shops and establishments were allowed to run 24

'The shop owners must comply with the provisions and regulations outlined in the Delhi Shops and Establishment Act of 1954. This eliminates the need for business owners to visit government offices. The verification process is completed within four weeks of submitting the application, it said. This will create more employment opportunities and foster overall devel-

opment in Delhi's economy. This is anticipated to have an equally positive impact on both businesses and consumers. Additionally, allowing businesses to serve for extended hours will provide better facilities to the public, enabling them to access essential goods and services

around the clock. The Government will monitor these shops to ensure compliance with the regulations and take action against violations. The operation of these commercial establishments for 24 hours will not only boost the economy, but also create new job opportunities for youngsters,

the statement said.

For instance, in Dwarka, Mata Sundari, Netaji Subhash Place, Karol Bagh, Sarita Vihar, Kamla Nagar, Dwarka, Select City, Nagar, Dwarka, Select City, Greater Kailash-I, shops of the 'shop category' will be open. Similarly, at Defense Colony and IGI Airport, individual restaurants will operate 24 hours. Rajouri Garden, Kakrola, Laxmi Nagar Metro Station, Roshanara Sabzi Mandi, Pitampura, Chandrawali, Okhla Industrial Area Phase,-II, Rohini Sector-III, Udyog Nagar, Dheerpur, Yamuna Bank, Palam Dabri, Mangolpuri Industrial Area,

Naraina, Baprola, Gazipur,

Krishna Nagar, Nangli, Bamnoli, Hauz Khas, Dashrathpuri Metro Station, Pusta Kartar Nagar Dwarka, Subhash Nagar, Mayur Vihar Phase-I, Ghitorni Metro Station, IGI Airport, Matiala, Karala, Narela, Uttam Nagar, Burari, Gautam Nagar, Rohini Sector-19, and Welcome Metro Station shops of the 'commercial category' have been granted permission Additionally, in Yamuna Vihar, Subhash Complex GK-II, some retail trade shops' have been permitted to operate 24 hours. Under the Delhi Shops and Establishment Act, 122 individuals expressed their interest with the city labour department in running shops for 24 hours. The department examined the

applications and documents, finding deficiencies in 29 application forms. All necessary documents were found to be correct and in accordance with the regulations of the Delhi Shops and Establishment Act for the remaining 83 application forms, leading to the approval of these commercial establishments'

festivities with Purvanchalis STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

AP convenor and Chief A AP convenior and — Minister Arvind Kejriwal, ministers of Delhi government, MLAs and party councillors joined Chhath puja with people from purvanchal on Sunday. Kejriwal participated in various programs organized for Chhath puja in his electoral constituency New Delhi's Lakshmibai Nagar, East Kidwai Nagar, and Kali Bari.

The Chief Minister met devotees and extended his best wishes and congratulations for the grand festival. AAP convenor also prayed to Chhathi Maiya to bring happiness to everyone and bless every home abundantly.

The Delhi Government has constructed 1000 Chhath ghats this year so that people from Purvanchal living in Delhi can celebrate the Chhath Mahaparv with all



Kejriwal, AAP leaders join Chhath

every possible assistance to the devotees The Chief Minister also sought the blessings at Shiv Temple located on Kali Bari

Marg, meeting devotees and

extending Chhath Puja greet-

ings. After that, Kejriwal

his 'X' (formerly Twitter). He tweeted, "Along with all my Purvanchali brothers, sisters and mothers of Delhi, I participated in the great festival of folk faith 'Chhath Puja', offered Arghya to Lord Surya and prayed to Chhathi Maiya for everyone's good health, happiness, prosperity and happy life. Jai Chhathi Maiya." Extending best wishes to people on the occasion in the morning, Kejriwal tweeted saying, "Heartfelt wishes to all of you on the worship of Lord Surya and the grand festival of faith Chhath Puja. May Chhathi Maiya keep you all healthy, happy and pros-perous, and fulfil all your

India sends second cache of aid to Palestine

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

As Israel-Hamas conflict Arages, India on Sunday sent the second cache of aid to Palestine, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said. "We continue to deliver humanitarian assistance to the people of Palestine," he posted on X. "Second Indian Air Force C17 aircraft carrying 32 tonnes of aid departs for the El-Arish Airport in Egypt," the External Affairs Minister said.

India sent the first cache of aid, including medical and disaster relief, to Palestine on October

The el-Arish airport is roughly 45 kilometres away from the Rafah crossing on Egypt's border with the Gaza Strip. Rafah is currently the only crossing point for humanitarian aid into Gaza. However, the crossing has not been fully operational since the war between Israel and Hamas began.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday last week had condemned civilian deaths 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.

"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.

Israel vowed to destroy Hamas after the terror group's October 7 rampage into Israel in which its fighters killed 1,200 people and took 240 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

As the conflict entered its seventh week, authorities in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip raised their death toll to 12,300, including 5,000 children.

Israel said it was preparing to expand its offensive against Hamas militants to southern Gaza after air strikes killed dozens of Palestinians, including civilians reported to be sheltering at two schools.

WHO, AYUSH Ministry begin work on global strategy on traditional medicine

In a significant move towards integration of Indian traditional medicines into global healthcare, the World Health Organisation in collaboration with the Union Ayush Ministry has started working towards preparation of Traditional Medicine Global Strategy 2025-34.
The Ministry and the global

health agency recently inked a pact with an aim to standardize the traditional and complementary medical systems, integrate their quality and safety aspects into the national health system, and disseminate them at the international level.

Other major objectives of the agreement include efforts to strengthen the system of training and practice in the field of complementary medicine System 'Siddha', formulation of guidelines for the listing of traditional and complementary medicines, safety and related efforts, etc.

An international herbal pharmacopoeia of herbs found in South-East Asia will be developed by the Ministry in collaboration with WHO.

Efforts will be made under this agreement to integrate evidence-based Traditional Complementary



Medicines with the National Health System, conservation and management of biodiversity and medicinal plants,

On this occasion, Union Ayush Minister Sarbananda Sononwal said that India has been the center of culture of many traditional and alternative medical systems since ancient times. Such global efforts by the Ministry to strengthen the National Health System will definitely give India a global identity in the field of healthcare services and promote medical tourism in India. This effort of the Ministry is one more step taken towards the global success of India.

Ayush Secretary, Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, said, in his virtual message during the signing event that the first phase of this agreement, 2023-28, will prove to be a milestone in the global devel-

opment of traditional and complementary medical sys-

According to Bruce Aylward, Assistant Director General, Universal Health Coverage and Life Course Division, WHO, this collaboration agreement will bring traditional and complementary medicine systems into the mainstream of India's National Health System and serve the objective of global healthcare and well-being. Representative to the United

Nations, Indra Mani Pandey, who signed the agreement on behalf of the Indian Government in Geneva, said, 'India is committed to working with WHO to strengthen Traditional Medicine Systems globally and especially in supporting fellow developing countries in promoting their own traditional medicine sys-

Murmu on 3 days tour to Odisha, Andhra Pradesh from today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

President Droupadi Murmu will visit Odisha and Andhra Pradesh from November 20-22 to attend a host of programmes, according to a statement issued on Sunday by the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The president will attend the

inaugural session of the 36th Annual Conference and Literary Festival of All India Santali Writers' Association at Baripada on Monday. "On the same day, she will also inaugurate an Eklavya Model Residential School at Kuliana," it said. President Murmu was born in a Santhali tribal family at Uparbeda village under Mayurbhanj in Odisha. On November 21, President

Murmu will inaugurate a skill training centre at Pahadpur village, the statement said. Subsequently, she will visit Badampahar railway station from where she will flag off three new (Badampahar-Tatanagar MEMU, Badampahar-Rourkela Weekly Express and Badampahar-Shalimar Weekly Express), inaugurate new Rairangpur postal division,

release a commemorative cover

of Rairangpur postal division

and lay the foundation stone

redevelopment Badampahar railway station, it said. President Murmu will travel from Badampahar to Rairangpur Badampahar-Shalimar express. She had served as an honorary teacher at Sri Aurobindo Integral Education Centre, Rairangpur from 1994 to 1997 In 2000, Murmu was elected from the Rairangpur constituency as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Odisha

till 2009, serving two terms. The president will also attend the 15th annual convocation of Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology, Burla on Tuesday evening. On November 22, Murmu will

and continued to hold the post

launch the National Education Campaign-New Education for New India, organised by Brahma Kumaris at Sambalpur, the statement said. Later, she will visit Puttaparthi where she will attend the 42nd convocation of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, it

the governor, as would

presently be demonstrated,

threatens to defeat and subvert

the very fundamentals and

basic foundations of our

Constitution, including the

rule of law and democratic

good governance, apart from

RTI appeals, complaints disposal rate crosses 90 per cent in current fiscal: CIC

The disposal rate of appeals I and complaints filed under the RTI Act has crossed 90 per cent so far this fiscal, Information Commissioner (CIC) Heeralal Samariya said on Sunday.

Samariya, who was sworn in as the CIC on November 6, said this during a meeting with Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh. During an hour-long meeting, Samariya informed the minister that the disposal rate of the Right to Information (RTI) appeals and complaints has, for the first time, crossed 90 per cent in the current financial year, according to a personnel ministry statement. Singh lauded the Central Information Commission for achieving "consistent decline" sponding rise in disposal of

According to the CIC data available as on November 9, 11,499 RTI appeals and complaints were disposed of, while 12,695 were received, marking a disposal rate of 90.5 per cent, the statement said. In 2022-23, 19,018 appeals

2021-22, 19,604 appeals were filed as against 19, 183 in

As many as 29,210 RTI appeals were disposed of in 2022-23, 28,793 in 2021-22 and 17,017 in 2020-21, it said, adding that the figures include the backlog of pending RTI appeals which were also disposed of during the respective years.

The minister applauded the office of Chief Information Commission for being the first government body to use artificial intelligence (AI) for study, analysis and pattern of RTIs and "also checking credentials of RTI applicants", the statement said

The CIC also apprised the minister of the hybrid mode, i.E., physical-cum-video conferencing introduced in his al of RTI appeals.

Singh told the CIC to urge the Information Commissions to also introduce the hybrid mode latest by the end of this year.

The commission conducted 4,783 video conferences in 2020-21, 7,514 in 2021-22 and 11,090 in 2022-23.

SC to hear TN, Kerala pleas against their Governors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday two separate pleas of the Tamil Nadu and Kerala Governments, alleging a delay by the respective State Governors in giving assent to bills passed by the assemblies. A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra is scheduled to hear the pleas.

The Tamil Nadu Assembly re-adopted 10 bills in a special sitting on Saturday, days after those were returned by Governor R N Ravi.

The bills, covering different departments, including law, agriculture and higher education, were passed in the wake of Ravi returning those on November 13. The re-adopted bills were later sent to the governor for his assent.

On November 10, describing Nadu governor in giving assent to the bills as a "matter of serious concern", the top court sought the Centre's response on the state government's petition accusing the Raj Bhawan of "sitting over" 12 legislations.

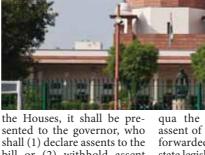
Issuing notice to the Centre, the top court had sought the eral or solicitor general in resolving the issue

"The issues which have been raised in the writ petition raise a matter of serious concern. From the tabulated statements which have been submitted before this court, it appears that as many as 12 bills which have been submitted to the governor under Article 200 have not elicited any further action.

Other matters, such as proposals for the grant of sanction for prosecution, proposals for the premature release of prisoners and for the appointment of the members of the Public Service Commission, are pending," it had said. The bench headed by CJI

Chandrachud had said, "Bearing in mind the situation, we issue notice to the second respondent, namely, the Union of India represented by the secretary to the government in We request the attorney general of India or, in his absence, the solicitor general of India to assist the court."

It had noted that Article 200 of the Constitution mandates that when a bill is passed by the legislative Assembly of a state or where a state has a bicameral legislature, by both



bill or (2) withhold assent therefrom or (3) reserve the bill for the consideration of the president. The Tamil Nadu government

has urged the top court to intervene in the matter, alleging that "a constitutional ing in an "unconstitutional manner, impeding and obstructing" the functioning of the state government for "extraneous reasons".

"Declare that the inaction, omission, delay and failure to corruption, including transfer comply with the constitutional mandate by the governor of Tamil Nadu/first respondent

qua the consideration and assent of the bills passed and forwarded by the Tamil Nadu state legislature to him and the non-consideration of files. government orders and policies forwarded by the state government for his signature is unconstitutional, illegal, arbitrary, unreasonable, besides mala-fide exercise of

The governor, by "not signing remission orders, day-to-day files, appointment orders, approving recruitment orders, granting approval to prosecute ministers, MLAs involved in of investigation to the CBI by the Supreme Court, bills passed by the Tamil Nadu

ing the entire administration to a grinding halt and creating adversarial attitude by not cooperating with the state administration," it says. Similarly, the Kerala govern-

ment has moved the top court

claiming that Governor Arif

Mohammed Khan is delaying defeating the rights of the his assent to the bills passed by people of the state to the welthe Assembly, which is "defeatfare measures sought to be ing the rights of the people". implemented through the It has claimed inaction on the bills," the plea filed by the governor's part in relation to Kerala government says. eight bills passed by the state The government has contended that grave injustice is being done to the people of the legislature and said many of these bills involve immense state as also to its representa-tive democratic institutions public interest and provide for welfare measures that would stand deprived and denied to the people of the southern by the governor by keeping the bills pending for long periods of time, including three for state to the extent of the delay. "The petitioner -- state of more than two years. Kerala -- in fulfilment of its The governor appears to be of parens patriae obligation to its the view that granting assent people, seeks appropriate orders from this court in rela-

or otherwise dealing with bills is a matter entrusted to him in his absolute discretion, to tion to the inaction on the part relation to as many as eight This is a complete subversion bills passed by the state legisof the Constitution," it has submitted. lature and presented to the governor for his assent under

The plea says the governor's conduct in keeping the bills pending for long and indefinite periods of time is also manifestly arbitrary and violates Article 14 of the

Modi, Kharge pay tributes to Indira on her birth anniversary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and top Congress leaders on Sunday paid tribute to former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on her 106th birth anniversary.

In a X post, the Prime Minister said; "On her birth anniversary, tributes to Indira Gandhi, India's former Prime

president Mallikarjun Kharge, CPP chairperson Sonia Gandhi and former party president Rahul Gandhi were among those who offered floral tributes at Shakti Sthal, the memorial of the former prime

Sharing his childhood picture with Indira Gandhi on X, Rahul Gandhi said, "For India, a people's leader, Prime Minister. For me, my grandmother, my teacher"

"The values taught by you of dedication to the country and people are the strength of my every step, the strength of my thinking!" Gandhi said in a post in Hindi.

The Congress president and CPP chairperson also participated in a commemorative programme 'Indira - The People's Prime Minister' at the Indira Gandhi Memorial at 1,



Safdarjung Road.

The programme marked the life of Indira Gandhi from her childhood and listed out the achievements of her political journey. A photo exhibition and a cultural programme were also organised on the occasion.

Later Kharge, Sonia Gandhi and some other leaders paid homage to the former prime minister at her portrait in the Central Hall of Parliament. In Mumbai, NCP president Sharad Pawar and Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde were among prominent leaders who paid tributes to former prime min-

ister Indira Gandhi.



at his official residence in Mumbai and administered a National Unity Day pledge to mark the occasion.

Remembering Indira Gandhi, Pawar described her as a visionary who raised India's image abroad with her political astuteness. "Garibi Hatao slogan was aimed at raising the standard of poor people in India," he posted on X.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray posted a joint picture of his late grandfather Bal Thackeray and Indira Gandhi, saying he pays tributes to her strong and visionary leadership.

Culture Ministry to launch global event at Red Fort on December 8

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

raking cue from Prime ▲ Minister Narendra Modi's directive to establish five cultural spaces in the country, including one at the Red Fort in the national Capital, the Union Culture Ministry is all set to hold a global event at the historical premises to be attended by international artists, architects, and designers while public art installations, art bazaar and cultural programs will be on the showcase at the large scale.

The mega event is all set to compete those being held in Venice, Sao Paulo, and Dubai, said an official from the Ministry.

To be inaugurated on December, 8, the 'India Art, Architecture and Design Biennale 2023' exhibitions will be held from 9th to 15th December and will be open to

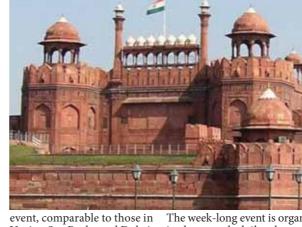
along with panel discussions, workshops and the art bazaar public while the pavilions set up as part of the Biennale will be on display till the 31st of March 2024 Building on the success of past events like the

Înternational Museum Expo

& Festival of Libraries, the

Biennale seeks to create a

prominent global cultural



Venice, Sao Paulo, and Dubai, an official from the Ministry said adding that 'IAADB'23 is an innovative initiative to highlights India's diverse art, architecture and design.

Minister of State for Culture External Affairs Meenakashi Lekhi recently shared the information that the biennale showcases a diverse range, including traditional artisans, contemporary designers, curators, and thought leaders.

The Biennale is an innovative initiative to celebrate the rich tapestry of our country's artistic heritage, spanning ancient, modern, contemporary and tech-driven art, architecture and design, said the Minister.

The week-long event is organised around daily themes, each aimed at showcasing different aspects of India's rich cultural heritage.

The curated pavilions at the event offer a fascinating journev through diverse aspects of India's cultural heritage. The India Art, Architecture & Design Biennale is set to be a unique event that aims to mobilise the community of artists and designers by providing a platform for both established and emerging

Its goal is to energize cultural and creative industries by fostering dialogue among practitioners in art, architecture, and design, said the

Texas University to build rice grain sized injectable glucose monitor device

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

 $R^{
m esearchers}$ at Texas A&M University in the US are working to create a fully injectable continuous glucose monitor (CGM) so small it rivals a grain of rice and can be used with an external optical reader to measure sugar levels at any given time.

Article 200 of the

"Of these, three bills have

remained pending with the

governor for more than two

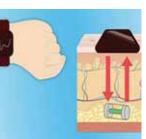
years and three more in excess

Constitution.

Two faculty members from Department Biomedical Engineering at the university have received a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to fund a multidisciplinary project to develop an injectable, grain-ofrice-sized glucose biosensor

and wearable device. "Continuous glucose monitors (CGMs) are commercially available, but most of them are indwelling, meaning there is a needle in the skin connected to a patch on the arm," said co-principal investigator and Regents Professor, Dr Gerard Cote.

"There is one CGM that is totally implantable, but it is much bigger than ours and requires a doctor to surgically implant it with an incision," he added. Cote and his lab are designing the injected sensor's chemistry and developing the watch-type reader device. The sensor is put under the



skin and analysed using light from the watch-like device to determine the glucose con-

The reader sends the signal to a cell phone and the patient can share the results with their health provider.

The chemical assay in the

injectable sensor is used to determine the concentration of the glucose within the tissue, and the watch device sends in light and measures the fluorescence from the sensor to give the sugar con-

centration," Cote explained. The sensor and wearable reader employ an optical sensing technology that addresses the challenges associated with biosensing for populations of darker skin 'We use chemistry that has a

fluorescent colour that emits in the red and infrared range rather than green light, which works better for the darker skin tones," Cote said

Thousands offer 'arghya' at sunset | Indira Marathon: Baghel,

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

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

Elaborate security arrange-

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

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



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

Kedar, Hanuman, Ravidas and Tulsi Ghat witnessed gathering of a heavy rush of devotees. Besides, a rush of devotees was also seen at Shastri and other ghats of river Varuna. Rush of devotees was also seen at various kunds and ponds includ-

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

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

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

Renu Singh stand first

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE PRAYAGRAJ

rmy's runners won the A38th Indira Marathon on Sunday. Army's Jaswant Singh Baghel stood first in the men's category in the race of 42.195 km whereas in the women's category, Renu Singh of the Army bagged the first position. Renu is posted in CISF Bhopal. In the women's category, Nutan stood second and Shipra stood third. Nutan is of Delhi while Shipra

is from Prayagraj.

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

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

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

CASE REGISTERED: A

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

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

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

Meanwhile, Ashraf's brothers-in-law Zaid and Saddam etc in connivance with Mohammad Asiyam and his wife Jinnat, allegedly seized

the waqf property.

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

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

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

New chapter in fight against dengue virus

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

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

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

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

VARANASI (PNS): With an

objective to achieve the target

of retail, agriculture and MSME

set by the government at

Centre, the Indian Bank, Zonal

Office, Varanasi organised a

programme here to distribute

the loan approval letters to the

beneficiaries. The chief guest

CORRESPONDENT MIRZAPUR

hearing at Sadar tehsil head-quarters the DC directed the

officials concerned to ensure

disposal of cases to the satisfac-

tion of the parties concerned

but on merit basis. He reviewed

the disposal of cases of the last

Sampoorna Samadhan Diwas.

On the day out of 222 cases

only one could be disposed of

on the spot. The DC inspect-

ed the tehsil office too and

issued the necessary directions

to the officials concerned. The

DM while hearing the cases at

tehsil headquarters Chunar

formed 12 teams with the

direction to go to the spot, solve

the matters on merit and report

through the SDM. A com-

plainant Shailendra Tripathi of Arajiline Sultanpur village alleged that a resident of same village had grabbed the barren

land by doing construction. A Divyang person, Malloo of Bhuili Khas village complained

that he was deprived of the

facility of house under govern-

ment scheme despite being

eligible. Out of 148 applications

only two could be disposed of

the spot. Chief

Commissioner

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

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

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

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

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

and MD & CEO of Indian

Bank SL Jain distributed the

loan approval letters to the ben-

eficiaries and while addressing

the customers assured that the

bank would provide the qual-

itative service to them. He also

assured the customers to make

the facilities and services more

department by Dr Badal Singh, Associate Professor.

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

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

donated the body to the med-

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

younger brother and nephew

easier and significant. The

Zonal Manager Rajesh said

that we are committed to pro-

vide banking services to cus-

tomers and added that the

customers could take advan-

tage of the bank's mobile appli-

cation IndOASIS MobileApp

being at home. The sub-zonal

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

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

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

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

a vote of thanks, while Chief

General Manager Vikas Kumar,

Regional General Manager of

Prayagraj Region Naveen

Kumar Srivastava and officers

Gorakhpur and Mirzapur

zones attended the programme.

Varanasi, Prayagraj,

Cleanliness drive launched at Ganga ghats

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

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

polythene bags. Regional convenor (Kashi) Rajesh Shukla said that the Chhath festival has been celebrated since time immemorial in which the prayers are to be offered to Lord Bhaskar (Surya gy on the earth.

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



Namani Gange activists removing garbage at Sciendia Ghat in Varanasi on Sunday morning.

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

Minister Narendra Modi is running an awareness mission programmes like 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan', campaign against single-use plastic, point of view of cleanliness and it has become more relevant to

Chhath, because in this festival special attention is given to cleanliness, he added.

sentative of the National Mission for Clean Ganga (New Delhi), said that Chhath Mahaparv is special from the environment along with reli-

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

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

Inspect paddy purchasing centres: Varanasi DM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

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

He also directed the officers to check the availability of electronic measurements, dusters, moisture meters and cotton bags at the paddy purchasing centres. Besides, he said that the details of online paddy purchase should be checked from the centre incharges, whether the payment has been made to the farmers

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



centres under any circumstances.

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

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

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

The DM has taken the

All the nodal officers

District Manager (PCU) to task for not getting the contract for handling/ transportation contractors and rice mills and zero purchase at four purchasing centres and nonpayment to farmers.

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

Similarly, the DM has also taken the concerned officers of two purchase centres each of PCF and UPS to task for zero purchase and less pay-He gave instructions to

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

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

Sampoorna Samadhan Diwas organised On Sampoorna Samadhan Diwas organised on Saturday Divisional Muthukumarasami B heard the grievances of the aggriev-ed at Sadar tehsil and District Magistrate Priyanka Niranjan at Chunar tehsil During the

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

oan approval letters distributed

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

INSPECTED: Deputy regional marketing officer Dhananjay Singh on Saturday inspected the paddy purchase centres of the district. During it the centre set up at Mahamalpur Majhawaan block was found closed and no staff was present to tell about the reason. Dy RMO said the centre was to be run by UPSS for which the district manager concerned has

cause notice has been issued to

the district manager concerned.

under tres, he added. been informed with the direction to take action against the incharge for laxity and show

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

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

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

ARRESTED: The Rajgarh

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

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

The police had recovered a countrymade gun, a cartridge etc from him, he added.

www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Waiting to exhale

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

■ n the smog-heavy and pollution-laden environment that defines the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) in the winter months, this is as exciting as it gets. Notorious If or severe pollution, the Capital is witnessing a positive turn as the toxic air levels come down somewhat and schools reopen today. The improved air quality is a welcome respite for residents who have long grappled with hazardous pollution conditions. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the battle may have been won, but the war is far from over. Regretfully, the authorities can claim little credit for this sudden and pleasant development, for it can be traced easily to conducive weather conditions. Over the weekend, Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) registered significant improvement, if it can be called that, transitioning from 'severe' to 'very poor.' The positive shift prompted the Government to reopen all schools in the Capital; however, outdoor sports activities and the morning assembly in the



open will not be held at least this week. The subcommittee on the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) revoked its invocation of Stage IV, which had mandated stringent measures to combat the pollution. The Commission for Air Quality Management has lifted Stage IV of GRAP, allowing the entry of medium and heavy goods vehicles into the Capital. All this signals a degree of confidence in the improving air quality scenario, but it also underscores the need for continuous monitoring and proactive measures to sustain the current improvement going forward. The AQI level in Delhi is hovering around 300+,

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



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

Tomorrow's world belongs to children

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

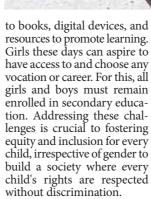
he anniversary of the United Nations United Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on World Children's Day is a cannot-miss opportunity for society collectively. to set the agenda and speak loudly for the universality of child rights.

Child rights, inherent to every child globally, must be enjoyed regardless of age, caste, religion, or gender. The UNCRC delineates these rights, encompassing crucial elements such as the right to survival, education, protection from harm, holistic development, participation in decisions, affirming identity, and fostering an inclusive environment for children to thrive.

Child rights are basic human rights and are fundamental to a prosperous and just society. Unfortunately, too many children across the world are being denied these rights. World Children's Day serves as a crucial reminder to refocus on safeguarding and nurturing children's fundamental principles and rights.
No Girl Should Miss

Opportunities

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



Empower Children And Adolescents For A Brighter **Future**

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

Education As A Catalyst Education, as a basic child right itself, holds immense potential in shaping youths as advocates for child rights. Quality education not only



PRIMARY

CAREGIVERS. MUST INITIATE Our Responsibility For **EDUCATION BY ENABLING A** LEARNING **ENVIRONMENT VALUING EVERY** CHILD'S RIGHTS

breaks the cycle of poverty but

Promoting Child Rights Parents, as primary caregivers, must initiate education by enabling a learning environrights. Engaging in conversainstil crucial values of respect, equality, and advocacy. role in shaping children's perchildren's challenges, can inspire students to advocate for





ASTHA ALANG



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

ment valuing every child's tions and setting examples, can Similarly, teachers play a vital ceptions. Beyond academics, they serve as guides, and integrating child rights lessons into the curriculum and creating saie spaces for discussions on their rights and the rights of

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

Policymakers also wield signif-

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

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

Citation is not the last word in scientific research



DHARMAPALAN

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

¬he productivity of scientific research is often evaluated through bibliometric analysis that mostly depends on the citation indices. Citation indexes are databases or tools used to measure how influential certain academic works have been through their citations. Researchers and institutions typically use these indices to estimate the importance of a given paper, author, or journal in the academic community. The evolution of citation databases can be traced back to the mid-20th century.

The Science Citation Index (SCI), established by Dr. Eugene Garfield, is one of the first and most prominent citation indexes. Despite the existence of citation indices for almost fifty years, there are still some intriguing questions that have not been answered. Do the papers with the highest number of citations represent the most significant ones? Do most cited papers produce disruptive research and innovation?

Indeed, citations are universally acknowledged as a conventional gauge of academic impact, indicating that a piece of work has not only been as controversy or popularity



read but also found valuable for subsequent research. Scientific papers that have a large number of citations play a crucial role in the network of sharing and discussing sci-

entific information. The absence of citations does not necessarily mean that a work is unimportant. It might be ahead of its time, focused on a niche topic, or overlooked by the research community. Research impact can take time, and some groundbreaking ideas might gain recognition only after a considerable period. One of the papers about measuring osmotic pressure published by the geneticist and Nobel prizewinner Oliver Smithies in 1953, had "the dubious distinction of never being cited". While citations can be a measure of impact, they do not always reflect the quality of a work. A paper might be cited frequently for reasons other

than its scientific rigour, such

or even by the author concerned. Many factors influence whether a paper gets cited, including the visibility of the journal, the popularity of the topic, and the author's network. High-quality research may go unnoticed due to factors unrelated to its merit. Of late, many journal editors are compelling prospective authors to cite papers published in their ournals to increase the impact factor. The number of citations does not determine the accuracy or truthfulness of research findings. Scholars may cite work for critique, replication, or to build upon it without necessarily endorsing its conclusions. Not all impacts of research are captured by citations. Real-world applications, influence on public policy, or inspiring future generations may not be immediately reflected in citation counts. There are many excellent disruptive research works that get published in low-profile journals, which many eminent scientists fear to cite due to repercussions from competent authority. Many consider low-profile journals classified as 'predatory', the term which to date has no clear-cut definition. Even if we go by the definition given by scholars in 2019, "Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterised by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices.", many so-called reputed journals fall into this category. Researchers and institutions are increasingly recognising the limitations of relying solely on citation metrics to assess the value of research. Altmetrics, which consider social media mentions, downloads, and other nontraditional indicators, are gaining prominence as complements to traditional citation metrics. Researchers should be aware of these myths and consider a broader range of indicators when evaluating the impact and significance of their work.

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

INDIAN LEOPARDS Sir— Amid the tigers and the cheetahs,

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

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

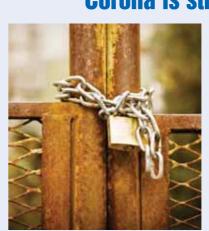
ELECTION PROMISES

Sir-Addressing an election rally in Gadwal, Telangana, Union Home Minister (HM) Amit Shah alleged that the Congress has hindered and delayed construction of the Ram temple for the last 70 years (sadly, his amnesia, not to mention the court case). Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi performed the 'Bhumi Puja' at the temple, and the 'pran pratishtha' will be done on January 22, 2024. HM Shah not only stopped here; he, like Madhya Pradesh (MP) and other states, once again promised that if BJP gained power in Telangana, its government would send people from the state to Ram temple in Ayodhya, as he said earlier in MP "Don't spend money.

HM Amit Shah is playing excellent politics. By saying Ram now and then, he is keeping his Hindu vote intact, and by doing real development, he is keeping his smart people's vote intact.

However, people wonder: has HM Shah fallen short of ideas? Is this offer not reflecting his and the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) desperation? I want to

Corona is still a menace



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

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

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

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

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

BICKERING IN THE PARTY

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

MLA Vijayendra and 66-year-old seventime MLA Ashoka. The granting of key positions to the two members of the Yediyurappa camp has reportedly unsettled several functionaries in the other group, comprising former BJP national general secretary CT Ravi, former Union minister Basangouda Patil Yatnal, and former Karnataka minister V Somanna.

The unfolding situation indicates discord within the state unit as a section, which is sulking over the perceived prioritisation of Yediyurappa's son and his loyalists, has decided to wait till the announcement of Lok Sabha polls to decide about their future course of action. There is also a concern among the party brass that this might affect the BJP's performance in the upcoming elections and that it may face defeat. Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to:

letterstopioneér@gmail.com

www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

FIRST COLUMN CHANGE YOUR FOOD, RECLAIM YOUR LIFE

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



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



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

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

(The writer is an educator, views are personal)

Stubble is not a trouble, just need a viable solution



AS MITTAL

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



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

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

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



STUBBLE BURNING AFTER PADDY HARVESTING IS BANNED, BUT IT CONTINUES TO FREQUENTLY IN PUNJAB. HARYANA, **UTTAR PRADESH** AND OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, and Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development. Views expressed are personal)

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

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

The narrow gap between the paddy harvest and the wheat-sowing time in Punjab and Haryana exacerbates the issue of rice straw. The paddy crop is usually harvested between the first and last weeks of October, and farmers sow the wheat crop from the first week of November. The combined harvester and thresher machine often leaves behind a significant amount of stubble on the field, which prevents other machines from sowing wheat seeds. With only a 10-15-day window between the paddy-harvesting season and the wheat-sowing time, farmers feel compelled to burn the stubble to quickly clear the fields. The Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) has claimed success with a bio-decomposer spray called 'PUSA', which can decompose most of the stubble into manure in a month. Nevertheless, the use of bio-decomposers in Punjab has not shown favourable results in trials, given the narrow gap of 10 to 15 days for sowing wheat after the paddy harvest. The current slow progress in curb-

ing stubble burning demands a practical commercial model that can effectively bring about a perceptible change in the atmosphere and people's attitudes. Fortunately, some private firms in Punjab have taken the initiative to buy stubble from farmers and produce gas and other byproducts in biogas plants. Global solution to local:

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

It's essential to focus on minimizing the costs for farmers who opt for alternative methods of paddy straw disposal and supplementing their sources of income. In Egypt, the government offered an incentive to traders to buy straws from farmers. Suggestions for alternative disposal methods include using it for animal feed, ploughing it back into the field as natural fertiliser, generating bio-energy, and using it as a substrate for mushroom cultivation. The Way Forward: Farmers often find it difficult to stop the age-old practice of stubble burning. This is

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

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

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

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

Enhancing accessibility and accuracy for global students

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

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

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



(The writer is a Global

SVP for TOEFL & GRE,

and ETS, views are

personal)

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

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

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

The IELTS evaluates four language skills: Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking. Students must prepare for each section to ensure a well-rounded performance. Numerous resources, including practice tests, study guides, and language courses, are available to help candidates familiarise themselves with the test format. Preparation for the IELTS exam not only focuses on testtaking strategies but also on enhancing overall language skills. Taking mock IELTS tests under exam conditions is a crucial part of preparaRecently some changes have reduction of the Listening been made to the IELTS exam and potential enhancements that could further refine this critical assessment tool. The following would be the highlights of the new system of

Recent Changes to the

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

section duration. Previously spanning 30 minutes, the listening component has been shortened to 20 minutes, aligning it with the actual length of the recorded material. This adjustment aims to provide a more accurate reflection of a candidate's listening skills without unnecessary time constraints. Computer Adaptive Technology for Reading and Listening: In certain regions, the IELTS exam has introduced computer-adaptive technology for the Reading and Listening sections.

This adaptive approach tailors the difficulty of questions based on a candidate's previous responses, offering a more personalised and precise evalnotable change involves the uation of their language pro-

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

Opportunities for Improvement

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

Interactive online resources,

als could help students address specific weaknesses and optimise their performance in each section. Expediting the release of test scores in real time could offer candidates more immediate feedback on their performance. This not only reduces anxiety but also allows for quicker decision-making in terms of university applications and visa processes. Providing a broader range of test dates could accommodate the diverse needs of interna-

tional students, especially

those facing time zone chal-

lenges. More flexibility in

scheduling exams would con-

tribute to a smoother and

more accessible testing expe-

adaptive learning platforms,

and targeted practice materi-

31 'very sick' babies evacuated from Gaza hospital

(GAZA STRIP)

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

itant group's wide-ranging

attack into southern Israel six

weeks ago, which killed over

1,200 people and triggered the

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

fuel in the besieged territory. Israeli troops who have been based at the hospital and searching its grounds for days say they have found guns and other weapons, and showed reporters the entrance to a tunnel shaft. The Associated Press couldn't independently verify Israel's findings.

HEAVY FIGHTING IN THE NORTH

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

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

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

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

HOSTAGES FOR AID

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

Tens of thousands of religious party supporters rally in Pak

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WIND, RAIN HITS TENT CAMPS

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

Earlier this month, Haq, the JI chief, said the ongoing rallies in support of Palestinians around the world awaken world governments and give a voice to the inno-

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

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

allowed UNRWA to import enough fuel to continue humanitarian operations for another couple of days, and to keep internet and telephone systems running.
Israel cut off all fuel

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

'Shooting suspect kills self after kiling 4 women'

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

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

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

Dissent over US policy in Israel-Hamas war stirs protests

AP WASHINGTON

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

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

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

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

becomes more diverse, so does the federal workforce, including more appointees of Muslim one open letter had been and Arab heritage. And surveys endorsed by 650 staffers of

regarding US ally Israel, with "Most of our bosses on more people expressing unhappiness over the hard-right government of Israeli Prime

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

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

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

As of late this past week,

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

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

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

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

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

careers. Some current and for mer officials and staffers said it's the public nature of some of the challenges from federal employees that is unusual. It worries some, as a potential threat to government function and to cohesion within agen-The State Department has

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

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

Cold weather claims five lives in Jajarkot

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

 $F^{\rm ive\; elderly\; people,\; including}_{\rm two\; women,\; who\; were\; stay-}$ ing in makeshift tents have died due to harsh cold weather in Nepal's earthquake-hit Jajarkot district, police said on Sunday.

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

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

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



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

Hindu faith gives me freedom, says Ramaswamy

PTI WASHINGTON

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

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

"My faith is what gives me my freedom...my faith is what led me to this presidential cam-paign actually," he said. "I am a Hindu. I believe that

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

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

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



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

Ramaswamy also drew parallels between Hinduism and

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

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

GOP secures all elected statewide offices in Louisiana

AP ■ BATON ROUGE

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

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

In addition, the GOP holds a two-third supermajority in the House and Senate. Liz Murrill was elected as

attorney general, Nancy

Landry as secretary of state and John Fleming as treasurer. The results also mean Louisiana will have its first female attorney general and first woman elected as secre-

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

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

missioner. All are Republican.

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

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

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

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

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

Murrill has joined Landry in championing conservative causes, including a lawsuit against President Joe Biden's administration for the COVID-19 vaccine mandate for federal contractors.

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

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

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

served as a member of the former president's administra-

In Saturday's runoff, Fleming faced Dustin Granger, a Democrat, who is a financial advisor based in Lake Charles.

Nancy Landry, who is not related to the governor-elect, beat Gwen Collins-Greenup, a Democrat, in the race for secretary of state.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

At nearly 81, Biden is already the oldest person elected presi-

Indian-Americans celebrate Chhath

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

tary of state.

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

joining slowly and after 2014,

Keeping their family tradi-



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

ers, the free tickets were

system being opened up, with a large number of people on the waiting list. "We thought how will our

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

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



72nd Miss Universe Beauty Pageant in San Salvador, El Salvador, Saturday. AP/PTI

US lawmakers for withholding assistance to Pakistan

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

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

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

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

Seek restoration of constitutional order and rollback of blasphemy law changes in remains rampant in Pakistan,

bers said, "We are extremely concerned about the passing of Criminal (Amendment) Bill, 2023 which will strengthen the existing blasphemy law, which has historically been used to persecute

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

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

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

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

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

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

Addressing ongoing harassment and arrests, the lawmakers mentioned the cases against jailed prime minister Imran Khan as well, noting that he could potentially face the death penalty for allegedly violating the Official Secrets Act. The letter also mentioned prominent Pakistani human rights lawyer Pak army kills 4 militants along border with Afghanistan

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

The military said one of

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

PML-N indicates plan B for making Nawaz PM

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

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

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

"With a stop-gap arrangement in mind, the PML-N seems to have prepared a plan B for ensuring that its supremo (Nawaz Sharif) becomes the premier for the fourth time," the report said. Earlier, PML-N remained

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

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

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

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

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

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

The US has about 2,000 US forces in Iraq, under an agreement with the Baghdad government, and about 900 in Syria, mainly to counter IS but also using the al-Tanf garrison farther south to keep tabs on Iranian proxies moving weapons across the border.

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

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

Argentines vote in election that could lead populist to presidency

Imaan Mazari who was taken

from her home at 3 am in

August without an arrest war-

rant after she spoke at a rally

against enforced disappear-

ances. The lawmakers urged

the US Embassy in Islamabad

to send observers to hearings

and other legal proceedings of human rights defenders and political dissidents, including

for emblematic cases such as

with Secretary Blinken to pro-

mote human rights, democra-

cy, and stability in Pakistan.

However, it remains unclear

how the state department will

respond to these concerns and

whether it will impact the

dynamics of the US-Pakistan

relationship, the report said.

on human rights violations

underscores the delicate bal-

ance between geopolitical

alliances and the promotion of

democratic values on the glob-

al stage. The state department

has been markedly careful

while commenting on the cur-

rent political situation in

Pakistan, the Dawn report

said. The issue has been raised

regularly at the state depart-

ment's daily briefings, where

the spokesperson has careful-

ly avoided making statements

that could be interpreted as an

expression of support for either

the government or the oppo-

In Washington, the focus

They also offered to work

Khan and Mazari.

AP BUENOS AIRES

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Money covers less and

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

tioned his mental acuity; ahead

of the first round, Milei some-

saw at rallies.

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

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

which have been notoriously wrong at every step of this year's campaign, show a statistical tie between the two candidates. Voters for first-round runoff will be key. Patricia Bullrich, who placed third, has endorsed Milei.

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

B'deshs top court upholds decision barring largest Islamist party from elections top leaders for their role in acts

 $B^{\text{angladesh's highest court on}}_{\text{Sunday dismissed an appeal}}$ by the country's largest Islamist party seeking to overturn a 2013 ruling that barred it from participating in elections for violating the constitutional provision of secularism. Bangladesh is set to hold its

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

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

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

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

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

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

Despite Sunday's decision by the High Court, it again remained unclear if Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami could continue its activities. Usually, the Ministry of Home Affairs is the entity that bans radical groups deemed as anti-state. Jamaat-e-Islami has been a key partner to the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party led by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who has been the archrival of the current head of government, Hasina, for decades. The Islamist party and Zia shared power in 2001-2006 when the latter was the premier

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

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

Afghans to lose their homes, businesses yet again

PTI KARACHI

 ${
m H}^{
m aji\,Mubarak\,Shinwari\,had}_{
m come \,to\,Pakistan\,in\,1982}$ with his five sons and two brothers. He worked assiduously to build a healthy network of businesses including cloth, fabrics, transport, and giving loans and now owns numerous properties at Al-Asif Square on the outskirts of Karachi. "We have lived here with-

out documents for all these years and set up our businesses with the help of locals," Shinwari said. He is not alone.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rehmat Khanzada, who runs two grocery shops in Quetta, told PTI on the phone that he fears all his savings are going down the drain now. 'It is a situation similar to

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

price last month.

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

drones.

 $R^{ussian\ drones\ targeted}_{Kyiv\ on\ Sunday\ as\ the}$ British Defence Ministry said there were "few immediate prospects" for major change along the Ukrainian front line as the war enters its second winter. Russia launched 20

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

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

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

Preliminary reports indicated no casualties or critical

damage, he said. The UK Defence Ministry said on Sunday that

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

In a statement, it said

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

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

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

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

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

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

Sanjeev Dwivedi (Advocate) 48, Gajanand Block, Tis Hazari Courts, ND-54

NOTICE Notice is hereby given that following share certificates issued

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

UK seeks higher protection for its GI products

From agri sector under FTA with India

PTI NEW DELHI

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

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

A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory. an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its

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

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

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

hibits the use of a GI if the product does not genuinely originate



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

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

right. On this subject, under a

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

Nilanshu Shekhar, founding partner at law firm KAnalysis, said Indian legislation does not differentiate between wines and spirits, and other products in terms of GI protection, and the decision to grant higher protection rests with the central government and varies based on international recognition. India has been advocating for products beyond wines and spirits to prevent misuse of its labels like Basmati rice by other

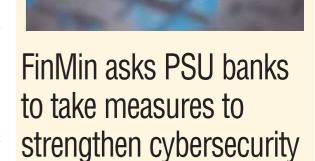
The UK's interest in securing higher-level GI protection for more products in the proposed FTA with India predominantly benefits its strong export seg-ments of wines and spirits, dairy products etc. As FTAs are based on mutual benefits, India should negotiate firmly for the UK to offer similar elevated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

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

A higher level of GI protection for products like cheese will create problems for Indian companies, hence, New Delhi should not accede to the demand unless in this or another department, he added.

Sharing similar views, expert on internal trade and WTO-related issues, Abhijit Das said: "If the UK is demanding a higher level of protection for its GIs, Britain must be willing to give a higher level of pro-action to our GIs as well. But, there could be some adverse consequences for cheese manufactured by Amul in India". The famous Indian goods carrying GI tag include Basmati rice, Darjeeling Tea, Chanderi Fabric, Mysore Silk, Kullu Shawl, Kangra Tea, Thanjavur Paintings, and Kashmir Walnut Wood Carving. Commerce Secretary Sunil

Barthwal has recently stated that India and the UK are not working under any deadline for the conclusion of negotiations for a free trade agreement as both sides are discussing issues "slightly" complex in



 $T^{\text{he Finance Ministry has}}_{\text{asked state-owned banks}}$ to review systems and processes related to their digital operation in view of the recent UCO Bank incident. According to sources, the banks have been advised to check their cybersecurity robustness and take measures to strengthen them.
Banks should keep a tight vigil, and there should be readiness for future cyber threats, sources said.

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

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

Service (IMPS). During November 10-13, the

bank had observed, due to technical issues in IMPS, certain transaction(s) initiated by holders of other banks have resulted in credit to the account holders in UCO Bank without actual receipt of money from these banks. IMPS is a real-time interbank electronic funds transfer system without any intervention. The bank blocked the recipients' accounts and has been able to recover Rs 649 crore out of Rs 820 crore, which is about 79 per cent of the amount.

The state-owned bank is yet to clarify whether this technical glitch was due to human error or a hacking attempt. However, the bank has reported the matter to the law

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

PTI THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

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

The CEA, during his Leadership Talk on the concluding day of the Huddle Global 2023 organised by the Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM), said that India was the fifth largest economy on course to become the third largest in a few years.

"In fact, I will say 7-in-7 is the buzz slogan, that is 7 trillion USD economy in seven years. by 2030 is possible if Índia maintains its present growth trajectory, and in that journey startup entrepreneurs are going to play an important role," he is quoted as having said in the

He was of the view that the active participation of startups in India in developing business models on the foundation of expanding physical and digital infrastructure will continue to generate efficiency, revenue and economic returns for the country. "The last decade has seen an exceptional transformation in the startup landscape in India, which has emerged as the third largest ecosystem globally, with over 1.12 lakh startups presently recognised by the Department for Promotion of

Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) across 763 districts. "Among them, more than 110 are unicorns with a total valuation of around USD 350 billion," he said. The CEA further said that the country ranks second in innovation quality.

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

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

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

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

ment's nodal agency established in 2006 for entrepreneurship development and incubation activities in the state. Nageswaran said that with over

4,000 registered tech startups, 63 incubators and 10 lakh square feet of incubation space, KSUM has not only met its goal of promoting technology-based entre-preneurship but has also earned the distinguished position of being among the world's top business incubators.

The November 16-18 fifth edition of Huddle Global, India's biggest beachside startup conclave, was organised by KSUM at Adimalathura beach, near Vizhinjam, here.

Attended by around 1,500 delegates, the event displayed sophisticated products from emerging sectors such as robotics, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, life sciences, space tech, blockchain, IoT, e-governance, fintech, healthtech, agritech, edutech and SaaS from across the

Securing funding major challenge for women entrepreneurs, say founders ing is a significant challenge for such as healthcare, financial

PTI NEW DELHI

Securing funding is a major Challenge for women entre-preneurs along with balancing the demands of entrepreneurship with traditional gender roles and expectations, say women business leaders. Creating an inclusive work envi-

ronment and addressing key areas like easy entry into workforce, financial autonomy and healthcare would help women lead and make an impact, women entrepreneurs said on the occasion of Women Entrepreneur Day. According to Assiduus Global CEO & founder and Niti Aayog advisor Somdutta Singh, securing fund-

women entrepreneurs along with balancing the demands of entrepreneurship with traditional gender roles and expecta-"Historically, many business networks have been male-dom-

inated, making it harder for women to access key connections and opportunities. I am constantly working to create a diverse and inclusive work environment. I am involved in building networks that support women in entrepreneurship. "I am always advocating for equal funding opportunities, pushing for a more equitable distribution of resources," she said. Founder of SheThePeopleTV



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

logue. With both my initiatives, I have centred the platforms around the community, aiming to build a sisterhood economy, where women lead and make an impact," she said. Design and architecture company Novatr's chief product officer

autonomy, and inclusive dia-

Vipanchi Handa said personal problems in the sector faced during her corporate job propelled her to venture into doing her own thing.

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

Flurry of IPOs; 5 firms gear up to raise ₹7,300 cr next week "There have been several draft was a decline of 26 per cent from the Rs 35,456 crore remaining four companies will

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

The other three companies whose maiden public issues

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

ASK Automotive, Protean eGov Technologies, and ESAF Small Finance Bank -launched their public issues earlier this month. Further, are ready to open are Fedbank IPOs of Honasa Consumer, Mamaearth, and household products and stationery manufacturer Cello World concluded in the first week of the month.

V Prashant Rao, Director & Head-ECM, Investment Banking at Anand Rathi Advisors, attributed several factors to the hectic IPO activity next week, including strong post-listing returns (average 30 per cent) for recent public issues and robust macros.

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

Overall, the Indian IPO market witnessed 31 initial share sales collecting Rs 26,300 crore in the first half of FY24. This mobilised by 14 IPOs during the same time in 2022-23. However, Rao believes that the second half of the current financial year (FY24) will see good quality companies that have been priced reasonably to launch their IPOs. The initial share sale of state-

owned Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) will open for public subscription during November open on November 22 and conclude on November 24. Tata Technologies' IPO is entirely an Offer for Sale (OFS) of 6.08 crore equity shares. Under the OFS, Tata Motors will offload an 11.4 per cent stake, private equity firm Alpha TC Holdings will sell a 2.4 per cent stake, and Tata Capital Growth Fund I will do away with 1.2 per cent of shareholding.

INR a hard currency: GTRI

PTI NEW DELHI

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

Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that transforming a currency into a hard currency is a complex process that hinges on several pivotal factors.

Firstly, economic stability is paramount; a country must exhibit low and stable inflation, consistent growth, and a balanced trade environment. This stability underpins confidence among international investors and trading partners, it added. Equally crucial is the implementation of strong fiscal and monetary policies by the government and central bank, including effective national debt management and sensible interest rate policies, it said, adding aspiring for reserve currency status is a

significant aspect.
This status is typically achieved when a currency is widely used and trusted, and reciprocally, it gains trust because of its wide-

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

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

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

Conditions not ripe to make | Macrotech to invest ₹800 cr to | Dabur plans to open construct 2 housing projects in **Bengaluru: MD & CEO Lodha**

PTI NEW DELHI

Macrotech Developers will invest about Rs 800 crore to construct two housing projects in Bengaluru where it has entered to expand business amid strong demand, its MD & CEO Abhishek Lodha said.

Macrotech Developers, which markets its properties under Lodha brand, has a significant presence in Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and Pune.

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

Macrotech Developers this month launched its first residential project in Bengaluru.

"We are targeting to launch the second project in the fourth quarter of this fiscal. It may slip to the first quarter of the next financial year," Lodha told PTI. Asked about construction cost of these two projects, he said it



The gross development value or sales value is expected to be around Rs 2,500 crore from these two projects, Lodha said. Macrotech Developers will be selling apartments in the range of Rs 1.5-2.5 crore each.

Lodha asserted that the company would continue to focus on MMR and Pune residential markets.

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



portfolio expansion in the offing PTI ■ NEW DELHI Europe. Besides, the company is con-

manufacturing unit in South India;

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

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

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

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

When asked about the new plant in South India, Malhotra said,"I do not think it's a few years away. Maybe it is a year away .Within a year, we might plan something for South of India as business scales up." Dabur's last investment to

open a new unit was at Indore, where it had invested

forecast period 2022-2027, he

"This growth is driven by the

evolution of customer taste and

Mercedes, Audi see record sales in festive season this year

uxury carmakers Mercedes Land Audi have dispatched record units this festive season as the demand for high-end cars continues to grow in the coun-

Driven by brisk sales throughout the year, the luxury car industry in India is hopeful of achieving its best-ever performance this year.

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

Onam to Diwali has been better than last years, owing to multiple new launches, an attractive portfolio and also strong customer sentiment. "We have seen record deliveries

during Dussehra, Dhanteras and Diwali reflecting customer enthusiasm," he noted. Iyer said that the automaker continues to have a positive industry outlook, expecting record sales this year. It however expects supply chainrelated disruptions to continue to pose challenges, affecting the production and availability of SUVs, especially the GLC.

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

Audi India Head Balbir Singh Dhillon said the company has witnessed an 88 per cent growth with 5,530 units retailed in January-September 2023. We have been operating with one of our highest-order banks in recent times. This festive period marked bigger celebrations for Audi India as we wit-

nessed our highest-ever festive season sales in the last seven years," he added.

Growth was on the back of sustained demand for our best-sellers including the A4, Q3, Q3

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

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

ny has launched some powerful products - both cars and motorcycles in the festive period.
"We will keep this momentum

Vikram Pawah said the compa-

going," he added. Lamborghini India Head Sharad Agarwal said India is one of the fastest growing markets globally and has the 3rd largest millionaire population.

The Indian luxury car market was valued at USD 1.06 billion in 2021 and is expected to reach over USD 1.54 billion by 2027, registering a CAGR of more than 6.4 per cent during the

preferences and hence the automobile segment is seeing substantial expansion with increasing demand for luxury cars with advanced tech and safety features," Agarwal stated.The growth is further supported by better road infrastructure pan India, cities are being linked by expressways which coupled with high aspirations is driving

demand from tier 2's and

beyond, he added.

Alva, Nair win National Racing Championship titles

PTI COIMBATORE

Ruhaan Alva clinched the LGB Formula 4 title, while Arjun S Nair bagged the Novice Cup in the 26th JK Tyre National Racing Championship here on

At the Kari Motor Speedway in Chettipalayam, Alva enjoyed a 20-point lead over Kolkata's Arya Singh of Dark Don Racing which he had gained earlier, and with only one race left it would have been enough for the racer from Bengaluru to seal the title.

But Arya and a couple of drivers from the Momentum Motorsport team, in the Novice Cup, appealed to the Indian Motor Sports Appeal Court (IMSAC) and got their points back. These points were docked in

a post-event scrutiny in the penultimate round at the same venue for technical infringement and they had slipped down the table.

The pressure was back firmly

Sindhu to

'mentor'

Padukone

 $E^{\text{yeing a third Olympic}}_{\text{medal, ace Indian shuttler}}$

PV Sindhu will now move her

base from Hyderabad to

Bengaluru to train under the

legendary Prakash Padukone

Sindhu had a week-long stint

under Padukone in September

and before the Asian Games

she had indicated that she

would be training under him

The 28-year-old, who is nurs-

ing a niggle in her left knee,

finally revealed the move in a

"For those wondering and

constantly asking me, the cat is

finally out of the bag!!," she

wrote on 'X', formerly twitter

"Prakash sir is assuming the

role of the mentor in my setup.

I started training with him at

the end of August, and it's been

uphill ever since," wrote the

"He's more than a mentor; he's

my guide, my guru, and, above

all, a true friend. I whole-

heartedly believe he possesses

the magic to bring out the

"I am so grateful he reached

out to me with one call when

I was in Japan, and we've built

on that connection exception

ally well. Dear sir, İ AM

PÚMPED!! Looking forward

to training with you! Let's get

to work," wrote Sindhu, who

had won a silver at the Rio

Olympics under chief coach

In February, Sindhu had part-

ed ways with Korean coach

Park Tae-Sang, who was

instrumental in her winning

the bronze medal at the Tokyo

Olympics. The shuttler from Hyderabad

worked with SAI coach Vidhi Chaudhary for sometime

before roping in Malaysia's

Commonwealth Games cham-

pion Muhammad Hafiz

Hashim as her travelling coach

Recovering from a sore left

knee, Sindhu has opted for a protected rank of No 10 which

will be locked in BWF stand-

She sustained the injury on her

left knee and pulled out dur-

ing her second-round women's

singles match against Thailand's Supanida Katethong at the French Open on October 26.

ings until she recovers.

All-England

Pullela Gopichand.

former

absolute best from my game.

former world champion.

social media post.

Games

d up to the Paris

train under



on MSport's Alva with this development but he fought back well from the eighth position to take the second spot in the final race. He eventually emerged the winner with an overall tally of 82 points.

"It was a crazy final race. Diljith (Dark Don) and I were involved in a great battle (that) went neck to neck. He tried to hold me up for some time but I managed to cut a corner to come in second," said Alva. Arva and teammate Tijil Rao both finished on the podium but were tied for the second spot with 71 points each.

In the Novice Cup, Nair did not face much trouble for his title win. His teammate Neythan McPherson (53) points) and DTS Racing's Joel Joseph (44) finished second and third respectively.

In the GT Cup, Abhishek Vasudev (54) took the first spot while Jagadeesh Nagara (45) and Ullas S Nanda (39) were second and third respec-

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

Djokovic nosed in front in the

eighth game as Alcaraz - playing in his first ATP Finals -

saved one break point but

then hit a backhand into the

net to leave Djokovic serving

He duly did so to love, seeing

it out with an ace. Djokovic had won his past 15

matches after taking the open-

er and the writing appeared

on the wall for Alcaraz when

his opponent went a set and a break up early in the second

Alcaraz had the chance to level the set in the sixth game

for the set.



Max Verstappen won his 18th race of the season Saturday night with a pass of Charles Leclerc at the Las Vegas Grand Prix, which turned out to be one of the most competitive events of the season despite a disastrous start to Formula One's

"Viva Las Vegas! Viva Las Vegas!" sang the three-time reigning world champion as he crossed under the checkered flag waved by Justin Bieber. Verstappen had slammed the race at every chance, yet raced in an Elvisinspired firesuit and took the victory on the famed Las

"I hope everyone enjoyed it, we definitely did. Excited to come back here next year

Verstappen, Leclerc and Sergio Perez were driven in a limousine to a podium located near the Bellagio -'we go straight to the night-

show.

been turned off all week and restarted as part of the victory celebration. None of the participants seemed remotely interested as they stood chatting. After receiving their trophies, they were treated to a New Year's Eve-style fireworks show over the

launched into a throbbing DI set to entertain those who opened their wallets for the most expensive spectator Celebrities danced along on the grid and everyone seemed thrilled with the show and the stars in attendance included Brad Pitt, Rihanna, Usain Bolt and Shaquille O'Neal as F1 said the three-day event drew

The race was the the third stop this season in the United States, more than any other country, and was promoted by F1 and owner Liberty Media. But the event

opulence and excess. Tickets were expensive, hotels along the famed Strip hiked their prices, and the sporting element of the 21st race of the season was overshadowed by everything from celebrities, musical acts and a myriad of Elvis impersonators roaming the paddock that included a wedding chapel where former F1

Villeneuve was married earlier in the week. Liberty expected to spend \$500 million on the first grand prix it self-promoted, but paddock speculation before Saturday night's main event was that Liberty had gone well over budget. The

badly damaged his Ferrari and F1 had to close the 3.85-mile (6.2-kilometer) circuit for inspection.

Fans were forced to leave at 1:30 a.M. Thursday night after witnessing just nine minutes of track activity. The second practice started at 2:30 a.M. And ran until 4 a.M., and instead of an apology, F1 simply offered \$200 credits to its merchandise store to any ticket holders who had only purchased Thursday access. A classaction lawsuit was filed Friday against the Las Vegas Grand Prix.

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

raciness. Seven-time F1 champion Lewis Hamilton, who finished seventh for Mercedes, said the circuit "provided a better race than most of the

tracks we go to."
"I don't think the music stopped this entire weekend in the paddock," said Logan Sargeant of Williams, the only American driver in F1. Leclerc and teammate Sainz had qualified 1-2 on Friday but Sainz was handed a 10place penalty on the starting grid because Ferrari was forced to change his car because of the damage from hitting the drain cover. That pushed Verstappen up to second for the start and

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

Verstappen immediately

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

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

remaining.
Perez had worked his way past Leclerc for second but Leclerc grabbed it back at the finish to deny Red Bull its seventh 1-2 finish of the sea-

"I wanted that win so bad," Leclerc moaned. "But what a race. Honestly, there is nothing left. I enjoyed it so much. Second place with a

lot of fights. There is no better race for

Perez likely did enough to ensure he will finish second to Verstappen in the final

Ferrari cut its deficit to Mercedes to four points for second in the constructor championship headed into next week's finale at Abu

of F1 season

AP LAS VEGAS (US)

expensive extravaganza.

Vegas Strip.

and try to do something similar," said Verstappen, who had markedly reversed his position on the Las Vegas spectacle.

club," Verstappen told his fellow podium finishers - but they were instead treated to the casino's famed fountain

The Bellagio fountains had

Martin Garrix then

315,000 spectators. has been lambasted - especially by Verstappen - for its

champion Jacques

entire event nearly imploded nine minutes into the first practice session when Carlos Sainz Jr. Ran over a water

the first race in Vegas. Even so, with Lewis Hamilton finishing seventh,

driver standings. The Leclerc finish helped

the clash --some more might be

with Argentina's soccer body.

The encounter could mark

Messi's last match for Argentina

ATP Finals: Djokovic chasing seventh title

AP TURIN

op-ranked Novak Top-rankeu
Djokovic will be bidding for a record-breaking seventh ATP Finals title when he takes

on home favorite Jannik Sinner in Sunday's final. Djokovic took less than 90 minutes to beat Carlos Alcaraz 6-3 6-2 in a semifinal match between the top two ranked players on Saturday night, after Sinner had earlier dispatched Daniil Medvedev 6-3 6-7(4) 6-1.

The 36-year-old Djokovic is currently tied with Roger Federer on six titles at the season-ending tournament for the year's top eight players, while Sinner is the first Italian

to reach the final. However, Sinner recorded his first-ever victory over Djokovic earlier this week and the Serbian will also have to contend again with a passionate, partisan crowd.

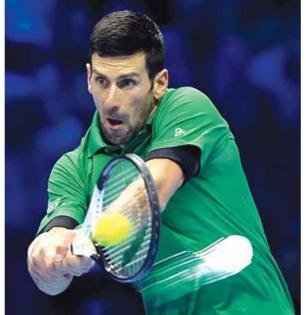
tennis, arguably the best ten-nis of his life," Djokovic said. 'We played a verý close match the right attitude, the right "He had break points right with a lot of high quality ten- the set.

phere was unbelievable, electric really. I don't expect any thing less than that, probably even louder than what we had in the group-stage matchup. "It's the final, I've been in this

situation before many times. I'm really happy with the way I'm feeling, the way I'm playing, so hopefully I can deliv-

er my A' game tomorrow." Djokovic had plenty of sup-port in Turin on Saturday, with many chanting his name between points.

Alcaraz and Djokovic had played each other four times previously and won two each. Djokovic won their most recent encounter in the final in Cincinnati in August, while Alcaraz beat the Serb in five sets in the Wimbledon final. The latest battle between the two never hit those levels of drama, however, as Djokovic clinically took his chances after recovering from having "He's been playing fantastic to stave off two break points in the opening game.



mentality, and I knew from the very first point it was going to be greatly intense,"

away, 15-40 in the first game. That's Carlos. He always brings out his best in these who broke in the very next

but Diokovic saved two break points, the second with a sumptuous crosscourt forehand that had the crowd roaring its approval. Djokovic lapped it up, raising his arms out, before cupping his hand to his ear and nodding his head and then pumping his fist. Instead, it was Diokovic game and then duly serv

least one goal after the 80th

A draw was enough for

Switzerland to qualify because

Romania won 2-1 against third-

Romania recovered from Israel's

Eran Zahavi scoring in the sec-

ond minute, responding with

goals from George Pu?ca? and

Ianis Hagi. Israel was the official host team but Saturday's game

was played in Hungary because

Romania qualifies for its first

major tournament since 2016

after missing the last European

of the Israel-Hamas war.

place Israel.

Sinner has won all four | Netherlands, Switzerland, matches at ATP Finals



AP ■ TURIN

inner has been fervently Sbacked by the fans in Turin - with the orange-clad "Carota Boys" ever present - and the 22-year-old raised his arms to the joyous crowd after serving the match out to love against 2020 champion Medvedev. "It is a privilege to have this kind of pressure," Sinner said. "The crowd has given me so

much energy. "It was a very difficult match. He started better than me,

then I somehow managed to

get the break and then I felt a

Sinner is already up to No. 4 in the rankings - the highest an Italian man has risen since Adriano Panatta nearly a halfcentury ago.

Sinner's win over the thirdranked Medvedev also saw him become the Italian with the most victories over top-five players (10), breaking Panatta's

Medvedev had won all six of his matches against Sinner before last month but the Italian had ended that streak with victories in the finals at Beijing and Vienna.

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

the sixth game before serving

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni

out to love

Romania qualify for Euro 2024 **AP** LONDON The Netherlands, Switzerland and Romania all secured places at Euro 2024, and France racked up the biggest-ever win in European Championship qualifying by beating Gibraltar The Netherlands needed a win

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

The Netherlands had 18 shots to Ireland's three but couldn't score

"We can be proud of ourselves and we certainly are now that we're going to the European Championship," Netherlands captain Virgil Van Dijk told Dutch broadcaster NOS. "With all the problems, injuries

we've had, we've still managed it.

Now we can start preparing."

SWISS STREAK

Switzerland drew 1-1 with Kosovo to make sure of qualifying and continue a run of not missing any major tournament since Euro 2012. But the game continued a troubling Swiss trend to let leads slip.

Switzerland dominated possession but couldn't get through the Kosovo defense until Ruben Vargas headed in a deflected ball in the 47th. Kosovo's Muhamet Hyseni leveled the score in the 82nd with a shot in off the post. It was Switzerland's fifth draw in six games, and in all of those draws Switzerland conceded at

Championship despite being one of the host nations. Israel misses out on an automatic qualifying spot but goes into the

playoffs because of its Nations League record. That means record for its biggest-ever win and also set a record for the competition.

Norway and star striker Erling Haaland can no longer reach the playoffs and will not play at Euro 2024. Belarus beat Andorra 1-0 in the other game in the group. RECORD WIN FOR FRANCE France's 14 goals against Gibraltar broke the team's

drain valve on the track that

Argentina eyes Di Maria and Brazil tests Jesus

Uruguay on Thursday its first match since it hoisted the World Cup trophy in Qatar, while the host of the superclasico will play without the injured Vinicius Júnior at the Maracana Stadium after two consecutive defeats in South American qualifying.

on Saturday tested a formation

ence that he accepts having "more responsibilities" on the team. Among the four strikers

poor performances under his Diniz is likely to play, he is the watch, tested Gabriel Jesus in one who knows best how to Vinicius' position at the team's training ground. Without sevfunction in multiple positions. "I knew my time would come, little by little. With Neymar out,

Maracana is special. I am young, but I have some experience. This will be a top three in my most important matches?

Brazil has never lost a home match in World Cup qualifying. Argentina still leads the 10-team South American qualifying group with 12 points from five matches. Uruguay is second with 10 points. Colombia has nine and Venezuela eight. Brazil will host the World Cup chamtion, with seven points.

The 2026 World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada will include 48 teams,

have five points each. Bolivia has

three and Peru one.

playing at its bitter next-door meaning direct entry for the top neighbour. The 36-year-old lost the 2014 six teams from South America. World Cup final at the same The seventh-place team can earn a berth in an interconti-Maracana Stadium where in 2021 he lifted his first national nental playoff. Brazil's soccer confederation team title, that year's edition of

AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

Argentina and Brazil tested new options up front for their World Cup qualifying match next week, an encounter that could give the losing side a bitter ending to 2023. Lionel Messi's Argentina lost to

in the first training, eyeing the match in Rio de Janeiro with veteran Ángel di Maria replacing Nico González, trying to explore Brazil's weaknesses on the flanks. That was a problem for the World Cup champion in their 2-0 home defeat to

Brazil's Fernando Diniz, facing pressure because of the team's

eral key players, he seems to trust a system with four strikers who can also fill the midfield: Jesus, Gabriel Martinelli, Rodrygo and Raphinha. Rodrygo said in a news confer-

Vini out, people expect more from me, and I need to deliver," Brazil vs Argentina at the

pions at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro in fifth posi-Ecuador, Paraguay and Chile

said on Saturday all 69,000 tickets it had have been sold for

Copa America playing against Brazil in the final.

OCEAN OF BLUE: ALL ROADS LEAD TO MOTERA



PTI AHMEDABAD

The buzz had reached its crescendo at least 24 hours before the 'big match' and with three and half hours to go before the start of the most awaited World Cup final, an ocean of blue seems to be travelling towards Motera. The city of Ahmedabad has become the centre of the cricketing world. It seems as if the entire city is moving in one direction. The roads of Ahmedabad are full of energy and a bit of madness.

Fans wearing the India jerseys, carrying the Indian flag, laughing, joking and anticipating an Indian win are moving towards the Narendra Modi stadium. There are families, friends,

children, adults, teenagers, middle aged and the senior citizen who have all painted the city blue

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

The streets that lead to Narendra Modi Stadium's main entry gate are lined with sellers of counterfeit India jerseys. Little Hetwik, all of eight is a big Hardik Pandya fan as he is Gujarat Titans skipper. He wants a jersey with Pandya written on the back but gets disappointment.

"Only Virat, Rohit, Maxwell and Warner available," the seller Qayamuddin said and started tending to other customers. "Beta, wear Virat, you look smart in this," the young father tried to persuade the kid whose eyes had already welled ID.

This final has been God-send for Sheetal Ben, who has an ailing husband at home and the counterfeit industry has been her way of putting food on the table. "I have been selling at-least 200

to 260 Virat Kohli jerseys and 150 Rohit along with India hat which is a big hit. During India vs Pakistan match, I earned around 30,000 in three days. That's about what I will make in six months time when tournament is over. God bless Rohit and Virat. They run my kitchen," Sheetal Ben said, smiling.

At-least 70,000 or more fans who have tickets aren't the locals and have flown in from different parts of India and a few thousands are NRIs from UK, USA, Australia, Canada and Singapore, who have spent a bomb for a cricket vacation. At least 20 charter flights with dignitaries, politicians, busi-

ness men and Bollywood personalities are supposed to land in Ahmedabad for the game. For the upmarket Indian elite, it's not just about Virat's cover drives or Bumrah's Yorker but also being at a happening place and have their "I was there moment" under the sun. Who's who are booked at team hotel as the party will continue till wee hours of morning. The tickets worth Rs 3500 is being sold at 30 times premium in black market while hospitality tickets have been sold

in lakhs.

The hotel prices have shot through the roof. A few fans have decided to stay overnight at Ahmedabad railway station waiting room as they don't have enough money to pay Rs

Narendra early as I the traffic the traffic the party this morn the celebrate all night.

15,000 for one-night stay at a hotel. That's the minimum rate available even at the 'cheapest' hotels. "Sab behti sabarmati mein

haath dho rahein hain," remarked a fan. For the past three days, the ITC

Narmada five star facility, where the national team is staying, has seen huge crowd gather in front of main gate. "I saw Dravid, Rohit and that coach (Paras Mhambrey) the other night getting out of hotel," a fan, who reached Narendra Modi Stadium as

early as 11 am trying to beat the traffic, said. The party had begun at 8:00am this morning and if India win,

the celebrations will continue

ICC ban betraval of nation: Lankan Minister



Indian Air Force's Surya team puts up spectacular show

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

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

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

The Surya Kiran team pilots,

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI AHMEDABAD

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

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



final against New Zealand at Mumbai on Wednesday.

"A special occasion & a special pre-match moment. There's CLASS written all over this gesture! The legendary Sachin Tendulkar gifts Virat Kohli his signed jersey from his last ODI," the BCCI wrote on X, with a picture of Kohli holding the jersey.

Kohli is the first batsman in the history of the game to score 50 ODI centuries, going past Tendulkar who has made 49 tons.

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sports Minister Roshan Ranasinghe on Sunday slammed Sri Lanka Cricket for bidding for a ban from the ICC, calling it a "big betrayal of the country".

Ranasinghe had appointed an interim committee after sacking the governing body headed by Shammi Silva following the national team's disastrous World Cup campaign.

"This is big betrayal of the country," said Ranasinghe after reading out correspondence with the ICC by Silva administration

"They were doing so to selfishly hang on to positions after audit reports had highlighted their corrupt action."

Ranasinghe had appointed legendary captain Arjuna Ranatunga as the head of the seven-member interim committee.

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

In response to a parliamentary speech by the main opposition leader Sajith Premadasa accusing SLC of promoting the ICC



for a ban, SLC said Ranasinghe was politically interfering in its work and as a full member they were duty bound to adhere to the articles of association of the

ICC.

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

At least three judges have recused hearing the case. Ranasingheled a scathing attack against the chair of the court of appeal in parliament for ignoring the audit report that highlighted the misdeeds of the SLC. Last Wednesday, SLC had slapped a defamation lawsuit against Ranasinghe for making "damaging defamatory statements" against it, deepening the administrative crisis in the

country.
The chaos in Sri Lankan cricket came after the national team's early exit from the World Cup.
The Lankans managed only two wins in nine games.

OTHER SPORTS

Bhullar lands closing eagle for 5-shot win in Indonesia Masters

TI
JAKARTA

Indian golfer Gaganjeet Bhullar closed an amazing week with a brilliant eagle putt from 20 feet on the 18th hole to clinch his 11th Asian Tour title and an incredible fifth win in Indonesia here on Sunday.

Bhullar dropped two bogeys during the day in his card of 67 at the BNI Indonesia Masters that also had four birdies. The eagle from 20 feet was the icing on the cake.

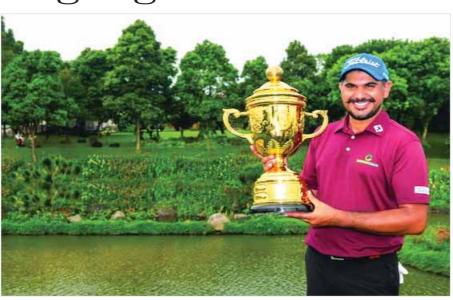
He finished with 63-67-63-67 for a 24-under 260 total and won USD 270,000 for his efforts.

Bhullar's five-shot win at the BNI Indonesia Masters was also the biggest of his international career and finishing second behind him was fellow countryman Karandeep Kochhar who had a bogey-free 63 on the final day.

It was also the first win in the International Series for any Indian. The last win for any Indian on the Asian Tour was 15 months ago, also in Indonesia, by Bhullar, who revealed that his mother was born in Indonesia.

The win took Bhullar to fourth place on the Asian Tour Order of Merit, while Kochhar is the next best Indian at 19th.

"It wasn't that easy. This is my fourth Asian Tour wire-to-wire. And this was a victory with a seven-shot lead (after three rounds) and I just kept telling myself I have done that in the past and I am ready to do that this week," said Bhullar



who playing steady through the week.

His other wire-to-wire wins came in the Macao Open in 2012 and 2017 and at the 2013 Indonesia Open.

"Today I played pretty well actually. I struggled a bit in the middle of the round, there was a stretch when I was trying my level best but I was not making the birdies but the chip in on number 16 turned around everything. And, of course the eagle on the last was the icing on the cake."

on the cake."
Beginning the final day with a seven-shot lead, Bhullar was never in danger despite a brilliant charge by Kochhar, who was nine behind at the start and finished five back by the end. Bhullar ensured there were no hiccups early in his round as he

birdied the third and the sixth. A dropped shot on the ninth did not mean much as he got it back on 11th. A second dropped shot on 15th was quickly repaired with a birdie on the 16th. He closed with an

"I have been doing meditation since I was 14 years old, and I think this is my 17th year on Tour. I learned over the years how to deal with the pressure and especially the conditions and the situation I was in the last three rounds. So, I think the past experience has really helped me," said Bhullar.

eagle on the 18th.

helped me," said Bhullar. Making it a great week for India were Veer Ahlawat (69) in tied-seventh at 14-under, while S Chikkarangappa (68) was 12-under. Rashid Khan (68) was T-36 at 8-under, Anirban Lahiri (72) at 5-over was 67th and Honey Baisoya (79) was T-68.

Kochhar had a brilliant front nine with five birdies on the third and fourth, followed by another on sixth and two more on eighth and ninth for a 5under 30.

On the back nine, he had three more birdies for a superb 63, a card that was twice achieved by Bhullar this week on the first and third days and bettered only once by David Puig on the third day.

"Obviously a very good day from start to finish. I told myself that the way I was hitting the ball the last few days I'm going to have a lot of opportunities, so it was all about being patient," Kochhar said.

damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

Printed and published by Shobori Ganguli for and on behalf of CMYK Printech Ltd., 100k Milap Bhawan, 8/A Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110 002, Phone: 011-40110455, Communication Office: F-31, Sector 6, NOIDA, Gautam Budh Nagar-201301, U.P. Phone: 0120-4879900 and printed at Jagran Prakashan Ltd, D-210, 211 Sector-63, Noida (U.P.). Editor-in-Chief Shobori Ganguli AIR SURCHARGE of ₹ 2.00 East: Calcutta, North: Leh West: Mumbai & Ahmedabad South: Bangalore & Chennai. Central : Khajuraho. Lucknow Office: 4th Floor, Sahara Shopping Centre, Faizabad Road, Lucknow-226 016. Telephones: 0522-2346443, 2346444, 2346445.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any