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NEW DELHI, THURSDAY OCTOBER 12, 2023; PAGES 12-3



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MESSI A DOUBTFUL
STARTER FOR
ARGENTINA
11 SPORT

ISRAEL SET TO INVADE GAZA Pathankot butcher killed in Pakistan

AP ■ JERUSALEM
Israeli air strikes on Wednesday smashed entire Gaza Strip neighbourhoods to rubble and left unknown numbers of bodies beneath mounds of debris. The bombardment raged on even though Hamas militants are holding an estimated 150 people snatched from Israel — soldiers, men, women, children and older adults.



Palestinians walk through the destruction by Israeli bombing in Gaza City on Wednesday. AP/PTI

"We will not allow a reality in which Israeli children are murdered," Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said in a meeting with soldiers near the southern border on Tuesday. "I have removed every restriction — we will eliminate anyone who fights us, and use every measure at our disposal."

The Hamas-run Interior Ministry said Israeli air strikes destroyed the entire al-Karama neighbourhood in Gaza City, with a "large number" of people killed or wounded. It said medical teams were unable to reach the area because all roads to it were destroyed.

Exchanges of fire over Israel's northern borders with militants in Lebanon and Syria, meanwhile, pointed to the risk of an expanded regional conflict.

On Wednesday, the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah fired anti-tank missiles at an Israeli military position and claimed to have killed and wounded troops. The Israeli military confirmed the attack but did not comment on possible casualties. The Israeli army shelled the area in south-

ern Lebanon where the attack was launched.

On Wednesday, an AP reporter witnessed waves of rockets rain down on Ashkelon, with shrapnel slamming into the street and Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system intercepting at least one overhead. Residents screamed and wept as they heard the explosions.

In a new tactic, Israel is warning civilians to evacuate whole neighbourhoods — rather than just individual buildings — then inflicting devastation, in what could be a prelude to a ground offensive.

"The objective is for this war to end very differently from all of the previous rounds. There has to be a clear victory," said Chuck Freilich, a former deputy national security adviser in Israel. "Whatever has to be done to fundamentally change the situation will have to be done."

Palestinians struggled to find any safe area as Israeli strikes demolished the tiny coastal enclave, hospitals ran low on supplies and the territory's only power plant ran out of fuel, deepening the misery of a war sparked by a stunning and deadly assault by Hamas militants.

Israel has vowed unprecedented retaliation against the Hamas militant group ruling the Palestinian territory after its fighters stormed through the border fence on Saturday and gunned down hundreds of Israelis in their homes, on the streets and at an outdoor music festival.

Since then, Hamas militants have continued to fire rockets at Israel, including a heavy barrage at the southern town of Ashkelon on Wednesday.

The war, which has already claimed at least 2,200 lives on both sides, is expected to esca-

late and compound the misery of people living in Gaza, where basic necessities and electricity were already in short supply.

After the attack, Israel stopped the entry of food, water, fuel and medicine into the territory — a 40-kilometre strip of land wedged among Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea that is home to 2.3 million Palestinians.

The sole remaining access from Egypt was shut down on Tuesday after airstrikes hit near the border crossing.

As Palestinians crowded into UN schools and a shrinking number of safe neighbourhoods, humanitarian groups pleaded for the creation of corridors to get aid in, warning that hospitals overwhelmed with wounded people were running out of supplies.

"There is no safe place in Gaza right now," journalist Hasan Jabar said after three Palestinian journalists were killed in the bombardment of a downtown neighbourhood home to government ministries, media offices and hotels. "I am genuinely afraid for my life."

Gaza's only power plant ran out of fuel on Wednesday afternoon, forcing it to shut down after Israel cut off supplies, the Energy Ministry said. That leaves only generators to power the territory, but they also run on fuel that is in short supply.

The UN's World Health Organisation said that supplies it had pre-positioned for seven hospitals have already run out amid the flood of wounded. Doctors Without

Borders said surgical equipment, antibiotics, fuel and other supplies were running out at two hospitals it runs in Gaza.

Israel has mobilised 360,000 reservists and appears increasingly likely to launch a ground offensive into Gaza, with its government under intense public pressure to topple Hamas, which has ruled the territory since 2007 and remained firmly in control through four previous wars.

That would likely require a prolonged ground assault and reoccupying Gaza, at least temporarily. Even then, Hamas has a long history of operating as an underground insurgency in areas controlled by Israel.

See Page 4: India sets up helplines in Delhi, Tel Aviv, Ramallah

India launches Operation Ajay to rescue citizens

New Delhi: India on Wednesday launched Operation Ajay to facilitate the return of Indian citizens from war-hit Israel.

"Launching Operation Ajay to facilitate the return from Israel of our citizens who wish to return. Special charter flights and other arrangements being put in place. Fully committed to the safety and well-being of our nationals abroad," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar posted on social media platform X.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shahid Latif, a key lieutenant of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) chief Masood Azhar and the mastermind of the attack on the Indian Air Force base in Pathankot in 2016, and his brother were gunned down in a mosque in Pakistan's Sialkot district early on Wednesday.

Latif, a resident of Aminabad in Punjab's Gujranwala (Pakistan), was wanted by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in connection with the 2016 Pathankot case.

Three motorcycle-borne assailants fired indiscriminately at 53-year-old Latif and his brother, Haris Hashim, as they were leaving the Noor Madina mosque in Daska town after pre-dawn prayers, experts tracking the developments said.

Latif, who was accompanied by his heavily armed guards, and his brother were killed on the spot in the mosque complex.

The gunmen reportedly disguised themselves as worshippers to gain entry into the mosque complex before firing at their targets.

While no outfit or individual has so far claimed responsibility for the attack but according to police chief Hassan Iqbal of the area where the incident occurred, Latif was killed in a preplanned



action and was the intended target of the assailants.

Latif alias Bilal alias Noor Al Din, a designated terrorist under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, was the launching commander of the Jaish-e-Mohammed in Sialkot and had been involved in planning, facilitation and execution of terror attacks in India.

Latif had entered Kashmir in 1993 from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir as a cadre of the banned Haker-ul-Ansar terror group. However, he was arrested a year later and sent to the Kot Bhalwal jail in Jammu, experts said.

He is estimated to have been brainwashed by Masood Azhar, who was also lodged in that jail till he was set free in 1999 in exchange for the passengers of IC-814, an Indian Airlines plane that was hijacked

by terrorists and taken to Kandahar.

After spending 16 years in the Indian jail, Latif was deported through the Attari-Wagah border in 2010 and was believed to have got in touch again with Azhar, who had by that time formed the Jaish-e-Mohammed terror group.

"This is the biggest blow to JeM on Pakistan soil," an official said.

Seven IAF personnel were killed when four JeM terrorists sneaked into the Pathankot Air Force Station on January 2, 2016. The siege went on for three days.

After the Pathankot attack, Latif was detained by the Pakistani authorities for some time. He was also involved in the terrorist attacks in Samba and Hiranagar in 2013, officials added.

Weddings put off Rajasthan election to November 25

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) announced on Wednesday that it has changed the date of polling for the Rajasthan Assembly elections from November 23 to November 25. This decision was made in light of "large-scale" weddings and social engagements.

In a notification, the poll panel stated that it had received representations from various political parties and social organisations, advocating for a change in the poll schedule due to large-scale weddings and social events on November 23. This could potentially cause inconvenience for a significant number of people, as well as pose various logistical challenges, possibly leading to lower voter participation.

"The Commission, having considered these factors and representations, has decided to change the date of poll from 23rd November, 2023 (Thursday) to 25th November, 2023 (Saturday)," the EC said in a statement. The counting of votes will take place as scheduled on December 3, along with the same for four other State Assembly polls.

As per the schedule

announced by the EC, the date for issuing gazette notification is October 30. The last date for filing nomination is November 6 and the nominations will be scrutinised on November 7. The last date for withdrawing nomination is November 9.

"This is a good thing. The Election Commission wants more voting to happen... This is a good decision... I welcome it," BJP MP Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore said.

Congress leader and AICC secretary Sanjiv Singh hailed the EC decision to change the Rajasthan poll date due to a large number of weddings and social gatherings on Ekadashi.

"The Election Commission has taken everything into consideration. Dev Uthani Ekadashi is a big festival for Hindus... The voting percentage will also be affected now that the date has been postponed & voters will come out to (cast their vote)," Singh said.

The EC had initially announced on October 9 that the State would go to polls on November 23. The previous polling day in Rajasthan coincided with Dev Uthani Ekadashi, an auspicious occasion when more than 50,000 weddings are likely to take place in the State. The people

involved in the business claimed that conducting polls on that day could hurt the voting percentage. This had become a cause of concern for those who have weddings planned for the day. Also, it had created apprehensions that the voting percentage may get affected on the day.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission on Wednesday ordered the transfer of several top police and administrative officers, including 25 police commissioners and superintendents of police, nine district magistrates and four secretaries and special secretaries, in the five poll-going States after finding laxity in their work.

During a review, the EC found that the performance of some officers was "unsatisfactory" and they were found "complacent, if not complicit" in various matters, including the illegal supply of liquor as a possible poll inducement, sources said. The poll panel has asked the transferred officials to immediately hand over the charge to their respective immediate juniors. It has also directed the respective State Governments to send by Thursday evening a panel of officers to replace those shunted out.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India continued its winning run over Afghanistan in the World Cup on Wednesday. Chasing 273 to win, Rohit Sharma went on a six-hitting spree, smashing 131 off 84 balls to record the most number of centuries in World Cup history, while Ishan Kishan (47), Virat Kohli (55 not out) and Shreyas Iyer (25 not out) chipped in with contributions as the hosts romped home in 35 overs.

Rohit and Ishan shared a 156-run partnership for the opening wicket to set the platform for the chase.

Earlier, Afghanistan posted 272 for 8 after opting to bat. Skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi (80) and Azmatullah Omarzai (62) struck fine fifties. Afghanistan just managed a decent score. For India, Jasprit Bumrah (4/39) was the pick of the bowlers while Hardik Pandya (2/43), Kuldeep Yadav (1/40) and Shardul Thakur (1/31) also contributed well.

Brief Score:
Afghanistan: 272 for 8 in 50 overs (Hashmatullah Shahidi 80, Azmatullah Omarzai 62; Bumrah 4/39).
India: 273 for 2 in 35 overs (Rohit Sharma 131, Virat Kohli 55 not out, Ishan Kishan 47; Rashid Khan 2/57).



Captain Rohit Sharma celebrates his century during the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 match between India and Afghanistan at Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi on Wednesday. India skipper Rohit (131 off 84) was unstoppable and flaunted his enviable range of strokes. His record seventh World Cup hundred off 63 balls helped India gun down the target in 35 overs, giving a big boost to their net run rate ahead of their fixture against archrival Pakistan on October 14. PTI

Looming heat crisis threatens India, Pakistan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

By the end of the century, climate induced heatwaves could expose up to 2.2 billion people in India's Indus Valley and Pakistan to many hours of intolerable extreme heat to the extent that they will begin to experience heat-related health illnesses, such as heat stroke or heart attack which can be fatal too, according to a new study.

Published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), the study said that if global temperatures surge by 1 degree Celsius (C) or more than current levels, each year billions of people will be exposed to heat and humidity so extreme that they will be unable to natural-

ly cool themselves. The researchers noted that the worst heat stress will occur in regions that are not wealthy and that are expected to experience rapid population growth in the coming decades.

"This holds true even though these nations produce significantly fewer greenhouse gas emissions than wealthier ones. As a result, billions of poor people will suffer, and many could die. But wealthy nations will suffer from this heat as well, and in this interconnected world, everyone can expect to be negatively affected in some way," said the researchers.

Heat, when combined with humidity, becomes especially dangerous, or even deadly. In fact, India has already started



feeling the heat. The majority of its 1.4 billion population work outdoors, often without protection. Many construction workers, hawkers and rickshaw pullers die each year during the summer as they don't have the means to beat the heat.

The National Crime Records Bureau data has revealed that more than 11,000 people died from heat stroke in India between 2012 and 2021.

The team on researchers from the Penn State College of

Health and Human Development, Purdue University College of Sciences and Purdue Institute for a Sustainable Future in the US modelled global temperature increases between 1.5 degrees Celsius and 4 degrees Celsius — considered the worst-case scenario where warming would begin to accelerate — to identify areas of the planet where warming would lead to heat and humidity levels that exceed human limits.

"To understand how complex, real-world problems like climate change will affect human health, you need expertise both about the planet and the human body," said W Larry Kenney, professor at Penn State and coauthor of the new study. The ambient wet-bulb tem-

perature limit for young, healthy people is about 31 Celsius, according to work published last year by Penn State researchers.

However, in addition to temperature and humidity, the specific threshold for any individual at a specific moment also depends on their exertion level and other environmental factors, including wind speed and solar radiation.

Results of the study indicate that if global temperatures increase by 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the 2.2 billion residents of Pakistan and India's Indus River Valley, the one billion people living in eastern China and the 800 million residents of sub-Saharan Africa will annually experience many hours of heat

that surpass human tolerance. These regions would primarily experience high-humidity heatwaves. Heatwaves with higher humidity can be more dangerous because the air cannot absorb excess moisture, limiting the body's ability to cool through sweat evaporation, and affecting moisture-sensitive infrastructure like evaporative coolers.

If warming of the planet continues to 3 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the researchers concluded, heat and humidity levels that surpass human tolerance would begin to affect the Eastern Seaboard and the middle of the US, from Florida to New York and from Houston to Chicago.

"Models like these are good at predicting trends, but they

do not predict specific events like the 2021 heatwave in Oregon that killed more than 700 people or London reaching 40 degrees Celsius last summer," said lead author Daniel Vecellio, a bioclimatologist.

In 2021-22, India too had touched record temperatures. In March-April, 2022, India and Pakistan experienced a heatwave that was 30 times more likely to have happened because of climate change.

As per health experts, exposure to extreme heat affects health directly, exacerbating underlying conditions such as cardiovascular and respiratory disease, and causing heat stroke, adverse pregnancy outcomes, worsened sleep patterns, poor mental health, and increased injury-related death.

It also affects health indirectly by limiting people's capacity to work and exercise.

When doing a comparison between the figures of 2000-2004 and 2017-2021, yet another study published in The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change: Health at the mercy of fossil fuels, found that there has been a 55 percent increase in heat related deaths in India.

India had reported 20,000 heat related deaths in adults over the age of 65 annually in 2000 to 2004, and the number grew to about 31,000 deaths in 2017 to 2021. Globally there were 1.9 lakh heat related deaths in 2000-2004 of those over 65 years of age. This increased to 3.10 lakhs deaths in the year 2017-2021, it said.

Modi to inaugurate P20 Summit tomorrow



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate on Friday the meeting of Presiding Officers of Parliaments of G20 member nations that will deliberate on critical global issues such as gender equality and transforming lives through public digital programmes.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will kick-start the three-day summit on Thursday by chairing a Parliamentary Forum on LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment), a movement proposed by Modi to advocate sustainable lifestyles to safeguard the environment.

The Parliamentary Forum on LiFE will bring together parliamentarians from G-20 nations, along with invited countries and international organizations, to deliberate on strategies for advancing sustainable lifestyles and combating climate change, a Lok Sabha Secretariat state-

ment said.

This forum holds significance, serving as a platform for parliamentarians to exchange insights and successful approaches in the promotion of sustainable living, it said. The President of the Pan African Parliament will be making their inaugural participation in the P-20 Summit hosted in India.

The African Union was inducted into the G20 at the Leaders' Summit held here last month. The theme of the Summit is 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam — Parliaments for One Earth, One Family, One Future'.

It emphasizes the idea that the world is one interconnected family and that the collective actions today shape the future for all.

This theme serves as a reminder to parliaments and nations worldwide that addressing global challenges, such as sustainable development, climate change, gender equality and peace, requires collaborative efforts, transcending borders and differences, an official statement said.

The summit will deliberate on subjects of contemporary relevance such as agenda 2030 for SDGs: Showcasing Achievements, Accelerating Progress; Sustainable Energy Transition Gateway to Green Future; Mainstreaming Gender Equality — From Women's Development to Women Led Development; and Transformation in Peoples' Lives through Public Digital Platforms.

An exhibition titled 'Mother of Democracy' will be organized, highlighting India's ancient and participatory democratic traditions.

Stop drug menace in State, Congress tells Shinde Govt

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Charging that the drug cartel from Nashik is expanding its network to far-off cities like Amravati, the Maharashtra Congress on Wednesday asked the Eknath Shinde government to accept responsibility, take immediate steps to stop the drug menace and to ensure that the state does not turn into Punjab.

"The drug cartel from Nashik in north Maharashtra is now expanding to cities like Amravati in eastern Maharashtra. School and college students are getting trapped in the grip of drugs, which is a cause of concern. Such a huge drug cartel cannot be run without the blessings of the state officials," Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee President Nana Patole said.

Talking to media persons here, Patole said: "The Maharashtra government should accept its responsibility in the Nashik drug case. It's essential for the state government to stop the drug menace that is ruining the lives of the youth. The Shinde dispensation should not allow Maharashtra to turn into Punjab."



Alluding to the news reports about the escape of the arrested Nashik drug mafia don Lalit Patil escape from State-run Sasoan hospital in Pune, Patole said: "The information is emerging about who helped the drug mafia Lalit Patil escape from Sasoan hospital. How did Lalit Patil disappear? Who is trying to release him? We have all the information. We will disclose it at the appropriate time, but no one should back those playing with the lives of the youth."

"It is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that such incidents do not occur. The drug case in Nashik is not recent; it has been going on for a while, and slowly it is becoming clear as to who is backing the accused," Patole said.

Bombay HC allows divyang rape victim to abort 29 weeks foetus

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has granted permission for the termination of a 29-week pregnancy of a 25-year-old physically and intellectually challenged rape victim from Kolhapur in western Maharashtra.

After pursuing the medical report submitted by the medical board set up by it on October 5 to examine the matter, a High Court division bench of Justice Revati Mohite-Dere and Justice Gauri Godse gave a go ahead for the

medical termination of her 29-week pregnancy of the rape victim.

The medical report stated that the continuation of pregnancy of the rape victim would cause grave injury to her mental health and that she would not be able to take care of her newly-born child.

After hearing a petition filed by the father of rape victim, the HC bench on Monday allowed his daughter to undergo Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) either at Chhatrapati Pramilatai Rajee Hospital, Kolhapur or any

other Government Hospital. "Considering that the victim lady is suffering from Cerebral Palsy with Paraparesis 50% and mild intellectual disability 50%, continuation of pregnancy (29 weeks) caused by alleged rape can lead to grave injury to her mental health.

"It is also stated in the report that due to her intellectual disability, she will not be able to take care of her newborn. Thus, the termination of pregnancy (of the rape victim) is recommended," the HC bench observed.

Congress will never support Hamas; party always against terrorism: Digvijaya

PTI ■ BHOPAL

With BJP accusing the Congress of supporting Hamas and the Palestine cause, party leader Digvijaya Singh on Wednesday said Congress will never support a "militant" organisation like Hamas which can be called a "terrorist activity".

Singh also said the Congress has always been against terrorism and violence. In light of the NIA conducting searches at 20 loca-

tions across six States against the banned Popular Front of India, the Rajya Sabha member said, "If there is any allegation against this organisation, conducting raids is alright, but accusations in 97 per cent of such cases were found to be false."

"There is a border dispute between Palestine and Israel. Hamas is a militant organisation and we (Congress) will never support it...You can call it a terrorist activity," he told reporters in Ujjain while replying to a question.

ED questions wife of Abhishek for 7 hours

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday subjected Rujira Narula Banerjee the wife of Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee to a 7 hours marathon questioning in connection with the multi-crore teachers' recruitment scam — the scope of which has presently widened into municipal services recruitment too. Rujira reportedly asked to explain among many things her role as one of the directors in the Leaps and Bounds, a company owned by the Banerjees. Abhishek Banerjee who is also the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is reportedly the chief executive officer of

the company which according to a previous submission made by the ED before the Calcutta High Court was 'engaged in dubious transactions.'

Though she had earlier appeared before the ED and CBI in relation to coal and cattle smuggling cases whence she was reportedly asked to explain some huge transactions foreign banks this was the first time that the ED asked Rujira to appear for questioning in the teachers' recruitment case.

Before Rujira, her parents-in-law Amit Banerjee and Lata Banerjee too were summoned by the investigating agencies but they did not appear before the officials. Instead, they submitted documents related to their assets.

Late on Tuesday evening Abhishek Banerjee too submitted bundles of documents related to the properties and assets owned by him.

Crocodile at your backyard

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Straight out of Discovery channels where alligators are often shown amble into the backyards of American country homes, the people of Ambika Kalna a medieval temple town in Burdwan district on Tuesday saw a crocodile sauntering along a by-lane, dangerously close to a man feeding his cows.

The incident took place at Palpara locality of Kalna known for his ancient Shiva temples and its association with Chaitanya Maha Prabhu.

"I have not seen such a thing in the past 70 years and hope not to see it again in my life," Suresh Mondal, a local shopkeeper said. I was coming out of my house to feed my cows when I saw a big ten-feet reptile ambling towards my house ... I was deeply scared as initially I thought it could be some ghost ... but then I got back into my senses and realized the thing that I was seeing and cried at my neighbours."

Later the Forest Department was called and the beast was taken away to a safe place, sources said. The incident is not the first of this kind as a few weeks ago a crocodile was seen walking down the narrow lands of Katwa a town adjacent to Kalna, sources said.

Then too, the forest officials rescued and took it away.

When asked to comment about the repeated sighting of crocodiles which is somewhat a usual affair in the villages of Sunderbans some 200 km away from Nadia, Nisha Goswami the Divisional Forest Officer said, "it could be because of the floods ... the water-levels of River Bhagirathi (as the Ganges is called here) has been rising the crocodiles from upstream areas may strayed to these places."

Rajnath visits Safran Engine Division's Research in France

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday visited the Safran Engine Division's Research and development Centre at Gennevilliers near Paris, France during the second and final leg of his two-nation tour, defence ministry officials said here.

During his visit to the Centre, Rajnath witnessed the latest developments in aero-engine technology. Olivier Andrieu, Global CEO Safran welcomed the defence minister to the facility and, along with his team, gave a detailed briefing to

him. Safran expressed interest in being a part of the Indian growth story by working with its counterparts on mutually agreed joint projects.

Rajnath also met with the CEOs of the top French defence companies with a focus on their plans for collaboration with India. Eric Trappier, CEO Dassault; Pierre Eric Pommellet, CEO Naval Group; Guillaume Fauray, CEO Airbus; and Olivier Andrieu, CEO Safran Group were present during the interaction.

Rajnath highlighted the advantages of co-development and co-production in India, including possibilities of exports



to third countries. He underlined the inherent advantages of Indian market such as a large, skilled HR base, world class infrastructure and a strong legal architecture.

Later in the day, Rajnath took part in the 5th Annual Defence Dialogue with the French Minister of Armed

Forces Sebastien Lecornu.

Rajnath reached Paris late on October 10 and interacted with the Indian community. While addressing the sizeable Indian community at the India House, he highlighted the various achievements of India in the defence sector such as increased defence exports, increasing indigenous production of defence equipment, concerted efforts on co-development and co-production in India and an enhanced outreach in the region. He spoke about the tremendous progress achieved in India in the last nine years, an assessment which was heartily supported by the Indian community.

NIA searches 20 locations linked to PFI

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday carried out extensive search operations at twenty different locations across the country against the banned terror organisation Popular Front of India (PFI).

These searches were carried out at the premises of various PFI-linked suspects in various regions, including Fazalpur, Shaheen Bagh, Okhla, and Chandni Chowk in Delhi, Bhopal district in Madhya Pradesh, Thane and Mumbai in Maharashtra, Tonk and Ganganagar City districts in Rajasthan and in the regions of Lucknow, Siddharth Nagar, Sant Ravidas Nagar, Kanpur, and Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh. Additionally, searches were conducted in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, the NIA said in a statement.

These operations were part of an ongoing investigation in cases linked to the PFI and the outfit's involvement in unlawful and anti-national activities.

"During the searches, a substantial cache of crucial evidence in the ongoing case was found. This evidence includes various digital devices such as laptops, mobile phones, SIM cards, memory cards, pen-drives, and hard discs. Furthermore, incriminating documents have been recovered during the operations," the agency said.

Additionally, a significant amount of Indian currency, with a face value of Rs 8.5 lakh has been seized in connection with the case.

The case was initially recorded as FIR No 827/2022, dated July 12, 2022 at Phulwarisharif Police Station, Patna, Bihar.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, MOHD ASHRAF ALI
House No 104 Ram Nagar, Sai Upwan Society, Yusufpur Chak Sabari, G B Nagar have change my Name to Ashraf Ali for all future purposes for all future purposes

PD(175)A

PUBLIC NOTICE

In pursuance to rule 19(2) of DCS rules, 2007, it is to inform publicly that following members of Padmini CGHS Ltd. (Regd. No. 1282) have resigned from the membership of the society (i.e. 1) Sh. Avar Singh (M.No. 136), 2) Sh. Prem Kumar Jain (M.No. 17), 3) Sh. Kiran Lal (M.No. 68), 4) Sh. Santosh Gupta (M.No. 98) and 5) Sh. V.K. Johar (M.No. 20). Further they have been refunded their deposited amount. If anyone has any objections he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the RCS, Parliament Street, New Delhi or at society office i.e. 216, Vardhman Star City Mall, Sector-7, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075 within 7 day from the date of publication of this public notice.

President,
Padmini CGHS Ltd.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Tender Notice

Invitation of tender through E-tendering (e-Procurement System)
Conundrum 1:- Extension of last date of bid submission.
NIT No. 6-SEfile-167799-40

Tender for "Turnkey contract for provision of refurbishment/MLR schedule of 40 Rajdhani (20 LWACCN, 17 LWACCW and 03 LWFAC) LHB coaches at RCNK/SNP as per scope of work."

Tender Cost: Rs. 184555092.13/- including GST
(Rs. Eighteen Crores Forty-five lacs fifty thousand ninety-two and thirteen paise only)

Field Name	Existing date	Revised date
Tender closing date time	10.10.2023 11:00	20.10.2023 11:00

The due date for submission of above tender has been extended.
No. 6-SEfile-167799-40 Dated 09.10.2023 3155/2023

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

INDIAN RAILWAYS
"PUBLIC NOTIFICATION"

Notices is hereby given to all users of Railway lines and premises all users on the completed section of the under notified section of the Northern Railway that the 25000 volts 50 Hz AC overhead traction wires has been energized on and after the dates specified against the section. On and from the same date the overhead traction lines shall be treated as live at all time and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of said overhead lines.

SECTION	DATE
Energization of 25 KV AC Single phase OHE for electrification work of development of additional train handling facilities at Shakurbasti (Electrification of common loop lines no. 1,2,3,4, sand hump, Ballast siding ,Extension of shunting line , associated X/O, turn out, 04 nos. auxiliary transformer including yard modification in bet. KM No. BS-1 Ch. 8/192 to KM No. 13/13 Ch. 13/412.00 at Shakurbasti Yard)	11.10.23

INTRODUCTION OF 25 KV AC TRACTION "WARNING TO ROAD USERS"

It is notified for information of the public that in connection with introduction of 25 KV AC electric traction over the section. "Energization of 25 KV AC Single phase OHE for electrification work of development of additional train handling facilities at Shakurbasti (Electrification of common loop lines no. 1,2,3,4, sand hump, Ballast siding, Extension of shunting line , associated X/O & turn out, 04 nos. auxiliary transformer including yard modification in bet. KM No. BS-1 Ch. 8/192 to KM No. 13/13 Ch. 13/412.00 at Shakurbasti Yard)" of the Northern Railway Height gauges have erected at all the level crossings with clear maximum height 4.76m and contact wire shall be at a height of minimum 5.5 meter above Road level with a view to prevent loads of excessive height from coming into contact or dangerous proximity to live traction wire.

Public hereby notified to observe the height specified above for purpose of loading vehicle and to see that the load carried in road vehicles do not infringe the height gauges under any circumstances.

The danger of a load of excessive height are as follows:

1. Danger to the height gauge and consequent obstruction to the Road as well as Railway Line.
2. Danger to the materials or equipment carried or the vehicle itself.
3. Danger of fire and risk of life due to contact with or dangerous proximity to the conductors.

Dy. Chief Project Manager/Elect.
Gati Shakti/DLI Northern Railway
DRM office New Delhi

3158/23

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Put fee, ranking details online: UGC directs universities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a relief to students, parents and education counsellors, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has made it mandatory for universities and higher education institutions to disclose on their websites details of fee structure and refund policy, hostel facilities, scholarships, rankings and accreditation, according to top officials.

The move comes after the higher education regulator observed that the websites of several universities lack not only in providing basic minimum information but many of these are not functional and updated.

Details of patents, foreign and industry collaborations, internal quality assurance cell, internal complaint committee, anti-ragging cell with helpline number, and equal opportunity cell, are also part of a checklist issued by the university regulator.

"We have found that the websites of several universities lack not only in providing basic minimum information related to their university but also at many



a times their websites are not functional and updated. This causes lot of inconveniences and uncertainty to the stakeholders.

"At this defining moment when we are celebrating third year of National Education Policy 2020 it would be prudent to desire from the universities to provide basic minimum information and updated content on their website. We have prepared a check list of these information to be provided by the universities on their websites," said UGC chairman Jagadeesh Kumar.

Details about alumni association, unions, affiliated colleges, constituent units, students grievance redressal committee, socio-economically disadvantaged group cell and CPIO and appellate authority, are also on the mandatory checklist.

Revoke transfer orders of CAG officers who exposed graft: Congress to Government

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Wednesday accused the Central Government of intimidating officers of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), who had exposed "corruption" in various schemes, and demanded that their transfer orders be revoked.

Citing instances on the transfer of the officers, Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh charged that it is the modus operandi of the Modi government to threaten and remove anyone who "exposes" them.

"We demand that these transfer orders should be cancelled immediately, the officers return to the CAG and action must be taken on these mega scams relating to Dwarka Expressway, Bharatmala and Ayushman Bharat," he said.

The Congress leader charged that "the Modi government operates mafia style under a cloak of silence and intimidation. If anyone exposes its modus operandi of corruption, they are threatened or removed".

The latest victims are three

officers of the CAG, who exposed "massive scams" in government schemes in a report tabled during the Monsoon Session of Parliament, he alleged.

The CAG report showed scams across infrastructure and social schemes. It documented 1400 per cent cost inflation and tendering irregularities in the Dwarka Expressway, in addition to a diversion of Rs 3,600 crore from highways projects, faulty bidding practices, and 60 per cent cost inflation of the Bharatmala scheme, he claimed.

"Not only that, an audit of the Ayushman Bharat scheme showed lakhs of claims made to dead patients and at least 7.5 lakh beneficiaries linked to a single mobile number," he also claimed.

Ramesh charged that the three CAG officers in charge of reporting on the Ayushman Bharat and Dwarka Expressway scams have been transferred "to hide the blatant corruption in the Modi Government, despite the fact that the CAG is supposed to be an independent body".

8 prison officials under police lens for helping conman Sukesesh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has granted permission to Delhi Police for a probe into the role of eight prison officials in a case of organised crime syndicate allegedly run by conman Sukesesh Chandrashekhar from Rohini jail.

Saxena has given permission to the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police for investigation into the role of eight Group B officers of Delhi Prisons under section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, related to the

crime syndicate allegedly run by Sukesesh.

The eight are currently behind the bars, the officials said. They include two jail superintendents, three each of deputy jail superintendents and assistant jail superintendents. This is in addition to the permission granted last year by him to probe the role of 81 other jail officials under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act 1988 for facilitating Sukesesh in lieu of financial gains.

Raj Niwas officials said during investigation, it was emerged that Sukesesh used to

pay approximately ₹1.50 crore every month for getting facilities to use mobile phones and a separate barrack without any hindrance. The jail officials, who will now face probe u/s 7& 8 of PoC Act are Sunil Kumar, Sunder Bora (both Superintendent), Prakash Chand, Mahender Prasad Sundriyal, Subhaash Batra (all Deputy Superintendents), Dharam Singh Meena, Lakshmi Dutt and Prakash Chand (all Assistant Superintendents).

During investigation, it emerged that these eight Jail officials, already arrested under provisions of MCOCA for facil-

itating the organized crime syndicate run by Sukesesh Chandra Shekhar, operating from the Barrack No. 204, Ward No. 3, Jail No. 10, Rohini, had also facilitated Sukesesh by making his stay comfortable and ensuring privacy, so that he could use mobile phones in the jail, in lieu of pecuniary gains.

The footage of various cameras of Rohini Jail were collected and analyzed, duty roster of the said staff was checked, phone details were analyzed and information was collected on the basis of the disclosure of the accused persons.

It was found that that the



said staff was deployed in the Barrack of Sukesesh consultation with him so as to help him to carry out his criminal activities, for pecuniary gains. From

analysis of CDRS/IPDRS of phones seized, it was noted that Sukesesh was continuously in possession of two mobile phones.

During investigation, it has come out that money was paid to all these staff irrespective of their duties, as bribe to ensure that they keep themselves away from spilling beans and remain silent. A separate barrack was exclusively provided to Sukesesh by these Jail officials in gross violation of Jail Manual, for pecuniary gains received through Assistant Superintendent Dharam Singh Meena on regular basis.

In November 2021 the

Delhi Police had told a court here in a charge sheet that Chandrashekhar was using high-end mobile phone applications to spoof the landline numbers of government authorities to extort a large sum of money from several individuals from inside the Rohini prison. Due to his habit of allegedly bribing jail officials, he has been shifted from one jail to another.

He has stayed in Mandoli, Rohini and Tihar jails.

Sukesesh is charged with many multi-crore fraud cases and is also accused of duping high-profile individuals, includ-

ing the family of former Fortis Healthcare and Ranbaxy Lab promoters Shivinder and Malvinder Singh from the premises of the prison.

Earlier in an open letter last month, Sukesesh, has once again written a letter to his ladylove Jacqueline Fernandez.

He has claimed that he will be constructing a super-specialty hospital for horses, dogs and cats in Bengaluru with a budget of Rs 25 crore and it will cover 25000 square feet. Sukesesh claimed that it was Jacqueline's dream to do something for animals that's why he is building a pet hospital.

Delhi-Meerut rapid rail to have more women power

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

When India's first regional high-speed eco-friendly Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System RAPIDX train services will hit the tracks, which is any time soon, it will simultaneously break the ceilings in the male gender dominated transport sector by ensuring equal participation of women.

The 17 km long primary section of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS corridor is going to be commissioned for the public very soon. It is learnt that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Sahibabad-Duhai section this month.

Touted as a game changer, it will be showcasing women empowerment as train operators appointed to operate RAPIDX trains in the priority section will have more female operators than male operators.

Apart from this, women are also playing a crucial role in other areas like station control, station management, operation and maintenance, operation control centre, train attendants, customer care etc.

To familiarize the operators with this modern and urban transport system and train them, they were first provided with classroom sessions and necessary training including driving the train and controlling the



speed of the train on simulators for a duration of three months, said an official from the NCRTC.

"During these training sessions, they were trained about the ETC Level-2 signalling system, which is being used for the first time in the world in the RRTS system, its new-age rolling stock, train control system, etc."

Operating a train is a task of great concentration, patience, and responsibility.

In the last 6 months, trains have been run on this system in the same manner as they will be run after operations. Moreover, every dimension of this system is being examined closely. These women employees have performed excellently in this entire process.

Not only are these women happy to be a part of this pro-

ject, but their families are also feeling proud. They are also feeling the responsibility for the safe and successful journey of passengers.

Operations in the priority section of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS 17 km long corridor are going to commence very soon, preparations for which have been completed. There are 5 stations in this section: Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, Guldhar, Duhai and Duhai Depot. The priority section of RRTS is the first railway system in the country to be opened for operation covering its entire length at a maximum operating speed of 160 kmph, said the official.

RAPIDX will ensure fast, safe and comfortable regional transit service for commuters, said the official.

Taxi driver dies after robbers drag him under his car for 200 metres

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a shocking incident, a 43-year-old taxi driver died after he was dragged for nearly 200 metres on a road in Delhi's Vasant Kunj area.

Police said they received a call about a body of a man who was found lying in a pool of blood on National Highway-8, near the Delhi airport at 11.30pm on Tuesday. He was later identified as Bijendra, a

resident of Faridabad. The incident was caught on camera. A video purporting to show the man being dragged under the car on Tuesday has gone viral on social media. The incident is a re-run of the hit-and-run case in which a 20-year-old woman was dragged to death while she was trapped under a car in the Kanjhawala area of Delhi on new year's day.

Bijendra was driving his

taxi in the Mahipalpur area when a group of robbers tried to steal his vehicle. After overpowering him, the men attempted to flee with the vehicle. As he tried to stop the attackers, they hit him with the taxi and dragged him for over 200 metres.

The robbers fled the spot after dragging the man and left the victim badly injured in the middle of the road. He died after sustaining severe head

injuries, they added.

The police has registered a complaint and has started an investigation into the matter. They are investigating the CCTV cameras in the area and also other areas and are trying to nab the accused in connection with the matter.

The police is also examining the crime site and is searching for the clues that can lead to the arrest of the accused. The police is confident that they will

nab the accused soon.

In Delhi, seven men were arrested for hitting a 20-year-old woman with their SUV on New Year's Eve and dragging her for over 13 kilometers. CCTV videos showed her body dangling under the car even as the accused drove it around to dislodge it from their car.

Cases of similar dragging incidents have been reported from all over the country in the past year.

Modi wants to crush AAP by using agencies against leaders: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday, alleging that he wants to crush the Aam Aadmi Party using agencies like the ED and CBI against its leaders.

Kejriwal made the claims after AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan, whose premises were raided by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday, met with him at his residence here. The opposition BJP in Delhi responded to Kejriwal's charges, alleging that both his government and his party are "inundated" with corruption.

Talking to reporters after the meeting with the MLA, Kejriwal said, "This is not the only incident where PM Modi has directed the raids on the residence of AAP leaders. Since, the



AAP government was formed in Delhi, PM Modi is trying to eliminate AAP with all his might."

"In 2016, the Centre constituted the Shunglu Committee. The Shunglu Committee asked for 400 files, and top officials inspected them thoroughly, yet they did not find corruption of a single penny," the chief minister said. The AAP national convener claimed that after this, AAP MLAs were "framed" in

"fabricated cases". "So far, 170 cases have been filed against AAP MLAs, and judgments in 140 cases have been pronounced, all against the central government. All these judgments unequivocally stated that fabricated cases have been filed and arrests have been made against the AAP MLAs," he said.

Kejriwal also alleged that in the last two years, senior AAP leaders and ministers have been arrested. He was referring to former ministers Manish Sisodia, Satyendar Jain and Sanjay Singh. "The central government arrested Satyendar Jain, Manish Sisodia, and Sanjay Singh, and yesterday, they orchestrated an ED raid on Amanatullah Khan's residence. Yesterday's raid at Amanatullah Khan's residence is also a step towards Modi's scheme of things to curb the AAP."

High Court livestreams proceeding for first time

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday live streamed the hearing of a matter on its official website for the first time with a view to making the court proceedings easily accessible to all.

The proceedings of court no. 1 comprising Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Sanjeev Narula in a case was "successfully" live streamed from 10:33 AM to 11:43 AM, a statement issued by the high court said.

"With a view to make the court proceedings easily accessible to all in this digital age, the High Court of Delhi, under the guidance and visionary leadership of Chief Justice and Information Technology Committee, made this seminal achievement of live streaming of court proceedings in furtherance of its various ICT-enabled services for the benefit of lawyers, litigants and public at large," the statement said.

For now, the live streaming of court proceedings will be conducted on case to case basis, as per the directions of the court and the live streaming of court proceedings will start very soon in the high court's court no. 39, where another division bench conducts its proceedings, it said.

Court no. 1 of the high court generally deals with public interest litigations.

The statement said the Public Works Department has installed the necessary infrastructure for live streaming in

coordination with the information technology and caretaking branches of the high court.

An earlier communication from the high court had clarified that the live-streamed content is for information purpose only and shall not constitute the official record of the court proceedings.

It also said that no person/entity, including print and electronic media, and social media platforms, other than those authorised, shall record, share and/or disseminate the content.

In January, the high court had notified the rules for live streaming and recording of proceedings. 'Live Streaming and Recording of Court Proceedings Rules of the High Court of Delhi, 2022', framed by the high court with the prior approval of the lieutenant governor of Delhi, came into force from January 13 when they were published in the gazette.

As per the rules, all proceedings will be live-streamed by the court excluding matrimonial, child adoption and child custody matters, cases concerning sexual offences and gender-based violence against women, and matters registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act and the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act. Several other categories of cases have also been excluded from being streamed live.

Teams formed to improve air quality at 13 hotspots in city: Rai

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Wednesday said the City Government has formed interdepartmental teams to improve air quality at the 13 air pollution hotspots in the Capital.

"The number of good, satisfactory and moderate days of air in Delhi has increased from 109 in 2016 to 200 in 2023 so far. The 13 identified hotspots are Narela, Bawana, Mundka,

Wazirpur, Rohini, R K Puram, Okhla, Jahangirpuri, Anand Vihar, Punjabi Bagh, Mayapuri, Dwarka. These hotspots were identified based on the annual average concentrations of PM10 and PM2.5 in these areas. The separate action plans have been made for 13 hot spots, on the basis of which work will be done there. For this, 13 coordination teams have been formed," Rai said while addressing a press conference.

Rai said specific action plans



have been developed to identify and mitigate local sources of

air pollution, with the goal of achieving an immediate improvement in air quality.

He said an inventory of pollution sources reveals that construction work, emissions from diesel vehicles, broken roads, and traffic congestion are the primary reasons for poor air quality at Anand Vihar.

Rai said, "Interdepartmental teams have been established to address these issues. We will deploy 12 mobile anti-smog guns to control dust pollution in

the area."

Similarly, teams have been established to address pollution resulting from biomass burning and broken roads in Ashok Vihar. The minister also highlighted that dumping of waste, construction projects, and traffic congestion are major contributors to pollution in Bawana. In Mundka, road construction and traffic congestion significantly impact air quality, he said.

Biomass burning, heavy congestion & road dust, loose

mud dumping, construction site, unpaved road, potholes on road are major contributors to pollution in Wazirpur.

Construction & demolition activity in societies of Yojana Vihar, road dust due to broken roads in B-Block, Jhilmil industrial, garbage C&D waste dumping near B-1/53 Jhilmil Industrial Area, traffic congestion on roads near Railway Road (Jhilmil Underpass) are major contributors to pollution in Vivek Vihar.

City Government to ready 1,000 ghats for Chhath Puja

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government will prepare more than 1,000 ghats across the national Capital for Purvanchali festival Chhath puja this year. These Ghats will provide essential facilities such as clean water, tents, electricity, restrooms, security, medical services, power backup, and CCTV cameras to the devotees.

Delhi Revenue Minister Atishi after a meeting to review preparations for the festival to be held next month, said the government will ensure a more vibrant and grand celebrations of the festival this time.

She directed the officers to identify locations for setting up Chhath puja ghats and give a special attention to sanitation.

She added that all district magistrates should identify locations for Chhath Ghats in their respective districts as per the convenience of devotees and initiate the construction of Ghats there. Additionally, officials should start conducting meetings with local Chhath Puja committees, gather their suggestions, and make preparations accordingly for the successful organization of the puja.

The officials must consid-

er suggestions from Chhath puja committees for preparations of ghats and make proper arrangements for lighting, tent, water and toilets, Atishi said.

The minister asked the officers to begin the preparation in advance so that there is no inconvenience to devotees and mismanagement at the last moment.

"Chhath puja festival is associated with the faith of lakhs of people and the Kejriwal government is determined to ensure that no inconvenience is caused to the devotees while worshipping. All the concerned officials have been directed to ensure that," she said.

The district magistrates will identify locations for Chhath ghats in their respective districts as per the convenience of devotees and start preparing the ghats there. The government has planned to come up with over 1,000 ghats, she said.

These ghats will have essential facilities such as clean water, tents, electricity, restrooms, security, medical services, and CCTV cameras, said the minister.

Besides, cultural programmes by the Maithili-Bhojpuri Academy will be held at several ghats, she added.

Discoms to provide 'tatkal' connection for festival

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Power utility companies of the national Capital, Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited and BSES, have geared up for extensive safety drive in view of the festive season as well as impending winter season.

BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) and BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) have geared-up to provide 'Tatkal' temporary electricity connections for a range of celebrations, including Durga

Pujas, Diwali Melas, Ramlilas, and Marriages. These temporary connections are not just hassle-free; they are also cost-effective, safe, and contribute to a reduction in noise and air pollution. On the other hand, Tata power, supplying electricity to a populace of over 7.5 million in North Delhi, is organising an extensive safety drive for its consumers and field staff to reduce the chances of electricity-related occurrences.

In a statement, BSES Under this innovative scheme, consumers can obtain a 'tatkal' temporary electricity connection on the same day they apply and complete the necessary commercial formalities. This is a significant improvement over the usual wait time of up to seven days for temporary connections.

To avail themselves of the 'tatkal' temporary electricity connection, customers can apply and make payments online through BSES' official website (www.bsesdelhi.com), Mobile App, or WhatsApp.

Alternatively, they can contact the BSES call center at 19123 (BRPL) or 19122 (BYPL) or visit the customer care center/Digi Seva Kendra at the division office for a hassle-free experience.

"Our entire organisation is geared up to make 'same day' connections a reality for our customers. Leveraging our advanced IT capabilities and streamlined processes, this scheme represents our contribution to the festive spirit while actively combating air pollution

in Delhi by reducing reliance on diesel generators. By offering 'Tatkal' temporary electricity connections, they aim to make every festivity memorable, safe, and eco-friendly," a BSES statement said.

In a statement, Tata Power said during this campaign, more than two lakh installations including plain cement and concrete (PCC) poles, street light poles, stay wires, towers, rail poles, fencing of substations, feeder & service pillars, PWD Poles, MCD Poles, ATMs

and lights installed in parks were checked for any unsafe situation / hazard; rectifications thereof.

The company is also running a dedicated social media campaign using its corporate mascot Koshni for giving safety tips to urge consumers to ensure safety during the festivity.

It is also sensitising school children and RWA members through online and offline modes on various aspects of electrical and fire safety.

JNU students boycott classes over delay in students union polls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A section of Jawaharlal Nehru University students boycotted classes on Wednesday in support of a strike call to protest against "delays" in conducting students' union elections, leaders of several organisations said. No immediate reaction was available from the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) administration on the issue.

Students affiliated with various organisations also held demonstrations against the delay in holding elections to the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU), the leaders said. The ABVP, however, did not take part in the strike call.

JNUSU President Aishe Ghosh said that the students' union issued an



"ultimatum" to the university administration, seeking a reply on holding the elections.

"Yesterday (Tuesday), we met the vice-chancellor over the issue and the administration sought another week to furnish an update on the elections. We

will launch an agitation if no proper reply over the elections is received from the university administration," she said.

Students associated with the CPI(M)-backed Students' Federation of India (SFI), the CPI(ML) Liberation-linked All India Students' Association (AISA) and several others from different departments took part in the strike, Ghosh added.

An AISA activist said the elections should have been held by September "but we are already in the middle of October and there is no update on the polls". An ABVP leader said, "We want the polls to be conducted as soon as possible but not at the cost of academics. The boycott of classes will affect the students' education."

MCD attaches property in Jasola for non-payment of over ₹1 crore property tax

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) have "attached" a property in the Jasola institutional area here after its owners allegedly failed to pay outstanding property tax worth more than Rs 1 crore.

In a statement, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) said it has "identified all non-filers and tax defaulters", and will continue to take such action against them.

Taking stern action against property tax defaulters, the MCD has "attached one property -- All India Asian Education Foundation 3 & 4 in Jasola institutional area after its own-

ers failed to pay the total outstanding property tax dues of Rs 1,24,11,238 (approximately Rs 1.24 crore)," it said. "The property owners failed to pay the outstanding property tax due for the period 2017-18 to 2022-23, despite being given ample opportunities by the MCD to pay outstanding dues," the statement said.

Under the drive against property tax defaulters, the Assessment and Collection Department of the MCD has identified all non-filers and tax defaulters and such action against them shall continue under relevant provisions of the Delhi Municipal Corporation (DMC) Act, officials said.

Shah hails Modi after IMF growth forecast

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the International Monetary Fund (IMF) raising India's GDP projection by 0.2 per cent to 6.3 per cent, Union Home Minister Amit Shah Wednesday said when the country is led by a 'sensitive, hardworking and dedicated' leader like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, 'extraordinary results' become imperative as the BJP asserted it was an acceptance of the Indian economy's strength amid slowing global economy.

A day before, the IMF raised India's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) projection by 0.2 percentage point to 6.3 per cent even as it slashed the global growth forecast to 2.9 per cent in 2024 from three per cent in 2023.

"Leadership matters. When the nation is led by a sensitive, hardworking and dedicated leader, then extraordinary results become imperative. On account of the visionary leadership of PM @narendramodi ji our nation is



growing at a rate faster than that of developed nations today.

"What an economist Prime Minister couldn't achieve, a leader dedicated to the people accomplished. More power to you Modi ji on the path to making our Bharat the foremost country in the world," Shah wrote on X.

The IMF's 'World Economic Outlook' noted that the growth in India is projected to remain strong at 6.3 per cent in both 2023 and 2024, with an upward revision of 0.2 percentage point for 2023, reflecting stronger-than-expected consumption during April-June.

India's growth is projected to be higher than China's, the second-largest

economy in the world. The IMF's projection for the United States in 2024 is 1.5 against 2.1 in 2023, for Germany 0.9 against -0.5, the UK's 0.6 against 0.5 and Canada's 1.6 against 1.3.

BJP national spokesperson Syed Zafar Islam also told a press conference that global institutions had "acknowledged" that India's leadership has been able to make its handling of the economy a template for the world.

"Modinomics is being acknowledged globally," he said, praising Prime Minister Modi's handling of the economy.

"The world has acknowledged that the Indian leadership not only understands the economy but is also making the Indian economy a template for the world to follow," he said.

He said the world's economy has historically grown at 3.8 per cent but is now projected to go down to 2.9-3 per cent while India's has been raised. "It is growing at a bullet's pace. It used to be called a part of fragile five in 2014



India sets up control room to keep tabs on Israel war

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

There have been no reports of casualties among the Indian nationals living in Israel. At present, there were no plans to evacuate the citizens as no requests have been received in this regard so far, it was learnt. Incidentally, there are more than 85,000 Jews of Indian origin in Israel. They reportedly migrated there in the 1950s and 1960s.

After Hamas carried out strikes on Saturday last, the Indian embassy in Israel had asked its nationals living in the country to "remain vigilant" and "observe safety protocols as advised by local authorities."

The Indian embassy in Israel in a post on X said, "In view of the current situation in Israel, all Indian nationals in Israel are requested to remain vigilant and observe safety protocols as advised by the local authorities."

"Please exercise caution, avoid unnecessary movement and stay close to safety shelters," it said and urged citizens to contact officials in case of an emergency.

The embassy said for additional information, please see the Israeli Home Front Command website or their preparedness brochure," it said in a statement.

"In case of emergency, please contact us at +97235226748, or leave a message at cons1.telaviv@mea.gov.in. The Embassy personnel remain at your disposal for any further guidance," it added.

Concerns about the security situation have grown after citizens of countries including Nepal and Sri Lanka lost their lives in the violence.

Ten Nepalese citizens were killed in Kibbutz Alumim, one of the locations attacked by the Hamas fighters, while four more were injured and another has been reported missing. The Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment has said a Sri Lankan woman reported missing is suspected to be dead.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Rukshana Khan W/o Mohd. Kadir who is purchasing the Plot Bearing No. 43-A, area measuring 32 Sq. yds., out of Khasra No. 8/13, situated in the area of Village Hastal, Delhi State Delhi, abadi colony known as Shiv Vihar, Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi-110059, from Mr. Satish Kumar S/o Mr. Bhagwan Yadav, who is owner/flat/holder of the aforesaid property vide Notarized General Power of Attorney, Agreement to sell & (unmolested) Will, dated 04/07/2023, which is executed by Mr. Santosh Kumar Prasad S/o Mr. Ram Fakire Prasad, and same to be finance & mortgage by Shubham Housing Development Finance Co. Limited. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any right of claim, title, interest, or creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 07 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, liens etc.

Lucem Legal LLP
Plot No. 136, (Basement) Uday Park,
New Delhi-110049, Contact # 011-40046316

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Sunita Choudhary W/o Late. Mr. Ravinder Kumar who is owner of the First Floor, Without Road Rights, Area Measuring 60 Sq. Yards Built On Property Bearing No. A-26/A, Out Of Khasra No. 75/19, Situated In The Revenue Estate Of Village Hastal, Delhi Area Abadi Known As Colony Known As Ullam Nagar, New Delhi vide Relinquishment Deed dated 24.05.2018-SRO-Delhi, Purchased by Mr. Shane Nonammet And same to be finance & mortgage by Muthoot Homefin (India) Ltd. (MHIL). That The Surviving Member Certificate (SMC) of Late Mr. Ravinder Kumar S/o Late Mr. Rohit Singh is Lost/Misplaced/Not available. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim from title/interest/creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, liens etc.

Lucem Legal LLP
B-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank, Sector 2
Noida, UP-201301, Contact # 0120-4269379

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to all that my client, SHRI SURINDER MALIK S/O SHRI INDER KISHAN MALIK R/O FLAT NO.117-C, SECOND FLOOR, POCKET-JG-III, VIKAS PURI, NEW DELHI-110018, is the owner of DDA JANTA FLAT NO.117-C, SECOND FLOOR, POCKET-JG-III, SITUATED AT VIKAS PURI, NEW DELHI-110018. The original documents i.e. Original DEMAND LETTER of the above said property have been lost or misplaced by my client and is not traceable despite of his best efforts. An F.I.R./NCR to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station, Crime Branch, Delhi (LR No.99822/2023 dated 10.10.2023). Any person(s) claiming any rights, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above Address/Phone No. within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally inform or write to Deputy Director (J.G. Housing) Janta or Director (Housing), Vikas Sadan, New Delhi.

Naveen Aggarwal (Advocate)
Ch.No. M-7, Near SBI, Western Wing, 15 Hazrat Nizamuddin Court, Delhi-54

Cabinet approves formation of Mera Yuva Bharat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the establishment of an autonomous body — 'Mera Yuva Bharat' (MY Bharat) — to serve as an overarching enabling mechanism to ensure youth-led development. The body will be dedicated to the nation on the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on October 31. It will provide equitable access to youths to actualise their aspirations and build a developed India by utilising their energy, said Union minister Anurag Thakur.

Briefing reporters on the decisions taken by the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Thakur said the primary objective of 'Mera Yuva Bharat' (MY Bharat) is to make it a "whole of Government" platform for youth development. Under the new arrangement, with access to resources and connection to opportunities, youth would become community change agents and nation-builders, allowing them to act as the 'Yuva Setu' between the government and citizens.

It seeks to harness the immense energy of youth for nation-building, the minister said, adding it will help achieve youth-led development through 'Kartavya Bodhi' (sense of duty) and 'Seva Bodhi' (sense of service) during the Amrit Kaal. The platform would benefit youth in the age-group of 15-29 years, in



line with the definition of 'Youth' in the National Youth Policy and will help their participation in various government initiatives voluntarily, said Thakur.

The youth in this age group constitute 27 per cent of India's population and this platform will help integrate different schemes related to youths that are being run by the Youth Program Department and many other ministries, he said. To make India strong and powerful, it is necessary to inculcate the spirit of service and sense of duty among the youth and there is a need to include the country's philosophy and history in their thinking to ensure they have the passion to make India self-reliant, the minister said.

To achieve these objectives, it is necessary that various youth-related schemes and programmes are run in a focused manner and schemes and programmes related to youths are brought under an integrated digital platform, he said. This will ensure harmony between the aspirations of the youths and the needs of the community, Thakur said, adding the objective of voluntary community participation of National Education Policy 2020 will also be achieved.

Thakur said this will improve the leadership skills of youths through experiential learning by shifting from isolated physical interaction to programmatic skills and investing more in youths to make them social innovators and community leaders. Setting the focus of the government on youth-led development, the programme aims to make them "active drivers" of development and not merely "passive recipients", he said.

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

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

Whereas

The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Raj Pal Dhillon/Raj Rani/ Ramesh Malik/ V.K. Tex India/ LBPND00002275932	Flat No. T-15-2003 Green Parc-II Crescent Parc Sector 92, Haryana, Gurgaon-101002/ October 10, 2023	April 19, 2023 Rs. 10,14,868/-	Panipat/ Gurgaon

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

Date: October 12, 2023
Place: Gurgaon
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

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Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Devendra Kumar Saxena/ Adarsh Saxena/ Satya Priya Saxena/ Surman Saxena- LBKOT00003397937/ LBKOT00003399314/ LBKOT00003397944	Plot No.42, Panchsheel Colony, at Subhash Nagar, Khasra No. 390, Thermal Road and Nanta Road, Village Kunhari, Tehsil Ladpura, Kota, Rajasthan-324008. Plot No.43, Panchsheel Colony, at Subhash Nagar, Khasra No.390, Thermal Road and Nanta Road, Village Kunhari, Tehsil Ladpura, Kota, Rajasthan- 324008/ October 10, 2023	May 17, 2023 Rs. 83,68,805.00/-	Kota/ Jaipur/ Delhi

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

Date: October 12, 2023
Place: Delhi
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

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

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Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Yogesh Bhandari/ Bharti Sharma/ LBFDD00003412411	Flat No - 4011, Golden Panoramas Tower- 4, Gubbala Village, Uttarahalli Hobli, Bangalore, Karnataka/ October 06, 2023	June 23, 2021/ Rs. 62,30,672/-	Delhi & NCR/ Bangalore
2.	Saurav Singh/ LBGUR00005987401	Flat No. D-103, D Block, 1st Floor, Concorde Amber, Bangalore Sy No.63/1 63/8, Bangalore/ October 09, 2023	February 25, 2023/ Rs.73,41,048/-	Delhi & NCR/ Bangalore
3.	Kapil Dang/ Kanta Devi/ LBDEL00004807343/ LBDEL00004808769	Joda Prop No-53-55, 1st Floor Without Roof, Block E-16, Sector-08, Rohini, Delhi/ October 07, 2023	April 26, 2023/ Rs. 25,77,654/-	Delhi & NCR
4.	Neeraj Gupta/ Rakhi Bubna/ Navcom Technologies/ LBDEL00002303314	Property Bearing No. 280, Entire Second Floor, Block-c, Without Roof/ Terrace Rights, Prashant Vihar Residential Scheme, Prashant Vihar, (along With 1/4th Undivided Share Of Stilt Parking Floor With Right To Common Amenities, With The Proportionate Free Hold Right Of The Land Underneath) Delhi 110085/ October 07, 2023	June 07, 2023/ Rs. 21,22,309/-	Delhi & NCR
5.	Seema Suri/ Virender Suri/ LBDEL00001790872	Property No- 156, Block -su, Only Ground Floor Without Roof Rights, Maura Enclave Pitampura Delhi 110034/ October 07, 2023	May 24, 2023/ Rs. 7,21,455/-	Delhi & NCR
6.	Sanjeev Ranjan Das/ Sumita Das/ LBDEL00002364358	Flat No 1129, 11th Floor, Mig-1 Siddhi Tower, Mahagun Mantra -ii, Situated At Plot No.gh 01, Sector 10, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Greater Noida West/ October 09, 2023	June 09, 2023/ Rs. 24,90,318/-	Delhi & NCR/ Bhagalpur
7.	Rajesh Kumar Yadav/ Anil Kumar Yadav/ LBDEL00002587330	Flat No-9, Ground Floor Lig Venus Cghs Known As Venus Apartment Near Under Enclave, Rohtak Road, Paschim Vihar Delhi Delhi / October 09, 2023	May 17, 2023/ Rs. 35,51,405/-	Delhi & NCR
8.	Sakshi Saxena/ Savita Saxena/ LBDEL00005573062	Flat No T6-1702, 17th Floor, Ace Divino, Sector 01, Situated At Plot No. Gh-14a, Sector- 1, Greater Noida West/ October 09, 2023	June 09, 2023/ Rs. 10,19,095/-	Delhi & NCR
9.	Mohammed Shahid/ Rashida Malik/ LBNOD00004964064	Shop No. O-977, On 9th Floor, Wing B, Gaur City Centre, Situated At Gaur City Plot No. Gh-01 In Sector- 4 Uttar Pradesh Greater Noida/ October 09, 2023	June 03, 2023/ Rs. 5,75,992/-	Delhi & NCR

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

Date : October 12, 2023
Place : Delhi/ NCR
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Court summons Shahnawaz in rape case



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi court on Wednesday Assumedon BJP leader Syed Shahnawaz Hussain on a woman's complaint alleging rape and criminal intimidation. The court took cognisance of the alleged offence and directed the former union minister to appear before it on October 20. The complainant had alleged she was administered an intoxicant by Hussain who then raped her at a farmhouse in the national capital in April 2018.

"This court after going through the cancellation report, protest petition filed by the complainant, the reply to the protest petition filed by the IO and other material on record is of the view that the complainant has given consistent statements to the police, to the court in her application and before the Magistrate in her statement under section 164 Cr.PC," the judge said.

The Delhi Police had filed a report before the court seeking cancellation of the FIR. In an order passed on October 10, the judge dismissed the police report, saying "The issues raised by the IO (investigating officer) while filing the cancellation report...are matters which can be decided during trial."

India, China hold 20th round of Corps Commander meeting on LAC



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As tension persists on the border in Ladakh between the two countries, the 20th round of India-China Corps Commander Level Meeting was held at Chushul-Moldo border meeting point on the Indian side on 9-10 October.

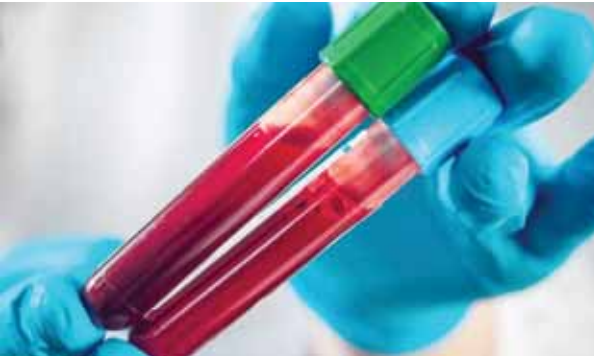
The two sides exchanged views in a frank, open and constructive manner for an early and mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Western Sector, in accordance with the guidance provided by the national leadership of the two countries, and building on the progress made in the last round of Corps Commanders' Meeting held on 13-14 August 2023, officials said here on Wednesday.

They agreed to maintain the momentum of dialogue and negotiations through the relevant military and diplomatic mechanisms. They also committed to maintain peace and tranquility on the ground in the border areas in the interim.

India has been maintaining that it ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas.

The eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong lake area.

The ties between the two countries nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades.



Simple blood test found to detect ovarian cancer early

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A new simple blood test known as OvaPrint can help detect ovarian-cancer-early-with-91-accuracy, according to a preclinical research published in the journal Clinical Cancer Research.

It can suggest whether a pelvic mass is benign or cancerous at a better rate than existing tests. It comes as a ray of hope for millions of women as high-grade serous ovarian carcinoma (HGSC) is the most common type of ovarian cancer. It is also the most lethal form, in part because clinicians do not have effective ways to screen women for it during the cancer's early stages, when it's easiest to treat.

The test has the potential to improve treatment, because the surgical approach to removing a pelvic mass differs depending on whether it's benign or not. Right now, doctors essentially have to take their best guess."

Bodour Salhia, PhD, co-leader of the Genomic and Epigenomic Regulation Research Program at USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and the study's corresponding author

Knowing more about the mass before surgery could point to which type of surgeon and which method of surgery is best for the patient, said Lynda

Collegium recommends elevation of two judicial officers



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court collegium on October 10 recommended the appointment of judicial officers Shalinder Kaur and Ravinder Dudeja as Delhi High Court judges. Shalinder Kaur recently retired from judicial service on September 30. The Collegium decided to go ahead with her elevation in order to ensure greater representation to women.

"The Collegium is conscious of the fact that the officer has recently retired from the Delhi Higher Judicial Service on 30 September 2023. Despite this, having regard to the fact that the officer has a proven track record and possesses both merit and integrity, the Collegium is of the considered view that she is suitable for appointment as a judge of the High Court of Delhi," the Collegium resolution noted.

The Collegium resolution noted that on May 30, the Chief Justice of the High Court in consultation with his two senior-most colleagues recommended the elevation of the two judicial officers.

Health dept keeping eye on viral fever: CMO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said that the district administration and Health department are continuously keeping an eye on the control and prevention of viral fever. "In this sequence, the Health department is emphasising on providing testing and treatment facilities to the patients suffering from fever and joint pain at the community level and also on contacting the Ayushman Bharat-Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) for primary health care.

The CMO said that 222 Community Health Officers (CHOs) are deployed at the HWCs of eight blocks of the district, who are continuously providing medical and health facilities to the people in the community. "At present viral fever is spreading rapidly. To avoid this, emphasis is now being laid on the HWCs, the lowest unit of the Health department, to provide testing and treatment services. In case of health problems like fever, joint pain etc, the CHOs can be immediately contacted at the centres located near the houses," he said, adding that screening and testing facilities are being provided by them. Along with this, a tele-consultancy



CMO Dr Sandeep Chaudhary reviewing efforts to control viral fever in Varanasi on Tuesday.

facility is available at the centres. They are being given counselling through experts/doctors and in case of serious situations, referral is also being made to higher units, he said.

According to Dr Chaudhary, 41 CHOs are deployed in Arazilines block, while 23 in Badagaon, 20 in Pindra, 35 in Sewapuri, 21 in Cholahpur, 29 in Kashi Vidyapeeth, 29 in Harhua and

24 in Chiraigaon. "On an average, five ASHA workers are also deployed in each HWC who are continuously identifying patients suffering from infectious diseases like fever, cold, cough etc and sending them to the HWC for examination and treatment.

Along with this, a special communicable disease control campaign is also being conducted in the district in which people are being advised to

destroy water sources every week," the CMO said.

The CMO said that CHOs will promote health at the grassroots level by using tele-consultation to ensure early detection of disease through testing, diagnosis and availability of medicines and continuous care.

"The CHOs play an important role by providing free primary health services to all," he said.

Kanchi Shankaracharya inspects progress of Shankara Netralaya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peeth Swami Shankar Vijayendra Saraswati Maharaj inspected the progress of construction of the local centre of world famous Shankara Netralaya at Tulsi Patti Hariharpur near Ring Road Phase-I here on Wednesday. Expressing satisfaction after observing the construction work, he said that the charitable hospital being built at a cost of Rs 100 crore will become operational in 2024 and it will greatly benefit the poor people of the city as well as the rural areas.

Swami Shankar Vijayendra Saraswati reached there after completion of his 100 days 'Chaturmas' stay in this holy city en route to his journey towards Ayodhya where he will remain present till forthcoming Shardiya Navratri. Shankara Netralaya was established in Chennai with the initiative of Swami Jayendra Saraswati in 1974 and it has opened its 16 branches in 13 states. It will be the 17th centre in Kashi. Speaking on the occasion, the Shankaracharya said that 'Sarva Indriyananam Nayanam Pradhanam' (the eye is the most important among all the senses). "We see the world through our eyes only so it is important to keep them healthy," he said.

He was accompanied by his local representative and Kashi's Kanchi Math in-charge BS Subramaniam Mani, Chandrashekar Chandru,



Shankaracharya Swami Shankar Vijayendra Saraswati attending a programme at a school in Varanasi on Wednesday.

Vijay Kumar, Vishwanath Temple Trust member Venkat Raman Dhanpathy, Shekhar Dravid, Avinash Pandey, MK Raghu, BK Raman, Shiv Kumar Bhardwaj and many other scholars. Earlier, the local people led by chief of Kashiraj Estate Kunwar Anant Narayan Singh gave an emotional farewell to the Shankaracharya at Chetsingh fort located at Shivala when he reached there from Kanchi Math located at Hanuman Ghat. The Shankaracharya arrived in this holy city for Chaturmas stay on July 15 last from Prayag by road.

The last programme of his Kashi's stay was organised by

Seth MR Jaipuria School near Babatpur airport, where a large number of intellectuals, heads of social, cultural and economic institutions, teachers, guardians and students were present. After reaching the school, the Shankaracharya offered prayers to Maa Sharda and performed a grand aarti. He stayed there for hours and visited the school premises and took stock of the arrangements and activities made for the all-round development of the students including outdoor and indoor sports facilities.

In his blessings, Swami Vijayendra Saraswati said that excessive hope and aspiration

leads to disappointment. "Every person should do his work honestly and with hard work. Whatever results he gets from it, he should do his duty. If one does not get success as per expectation then one should try again. Effort is never futile. If one does not get a true percentage of success in any field then one should not panic nor should one compare with each other," he said. On reaching the school, he was warmly welcomed by Chairman Deepak Bajaj, Manoj Bajaj, Shyam Sundar Bajaj, Ayushman, Director Anil K Jajodia, Principal Sudha Singh, Narendra Pandey, Rakesh Singh and others.

Sanjeev's paintings attract attention of visitors

VARANASI (PNS): The 55 paintings of eminent painter Dr Sanjeev K Goutam Rajput, who received several national and international awards, displayed at an Art Gallery of Ram Chhatpar Shilp Nyas India here attracted the attention of all the visitors. The exhibition with a title of 'Silver Age' shows the journey of the painter during the last 25 years. The exhibition highlights the important aspects of Sanjeev's life as they are creating artworks involving many experiments on a large-scale and along with teaching in many other art institutions, they are also playing an important role in the development of the art.

His paintings are mainly inspired by Indian art culture, love for nature as well as various human sensitivities and they attract the attention of the visitors with interesting subject matter and colour combinations. Due to the large size of



lamp. Sanjeev completed his education from Banaras Hindu University (BHU) by receiving a gold medal in painting in 1998, and has been continuously engaged in international level art work for the last 25 years. For many of his paintings, Sanjeev received the Lalit Kala Akademi National Award in 2001. Sanjeev, who received the international award in New Delhi and Thailand Bangkok this year, is the youngest artist in his field and is known as the first young artist to receive two national and international awards at the young age of 23.

He has also been honoured with almost all the government and non-government awards, scholarships and fellowships of the country since his youth.

While working as an assistant professor in the Faculty of Visual Arts, BHU from 2007 to 2016, he renovated the print-making studio and currently he has been working as the Head of the Department of Fine Arts in Lucknow University. He is famous for the vastness and experimentation of his artwork. New experiments at many levels are visible in Sanjeev's prints and paintings, which have given birth to many famous artworks which are also clearly visible in the display of his paintings in an exhibition here. Sanjeev has also been nominated as a member in many prestigious art institutions of the country like Lalit Kala Academy New Delhi, National Gallery of Modern Art New Delhi etc.

Prevalence of dengue in men higher: Report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Prevalence of dengue infection among men is higher than in women Sangam city as around 68 per cent patients of dengue fever were found to be males, according to a report of the Health department.

Statistics of the district Health department revealed that till October 10, out of the total 205 dengue cases reported in the city, trans-Ganga and trans-Yamuna pockets,

68.29 per cent (140) were males while 31.70 per cent (65) were females. The report further showed that dengue was found mostly in the 12-45 years age group. District Malaria Officer Anand Kumar Singh said, "The data of dengue patients has been analysed to check which age group and gender is more susceptible to dengue fever and viral infection. The highest number of cases was from the 12-45 years age group with over 205 cases." As many as 205

people have tested positive for dengue through the ELISA test this year. However, no hotspot was reported this season as cases were reported from all localities of the city. The health officials have also released a locality-wise cases which included Mundera (10), Naimi (9), Bamrauli (9), Shantipuram (7), Jhunsi (6), Civil Lines (6), Phaphamau (6), Rajapur (5), Preetannagar (5), Katra (5), Kalindipuram (4) and Teliyarganj (4). Instruction has

been given to the civic body to spray insecticides and conduct fumigation regularly to break the chain of dengue spread, the DMO added. He said, "There has been a drastic fall in the number of dengue cases in trans-Ganga and trans-Yamuna pockets of the district as compared to previous year. Youngsters are more vulnerable as they move from one place to another, exposing themselves to different environments," he said.

4 members of inter-district auto-lifters' gang held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Fatehpur police busted an inter-district gang of auto lifters and arrested four members near Devara turn. Five bikes, one e-rickshaw, five batteries and one country made pistol of 0.315 bore along with one live cartridge were also recovered.

Those arrested were Shahid Abbas of Kaushambi, Karrar Haider of Manjhanpur, Akash Yadav of Kada Dham and

Mohd Jamar of Fatehpur. One of their accomplices, Asif of Kada Dham, managed to escape. The police said the gang was operating in an organised way and targeted deserted houses, colonies and parking stands.

INAUGURATED: Mayor Ganesh Kesarwani inaugurated the Rojgar Mela organised by the Regional Employment Office on Wednesday at KP Higher Education Institute in Jhalwa in which 21 companies participated. The companies

interviewed 8,000 students. Out of these, selection has been done on 3,100 posts. Before its inauguration Mayor Ganesh Kesarwani, who was the chief guest, garlanded the idol of Mother Saraswati and lit the lamp.

Kesarwani in his address said providing employment to the youth as per their qualifications is the priority of the Modi and Yogi governments. MD of KP Higher Education Institute OP Pandey said 3,100 students have been given jobs

by 21 companies on various posts. The KP Higher Education Institute will continue to organise such big job fairs in future also.

The major companies that participated in the job fair included Career Bridge Skill Solution, Dusky Stallion Consultancy Service Pvt Ltd, etc

The posts for which selection has been made in the Rojgar Mela mainly include line operator, associate operator, etc.

RPF constable rewarded for devotion to duty

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A n RPF constable was rewarded with a cash prize and merit certificate for his help in restoring the lost ID card of a DRDO scientist. A senior IRED scientist of the Defence and Research Organisation (DRDO), Dehradun, Shashank Joshi, boarded the Vande Bharat Express from Agra on October 2 to Hazrat Nizamuddin station, New Delhi. In the process of boarding the train, Joshi's identity card fell on the platform. He realised this an hour later and informed Satyabhan Singh, RPF constable on duty, who assured him all possible help. Within an hour, Singh

informed Joshi that his identity card has been traced and will be sent to him by post.

His identity card was delivered to him on October 7. "Joshi sent a mail to the organisation and requested us to reward Singh," said the IGCum-Principal Chief Security Commissioner, North Central Railway (NCR), Amiya Nandan Sinha. Joshi wrote in his mail, "I feel pleased to place on record my appreciation for the devotion to duty displayed by Satyabhan Singh, RPF, Agra Cantt. After he was told about the loss, he assured me of all possible help and within an hour, he was back with information about my I card. He informed me that my

I card had been traced and he would send it to me by post. He did not even accept the postage charges for sending me my I-card". Joshi further wrote, "As a passenger of Indian Railways, I am impressed with the devotion to duty displayed by Satyabhan Singh of RPF and request you to reward him appropriately. Rewarding dedicated employees like Singh would inspire other fellow employees of RPF". Amiya Nandan Sinha rewarded Singh with a cash prize and merit certificate, here.

ELECTION: The IFFCO Officers' Association election programme was announced by Election Officer PK Patel at IFFCO Phulpur unit. The

nomination will be held on October 12 and 13 from 11.30 am to 3.30 pm in Old H Block. Scrutiny of nomination papers will be held on October 13, publication of list of valid candidates on October 13, withdrawal of nominations and publication of list of candidates on October 14. The voting will be held on October 20 from 5.30 am to 3.30 pm at Canteen Hall and counting of votes will start from 4 pm on October 20. The election results will be released on October 20. The IFFCO Officers' Association election will be held for 15 posts, including president, vice-president, general secretary and joint secretary.

ILS on women in engg from Oct 15

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A two-day International Leadership Summit (ILS) on 'Women in Engineering' will be organised from October 15 at Jhalwa campus, Indian Institute of Information Technology, Allahabad (IIIT-A).

The IEEE sponsored programme will focus on the theme IEEE Women in Engineering International Leadership Summit (IEEE WIE ILS) 2023: Igniting Innovation and Empowering Leadership.

Dr Pragya Singh, Head of Management Studies Department, IIIT-A and coor-

director of programme said the two-day event promises to be an inspiring and informative experience, bringing together distinguished speakers, eminent leaders and participants from across the globe.

The summit's inauguration will be graced by dignitaries Prof Mukul S Sutaone, Director, IIIT-A, Prof Seema Singh, Vice-Chancellor, UPRTOU, Prof SN Singh, Director, IIITM Gwalior, Prof RS Verma, Director, MNNIT Allahabad, Pallavi Rai, Deputy Director, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Training Centre for Disability Sports, Gwalior, MP, in the auditorium, Jhalwa on October 15.

The keynote speakers from abroad including Prof Celis Shahnaz, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Bangladesh, Prof Takako Hashimoto, Dr Lei Wang, Technical VP, Standards, Futurewei Technologies and representatives from IEEE Standards Association will take part in online mode during the two-day meet. The distinguished keynote speakers who will share their insights and expertise include Sindhu Verma, Master Engineer, Broadcom, Bengaluru, (Emerging Disruptive Technology), Prof Saij Mathew, IIT Madras, Chennai, (Business Intelligence), Prof

Santosh Rangnekar, IIT Roorkee, (Sustainability & Leadership), Prof J Ramkumar, IIT Kanpur, (Social Innovation), Shweta Berry, Director Marketing and Head of Strategic Alliances, Noida, (Leadership), Darilin Tang, IIM Shillong, (Women Empowerment) Dr Pragya Singh said more than 150 registrations have been received so far. We look forward to where innovation, leadership and empowerment converge to inspire change and progress. Together, we will shape the future of women in engineering, she said. A cultural programme will be presented by SPIC MACAY on the occasion.

DM inspects Navratri Mela area

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

District Magistrate Priyanka Niranjan inspected the Vindhyaal Navratri Mela area on Tuesday. She inspected the Roadways campus in which the exhibition was to be organised by the Department of Information and Public Relations to highlight the achievements of the government. She inspected the preparation of the pandal as well as the stage which is under progress for holding the cultural programmes under the aegis of Vindhya Teerth Vikas Parishad and Mahotsav Samiti during Navratri. At Vindhya Vidyapeeth Inter College she directed the officials to set up tents equipped with essential amenities, including temporary toilets, bathing rooms, light, bed etc. for the devotees. She directed to make all arrangement in the rooms for the stay of homeguards. At Kotwali road she asked the working agency to cover all drains on the road leading to the temple. During the inspection of Ganga ghats she saw the cleaning drive and warned to complete all works, including



DM Priyanka Niranjan inspecting the Navratri Mela area at Vindhyaal on Tuesday

changing room, lighting, barricading etc on time.

ARRESTED: The Madihan police on Tuesday nabbed an accused of raping a minor girl. One person had lodged a named FIR on September 21 alleging that the accused had enticed his minor daughter away. After registering the case the police started the investigation and recovered the girl. Later the sections of POCSO Act along with rape were added. The team formed by SHO Vijai Kumar Chaurasia arrested the accused of Kanhayeepur village and sent him to jail. Meanwhile Lalganj

police on Tuesday arrested an accused for cheating in the name of job through forged papers. A case was registered at the police station alleging that the accused persons had extorted money from the complainant in the name of job. The police had already nabbed three accused. SO Ajit Kumar Srivastava was tipped off by an informer and the police team raided the place, arrested the fourth accused and sent him to jail. The accused was identified as Toni Tiwari of Aahi village under Kachhawaan police station.

MURDERED: One per-

son was murdered in a petty dispute in an area under Adalhaat police station at night. Munshi Ram (40), a tractor driver of Bhormar Mafi village had gone to Bikhadu's residence to complain about his younger brother who had allegedly snatched Rs 95 from his son. The matter took an ugly turn and Bikhaduu allegedly attacked Munshi Ram's head. The villagers rushed Munshi Ram to the hospital for treatment but he died. The police registered a case and sent the body of Munshi Ram for the post-mortem.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Kriegspiel

The five Assembly election results would give a fair idea about the political mood of the nation

Elections to Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Telangana and Mizoram have been scheduled for November. These elections are not just regional contests but will have far-reaching implications for the General Elections of 2024. Madhya Pradesh has traditionally been a bellwether State with its outcome often indicative of the national trend. With the BJP keeping its cards hidden on the issue of the next CM, speculation is rife that it is the end of the road for incumbent Shivraj Singh Chouhan. The BJP is eager to regain power, while the Congress, led by Kamal Nath, is harping upon the anti-incumbency of 20 years of the BJP rule. In the state of Rajasthan it is Congress stalwart Ashok Gehlot who would be defending his turf and fighting anti-incumbency. In Telangana, Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) will seek re-election. The BRS swept the 2018 Assembly polls, and KCR has since been a prominent player in national politics, advocating for a federal front. The Opposition, including the Congress and the BJP, is determined to challenge KCR's dominance in the State. These elections could determine whether KCR remains a formidable regional force and whether his federal front gains traction on the national stage. Chhattisgarh, a State with a history of left-wing extremism, will also go to the polls. Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel has been leading the Congress Government, and the elections will test the party's popularity. In the border State of Rajasthan, it could be a direct contest between Congress and the BJP. Mizoram gears up for the impending Assembly elections on



November 7. The State will see its 40 Assembly seats go to polls in a single-phase election. The electoral battleground in Mizoram appears to be poised for a close contest, with opinion polls predicting a hung Assembly.

The interest in these elections is mainly for two reasons. First, they are the first major round of elections after the formation of the INDIA bloc and its first test at the hustings and, second, they are being held just months before the General Elections. Psephologists maintain that most people tend to vote for the same party when State and general elections are narrowly spaced. This would indeed indicate the mood of the people in these five important States, of which four are in the Hindi heartland. These elections are not merely regional contests but pivotal events that will shape the political trajectory of India as a whole. They will be closely scrutinised for clues about the national political climate, alliance dynamics and voter sentiments, all of which will impact the outcome of the General Elections in 2024. Though the state elections are different from the Lok Sabha election, the political parties would still be going all out to win these elections as they would not like to lose any ground just before the General Elections.

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PICTALK



An artist gives final touches to the miniature idols of Goddess Durga at an exhibition 'Durga Puja Art-2023,' in Kolkata PTI

India: The quality pharmacy of the world

Indian pharmaceutical companies have immense potential to increase their share in the \$1.4 trillion global pharma industry

The global pharmaceutical space has witnessed massive evolution in the last three years, following the pressure mounted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Within a short period, India — as one of the world's leading pharmaceutical producers — has embarked on an ambitious project towards becoming the quality pharmacy of the world. Now valued at about \$50 billion, and supplying generic drugs and vaccines used in the United States, the UK, Africa, and many other parts of the world, the Indian pharma industry has truly come of age.

The importance of India's pharma industry to the world is also heavily felt in the fight against viral diseases like HIV/AIDS, supplying around 80% of all antiretroviral drugs globally. While these are commendable feats achieved by impressive policies and the ingenuity of local drug producers and Contract Development and Manufacturing Organisations (CDMOs), there's still a lot to do as India's pharma turnover is only about 3% of the \$1.4 Trillion global pharma industry.



At the moment, India ranks 14th on the global pharmaceutical industries' index, in terms of value, supplying quality medicines both for domestic and global markets.

R&D through PLI
The government of India has set its sights on the Atma Nirbhar agenda, introducing policies and programmes to grow the sector. Since 2020, the government has introduced several schemes to support the industry, with many of them focused on promoting research and development. These include the Production-linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for the Promotion of Domestic Manufacturing of Critical Key Starting Materials (KSMs)/ Drug Intermediates and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs).

The scheme was introduced to support local production of KSMs and APIs in India to stop the country's

dependence on China and other countries, as well as encourage R&D and innovation among local drug manufacturers. Also introduced were the PLI Scheme for pharmaceuticals in 2021 and the scheme for Strengthening of Pharmaceuticals Industry (SPI) in 2022. With an overall aim to transform India into the global pharma leader, the SPI scheme seeks to improve productivity, quality, and sustainability in pharma manufacturing companies.

There is also the scheme for bulk drug parks which was gazetted in 2020. In September 2022, the Department of pharmaceuticals approved the set-up of bulk drug parks in Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh in a bid to support the manufacturing of bulk drugs in the country.

Strengthened regulatory framework for improved quality and processes

Although the SPI scheme specifically targets regulatory controls as well, there are other specific steps the government has taken in recent years to address long-standing issues. This includes increasing the scope of price

control for drugs as well as devices. Recent moves to ensure extensive checks and approvals are obtained for drugs, including the syrup guideline recently issued as well as the bioequivalence studies required for all drugs, category II and category IV are also geared towards achieving the best quality output to meet global standards.

Lastly, while centres like the Delhi Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research Institute, the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research, and other universities have been strengthened in recent years, a recent announcement by the government to identify and empower centres of excellence to undertake research in moonshot areas is laudable, and can further catalyse the growth the industry so needs to take its rightful place in the world. A joint effort of industry and academia can make the quality pharmacy of the world.

(The writer is Jt. Managing Director, Akums Drugs & Pharmaceuticals; views are personal)



SANJEEV JAIN

Hamas attack exposes Israel's vulnerabilities

Israel has no choice but to hit back hard but a more serious introspection and recalibration of governance is overdue

The recent Hamas attack on Israel has been a huge blot on Israeli perceptions, not because Hamas will come remotely close to holding onto anything tangible, but due to the abject Israeli failure to preempt a strike of such magnitude and intensity. Has too much been romanticised about the Israeli intelligence agencies (Mossad, Aman, Shin Bet etc), their preparedness, or even of its fabled security apparatus that could supposedly deter any attackers?

How did Israel not pick the unavoidable assemblage and tell-tale signs of fighters, weaponry and planning that goes into the execution of such a gargantuan operation? Hamas claims to have fired 5,000 rockets (though Israel suggests half) and breached supposedly well-guarded borders with technologically advanced barriers, replete with concrete, sensors, and cameras etc., Further, these borders were also supposedly always manned by trained and armed patrols. What happened to the apparently impregnable and highly advanced Iron Dome missile system — did it get overwhelmed by the simultaneous barrage of rockets? There were even six to seven paraglider-borne Hamas elements seen flying over Israeli barriers, just as Hamas attempted to cross into Israeli land by sea, with landing vessels. Civilian bulldozers were put into action to demolish the protective electric wire fencing on the border. The meticulously choreographed Hamas sweep was virtually from all directions with pick-up trucks facilitating their racy entry through border breaches.

Even politically, it wasn't as if a pacifist politician e.g., Shimon Peres, or one from a non-military background e.g., Ehud Olmert, Golda Meir or Menachem Begin, was leading the current Israeli dispensation — it is led by the ultrahawkish Benjamin 'Bibi' Netanyahu, who served in the Israel Defence Forces and whose brother is the legendary 'Yoni' Netanyahu, who commanded Sayeret Matkal (Special Operation Team) during the daring Entebbe raid, and was the only Israeli fatality in that operation. How did a



political leader with such 'muscular' politics, positions and commitments lower his guard to such an extent, that it was caught completely by surprise?

Has Israel's historical brazenness in sovereign conduct and defending itself been grossly mistaken for efficacy in action, especially in containing militancy? Indeed, Israel's history and geography have bestowed it with extraordinary challenges that warrant its popular belligerence, but that notwithstanding, this is not the first time that it has been caught off-guard, so completely. Exactly fifty years to the day, the Arab coalition of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq etc., launched a sudden, coordinated, and swift attack (Yom Kippur War) across the ceasefire line and entered the Israeli-held Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights. That the Israeli forces counterattacked and inflicted a terrible price on joint Arab ambitions, pride, and consciousness is another matter — what was similar then, as is now, the Israelis with all their fabled intelligence depth and instinct, had failed to pick the attack miserably, as it failed now.

While the familiar term that followed the '9/11' fiasco, as far as the US intelligence services were concerned, had seen some 'red flags' but failed to 'connect the dots' will surely emerge in the postmortem of the Hamas attack. What is glaring is that the sheer quan-

HAS ISRAEL'S HISTORICAL BRAZENNESS IN SOVEREIGN CONDUCT AND DEFENDING ITSELF BEEN GROSSLY MISTAKEN FOR EFFICACY IN ACTION, ESPECIALLY IN CONTAINING MILITANCY?

tum of human, material and multiple-front attacks that entailed this Hamas attack (which Israel declares their own '9/11') is far more difficult to hide than the original '9/11' operations. As the second biggest intelligence agency in the world with an impressive annual budget of \$3 billion and with almost negligible threat perceptions from the Arab States anymore, given their constraints and evolved narrative — the Mossad ought to have had Hamas (Lebanese Hezbollah's sabre-rattling notwithstanding) as the only realistic threat, and yet it slipped through.

The consequences of the fractured and deeply polarised Israeli society in recent times, especially on the relatively moderate security agencies cannot be discounted. Many in the intelligentsia and elites of Israeli society (including senior leadership in IDF) were bitterly opposed to Netanyahu's toying with the constitution, and with the Supreme Court, and pandering to the religious hardliners who have no understanding or background of security imperatives. A disengaged and dejected security environment couldn't have helped matters, as Netanyahu was speeding ahead with changing the status quo of the Israeli state and sensibilities, recklessly. A couple of years back, six former security chiefs had warned against Netanyahu's politicisation of

the security apparatus to buttress his political appeal, whilst compromising on its traditional restraint and apolitical bearings.

Beyond Netanyahu's misadventures, a certain hubris and overconfidence by Israel's intelligence agencies is obvious, perhaps a collateral damage of 'Hollywoodising' their image to mythic proportions. The Israeli reality is never as James Bondish as it is made out to be, as its undeniable counterattack ritual and lack of 'political correctness' in the face of repeated UN sanctions, does give it a larger-than-life aura, but not invincibility. History validates many spectacular failures like the 1973 Yom Kippur War, or now with the latest Hamas attack.

Another lesson for other countries is the overplaying of a 'muscular' hand in insurgencies without an element of accompanying and necessary political-societal inputs. Israel was safer in the 90s when the Oslo Accord was signed by the likes of Shimon Peres, but decidedly more violent when hardliners like Netanyahu or Sharon ruled. For now, Israel has no choice but to hit back hard but a more serious introspection and recalibration of governance is overdue.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE HAMAS ATTACK ON ISRAEL

Sir—The recent deadly attack by Hamas, an extremist organisation in Palestine, on Israel and Israel's subsequent retaliatory assault on Gaza, resulting in the loss of thousands of innocent lives, is truly heart-wrenching. The ongoing conflict in the Middle East is a consequence of the geopolitical maneuvers of world leaders, akin to a complex chess game. Israel's growing proximity to Saudi Arabia has raised concerns in Iran, prompting its support for Hamas, alongside other groups from Lebanon, in launching a fierce attack on Israel.

With explicit support from the United States, Israel has been imposing unfair terms on Palestine for several years, leading to a cycle of attacks and counterattacks that inflict immense suffering on the entire region. It is imperative that world leaders recognize that terrorism poses a threat to all nations, and a united effort to combat it must be pursued. Until then, the menace to humanity will persist, and global peace will remain an elusive dream. Rather than taking sides, nations around the world should address the root causes of the issue and assist the warring parties in finding a lasting resolution.

DVG Sankara Rao | Vizianagaram

UN MUST MAKE EFFORTS TO END WAR

Sir—In the first place, both Israel and Palestine should declare a ceasefire on all destructive activities, be it related to construction or loss of life. For decades, these two nations have failed to resolve their differences bilaterally, leading to intermittent bombings. As an initial step, the United Nations (UN) and Nobel Peace Laureates should collaborate as a unified team, engaging separately with each of the belligerent groups, Israel and Palestine, to understand their view points.

A unified team should deliberate among themselves and propose peaceful solutions. In the third step, they should mediate between the two opposing sides, presenting the agreed-upon solutions. This should be repeated until mutually

Assembly election schedule announced



The Election Commission (EC) has officially released the election schedule, with Mizoram set to vote on November 7, Madhya Pradesh (MP) on November 17, Chhattisgarh on November 7 & 17, Rajasthan on November 23, and Telangana on November 30. The counting of votes will take place on December 3. Approximately 16.1 crore voters, including 60.2 lakh first-time voters, are eligible to cast their ballots in these elections. Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar has emphasised the implementation of stringent measures to ensure that these elections

are free from inducements and influence. While this is a positive development for a free and fair election, some questions arise.

It's puzzling why CEC Rajiv Kumar, unlike other countries, schedules and announces results within a week. In India, we witness the spectacle of month-long elections, seemingly allowing Prime Minister Modi to travel extensively and promote his party through rallies. Additionally, the delay in announcing results raises concerns about the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). If electronic processes are being upheld, why not declare results the day following the conclusion of voting in states with a single-phase election? The suspicion that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had prior knowledge of the EC's election date announcement on October 9, 2023, raises questions about the autonomy of constitutional institutions. It is essential to reconsider the current election process for efficiency and transparency.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

acceptable solutions are reached, leading to a sustainable peace.

Madhu Nirviti | Secunderabad

THE BENEFITS OF WALKING BAREFOOT

Sir—Walking barefoot, often referred to as "earthing," offers a profound connection to the natural environment, providing a sense of calm and rejuvenation for many individuals. It allows your feet to directly engage with various surfaces, offering sensory stimulation, enhancing balance, and improving proprioception.

This ancient practice not only has physical benefits but also holds a special place in promoting mental and emotional well-being. As your feet touch the earth's surface, a unique grounding experience occurs, fostering a deep connection with nature. This connection can alleviate stress and anxiety, providing a soothing escape from the hustle and bustle of modern life. Many individuals who practice

earthing report increased mental clarity and reduced feelings of overwhelm. Additionally, walking barefoot can significantly enhance one's balance and proprioception. It requires you to adapt to the varying textures and contours of the ground, thus strengthening the small muscles in your feet and improving your overall stability. This can be particularly beneficial for individuals of all ages, including the elderly, in preventing falls and injuries.

Beyond the physical and mental advantages, walking barefoot can also be a spiritual and meditative experience for those who appreciate the spiritual aspects of connecting with the Earth. This practice has deep cultural and spiritual significance in many indigenous communities worldwide.

Tanisha Gupta | Ujjain

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FIRST COLUMN

THE SCIENCE BEHIND 'BEEJ MANTRAS'

It is a therapy based on sound vibrations and awakens your hidden powers



SWAMI CHARANASHRIT

Mantras have been an integral part of various spiritual and meditative traditions for centuries. These sacred sounds and phrases are believed to possess the power to transform one's consciousness and bring about profound changes in one's life. Among the vast array of mantras, Beej Mantras hold a special place. These concise, seed-like sounds are considered to be the essence of larger mantras and are believed to have unique vibrational qualities. In this article, we explore the science behind Beej Mantras and how their recitation can have a profound impact on our well-being.

Understanding Beej Mantras

Beej, derived from the Sanskrit word "bij," translates to "seed." Beej Mantras are, in essence, the core or seed sounds from which more complex mantras evolve. They are often single syllables or short phrases and are usually associated with particular deities, chakras, or specific aspects of life. Some of the well-known Beej Mantras include "Om" (the universal sound), "Hrim" (associated with the goddess Shakti), and "Ram" (associated with Lord Rama).

The Science of Sound

To comprehend the power of Beej Mantras, it is essential to delve into the science of sound. Sound is not merely an auditory sensation but also a vibrational one. Every sound emits specific frequencies and wavelengths, and these vibrations can influence the physical, emotional, and spiritual realms of our being. The scientific study of this phenomenon is known as Cymatics. Cymatics reveals how sound vibrations can create intricate patterns in substances like water, sand, and even on the human body. Beej Mantras, when chanted, generate particular vibrational frequencies that interact with the energy centers in our bodies, or chakras, and impact them in various ways.



Chakras and Beej Mantras

Each Beej Mantra is often associated with a specific chakra, or energy center, within the body. Chakras are believed to be focal points of energy, influencing physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. The resonant frequencies of Beej Mantras are said to activate and align these chakras, facilitating a sense of balance and harmony. For instance, the Beej Mantra "Lam" is associated with the Root Chakra, located at the base of the spine. Chanting this mantra is thought to strengthen and stabilize this chakra, promoting feelings of security and grounding.

The Power of Intention

Science suggests that the effectiveness of Beej Mantras may also be linked to the power of intention. When one chants a Beej Mantra with a clear and focused intention, the vibrational energy emitted is further amplified. Intention can direct the energy of the mantra toward specific goals, such as healing, personal growth, or spiritual realization. Studies in the field of quantum physics have shown that intention can influence and alter the properties of matter. Thus, it is plausible that when individuals chant Beej Mantras with a specific intention, they may be affecting not only their own consciousness but also their external reality.

Resonance and Healing

The science of resonance further elucidates the impact of Beej Mantras. When a vibrating object comes into contact with another object with a similar resonant frequency, the second object will begin to vibrate in sympathy. This principle is at the core of how Beej Mantras can influence our well-being. Chanting a Beej Mantra with the right frequency can induce a resonant response in our own energies, harmonizing imbalances and promoting healing.

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

RTI Act: Time to make it more effective

Right to Information (RTI) has brought transparency and systemic reforms but there is need to prevent its misuse and plug in loopholes



SUBHASH CHANDRA AGRAWAL



RTI Act implemented on 12th October 2005 in the initial years of its implementation did wonders not only by exposing scams and scandals but also resulted in systemic reforms. However, RTI rules (and not the RTI Act) need important modifications mainly to prevent misuse of the Act and minimise challenge to CIC verdicts in courts.

Precious time of Information Commissions and courts should be saved through a notification issued by the central government to declare all public-private partnerships, sports-bodies, cooperative societies and other such bodies, and public authorities under the RTI Act. Land and Building Departments of central and state governments should study all cases of allotment of land or government accommodations at subsidised rates or leases, and declare all these as public authorities under the RTI Act. For the future, land or government accommodations should be provided at subsidised rates on pre-condition of beneficiaries coming under the purview of the RTI Act.

Considering the vast participation of public money in private sector banks, all private sector banks must be under the purview of the RTI Act. Already all employees up to the highest post of CMD are public servants according to the Banking Regulation Act. RBI had to impose restrictions on the withdrawal of money for some time on a prominent private sector bank. The former CMD of another prominent private sector Bank is under arrest for serious charges of misappropriation of public money in the Bank. Inspection Reports of private banks revealed under the RTI Act by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reveal gross misuse of public money by top management.

Another private sector bank is renowned for a large number of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs). Heavy fluctuation in share prices of certain private sector banks tends to doubt the safety of public money in private sector banks. Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (a subsidiary of RBI) has to pay a maximum rupees five lakhs from state funds to each depositor of the bank including those in the private sector which collapses due to massive irregularities, which

is public funding to declare private sector banks as "public-authorities" under section 2(h) of RTI Act.

Sections 27 and 28 of the RTI Act give power to Competent Authorities and state governments to draft their own rules which include fixing RTI fees and mode of payment of RTI fees. Several Competent Authorities and states misused their power by having RTI fees as high as rupees 500. Several states fixed RTI fees for filing First Appeals. However, the Supreme Court in its verdict dated 20.03.2018 imposed a capping of rupees fifty to be the maximum RTI fee.

India should be governed by the principle "One Nation-One Rule" concerning RTI fees and its mode of payment by clubbing copying charges of the first twenty copied pages with basic RTI fees of rupees ten (for central public authorities) thus making Rupees Fifty as uniform RTI-fees throughout the country inclusive of charges of first twenty copied pages. Making basic RTI fees at rupees fifty will largely prevent misuse of the RTI Act. There must not be any fees for filing First or Second Appeals. To prevent big contractors and others from misusing the provision by filing RTI applications under the names of their workers of the BPL category to get copying charges in thousands of rupees waived off, persons under the BPL category may be required to pay copying charges for copied pages exceeding twenty.

Handling the cost of a postal order of value rupees ten costs the postal-department about rupees fifty with the cost of handling orders by a public authority and bank clearing even extra. Most public authorities require postal-orders under different names even though DoPT in its various circulars has required postal orders towards RTI payments to be in the name of the Accounts Officer only. To overcome the situation, frequent CIC verdicts and administra-

tive requests of CIC should be accepted by the department to issue special RTI stamps (like earlier stamps for payment of licence fees of radios and TV sets) in denominations of rupees 2, 10 and 50 which will save crores of rupees annually to public-exchequers in using postal-orders as a mode of payment of RTI fees. These RTI stamps should be conveniently available at all post offices and counters of public authorities and other convenient sale points. This will tackle a situation where public authorities like the National Green Tribunal (NGT) refuse acceptance of RTI fees in cash with the nearest post office at Baroda House (New Delhi) not selling postal orders thus putting RTI applicants in big difficulty.

Post-free RTI applications addressed to central public authorities should be accepted at about 1,60,000 post offices rather than just about 4,500 post offices presently. This post bag can carry post-free RTI applications received at the post office.

DoPT should issue a circular in tune with para 23 of the verdict dated 02.11.2012 by Punjab & Haryana High Court in the matter "Fruit and Vegetable Union versus Unknown" (CWP 4787 of 2011) which requires ID proof compulsory to be attached with every RTI application. First Appeal and petitions filed with Information Commissions. Already the aspect has been adopted in Odisha apart from Punjab and Haryana. Those who do not want to disclose their identity can file RTI applications through a post-box.

Police inquiry conducted at the behest of some Indian missions abroad established that a petitioner approached the Central Information Commission with a name and address both of which did not exist. Online portals for filing RTI applications should be modified so that RTI-responses and orders of First Appellate Authorities

may also be auto-emailed rather than RTI-applicants required to search the portal for viewing of RTI-responses. SMS and email alerts about emailing RTI responses should also be there.

Websites designed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) for central public authorities should be mandatorily for all states. This has become necessary for states like Odisha which has made online filing of RTI applications a mockery when it is compulsory to download an online-filled RTI application, and then send it by post to the concerned department. Some organisation named Institute-Of-Public-Administration (IPA) has been sending letters to all public authorities coming under the purview of the RTI Act regarding holding paid two-day workshops on charging heavily to the tune of rupees 20000 for local public authorities and rupees 40000 for participants with a spouse. The drafting of invitation letters looks like that of some government-authorised body like the Indian-Institute-Of-Public-Administration (IIPA). Many public authorities confuse the letter as if sent from a government-authorised sending participants to attend an RTI workshop at the cost of the public exchequer. IIPA should take cognisance of the matter to prevent such tactics from minting money by private bodies.

Delhi High Court in its order dated 08.08.2018 in WPC 8278 of 2018 in the matter "Anil Dutt Sharma versus Government of NCT Delhi and others" mentioned that this Court is of the prima facie view that the Right-To-Information Act, 2005 would now override the Delhi Right To Information Act, 2001 as it would occupy the entire legislative field. DRTI Act has lost all with the implementation of the RTI Act 2005. Very few applications are filed under the DRTI Act. All such acts legislated by individual states, before RTI Act 2005 came into existence must be repealed.



WEBSITES DESIGNED BY THE NATIONAL INFORMATICS CENTRE (NIC) FOR CENTRAL PUBLIC AUTHORITIES SHOULD BE MANDATORILY FOR ALL STATES

(The writer is an RTI consultant holding the Guinness World record, views are personal)

Hamas-Israel war: Why is the truth so tight-lipped?

That religious bigotry should determine the political attitudes of some of us in the 21st century is an insult to human intelligence

Crowds of jubilant Muslims across the globe celebrated as the Hamas horror unfolded. Even in cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic London, the Metropolitan Police received reports of street celebrations by "people", as one politically prim and proper British newspaper put it. What is happening in the unseen confines of Muslim drawing rooms is an easy guess. Why such misplaced, unbecoming celebrations of barbarism by educated, intelligent, prosperous individuals and groups, instead of the expected, even warranted, revulsion and criticism? Let us turn to the past for light on this.



PRADEEP BAJPAI

together in support of the surprise attack on Israel by Egypt and Syria. Pakistani pilots flew Syrian aircraft in raids on Israel, Algeria provided fighter aircraft and tanks, and Saudi Arabia and Libya sent light armoured battalions. Smaller Islamic countries like Kuwait, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon and Sudan also contributed arms or soldiers. Israel was fighting not one country but the entire Muslim Ummah.

Even now in the ongoing crisis, Pakistan and Iran have come out strongly in support of Hamas and the Palestinian cause, with the Iranian President, Ebrahim Raisi, even congratulating Hamas leader, Ismail Haniyeh, on the attack's initial success. Given the large scale of Hamas

attacks and the well-coordinated military planning, it is quite likely that it has funds, weaponry, and defence advisors from some Muslim nations. The barbarism of Hamas is religion-driven, reminiscent of medieval crusades, and morality does not come anywhere in determining the motivations of its sponsors.

The other day, Mehbooba Mufti, an outspoken sympathizer of Islamist terrorism in Kashmir, remarked with a satisfied smirk, that the shoe pinches when on the other foot. Hyderabad's Owaisi too voiced his support for Hamas. Most other Muslim political figures in India have kept a conspiratorial silence on the outrageous actions of Hamas and Hezbollah, betraying

their underlying sympathy for the terrorists as well as their guilt over it. Pan-Islamism is at work here, overriding all logical and ethical considerations.

Even predominantly non-Muslim political parties in India have been reticent and ambivalent for fear of alienating the large, community-committed Muslim vote-bank. In refreshing contrast, Indian PM Narendra Modi has been quick and clear in his condemnation of the Hamas attack and his assurance of the Indian government's support for Israel. No other past Indian Prime Minister could have done this.

That religious bigotry should determine the political attitudes of some of us in

the 21st century is an insult to human intelligence. One would expect humanity to have left such impassioned mediaeval bigotry far behind; sadly, that does not hold good for some of us. It repudiates the notion of evolution and growth of human society if innocent lives are taken by religion-driven hate and this becomes a cause of celebration.

What needs to be done to put humanity back on the track of pluralism and peace? For that to happen, religion has to retreat to the temple, mosque, church or synagogue, and to our homes and personal spaces, away from the temporal, public world of politics, commerce, and ideology that is today globalised, multi-ethnic, and

civilized. For that happy state of affairs to come about, we must call out the mediaeval bigotry, the distortions of religion and its misuse by vested interests. We must not let the unvarnished truth be obscured in humanity's discourse, even at the risk of appearing unfashionably impolitic.

Inexplicably, truth is diffident today and fanaticism is strident. The BBC refrains from calling Hamas a terror organisation; it prefers instead the less obnoxious expression "militant group". There has to be a limit to this penchant for softening the harsh realities of our world to appear neutral. It is downright timid for the BBC to do so to avoid upsetting British Muslims. One cannot help wondering, with

all this talk of paid fake news doing the rounds, whether filthy lucre is behind such patent hypocrisy.

Scribes prefer "one community", "a particular group", and other such euphemisms to refer to Muslim groups involved in violence. Politicians in Islamic countries inflame Islamic passions, those in secular countries like India appease them for votes.

In our interactions, we avoid frank inter-religious discussions. The press shies away from publishing articles that portray the uncamouflaged reality. This will not do. If humanity is to wipe away the accumulated scars from its fair face, the incorrigible, bullying fanatics must be called out.

Crisis escalates in Gaza as war enters day 5

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Residents in Gaza are facing an imminent loss of electricity as fuel supplies run dangerously low in the sealed-off territory. Israeli airstrikes left entire neighbourhoods demolished Wednesday, and hospitals in the Gaza Strip are struggling to treat the injured with dwindling medical supplies.

The war, which has claimed more than 2,200 lives on both sides, is expected to escalate. The weekend attack that Hamas said was retribution for worsening conditions for Palestinians under Israeli occupation has inflamed Israel's determination to crush the group's hold in Gaza. The Israeli military said more than 1,200 people, including 155 soldiers, have died in Israel since Saturday's incursion. In Gaza, the health ministry says more than 1,050 have been killed and over 5,100 injured. The United Nations Palestinian refugee agency says 250,000 people

have been displaced in Gaza. Here's what's happening on Day 5 of the latest Israel-Palestinian war:

9 UN STAFFERS KILLED IN AIRSTRIKES

Jerusalem — The United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees told the AP on Wednesday that nine of its staffers have been killed in airstrikes since the start of the Israeli bombardment on Gaza on Saturday, with several killed late Tuesday.

The protection of civilians is paramount, including in times of conflict," said Juliette Touma, director of communications of the agency, known as UNRWA. "They should be protected in accordance with the laws of war." Touma said the strikes killed the UN staffers at their homes across the territory. She also said that 18 UNRWA schools-turned-shelters were damaged in the bombing, and that its headquarters in Gaza City was also



A view of the rubble of buildings hit by an Israeli airstrike, in Jabalia, Gaza strip, Wednesday. AP/PTI

damaged, without causing casualties.

POPE CALLS ON HAMAS TO RELEASE HOSTAGES

Vatican City — Pope Francis on Wednesday called for the immediate release of hostages taken by Hamas fighters in the most serious assault

on Israel in half a century.

Francis said during a weekly audience that he is following events in Israel and the occupied territories with "pain and apprehension," with "many dead and injured," and said he is praying for those who saw "a day of celebration transformed into a day of mourning."

The pope said that "whoever is attacked has the right to defend himself. But I am very worried about the total siege under which the Palestinians in Gaza are living, where there are also many innocent victims."

CATHAY PACIFIC CANCELS TEL AVIV FLIGHTS

Hong Kong — Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific Airways said all its flights flying between the city and Tel Aviv from Wednesday to October 29 will be cancelled "in view of the latest situation in Israel."

SPAIN RECEIVES 200 EVACUATED PEOPLE

Madrid — Spain's defence ministry says its first military plane arrived early Wednesday carrying 200 people evacuated from Israel. It says the passengers included Spaniards, other citizens of European Union countries, and foreigners with residences established in Spain who had been visiting Israel. The ministry added that a sec-

ond military plane was heading to Tel Aviv to evacuate more Spaniards whose commercial flights were cancelled.

'AT LEAST 30 KILLED IN AN AIRSTRIKE'

A respected expert in international law was visiting family in Gaza when an Israeli airstrike struck his home in central Gaza City late Tuesday and killed everyone inside, authorities said. Saeed al-Dahshan was on his way to Cairo, where he primarily lives.

Health officials did not immediately give a number of those killed but al-Dahshan's friends said that his entire immediate family along with his brother and his family were killed, with Hamas official Bassem Naim estimating the death toll to be at least 30 people. "This level of death and destruction is unprecedented," said Hamas spokesperson Ghazi Hamad, whose house was razed by airstrikes late Tuesday.

Biden: Hamas attack is 'unadulterated evil' unleashed on world

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden Tuesday said the Hamas' attack on Israel is an "unadulterated evil unleashed on the world", and added that at least 14 American citizens were killed in the incident. Biden also said it was Hamas' stated purpose to annihilate the state of Israel and kill Jewish people.

"There are moments in this life — and I mean this literally — when pure, unadulterated evil is unleashed on this world. The people of Israel lived through one such moment this weekend. The bloody hands of the terrorist organisation Hamas — a group whose stated purpose for being is to kill Jews," Biden said in his address to the nation from the White House.

The US president has earlier vowed his administration's "rock solid and unwavering" support to Israel. The United States has launched a major global diplomatic drive to garner support for Israel and take necessary action against Palestinian militant group Hamas.

Hamas launched a wave of attacks on Israel on Saturday, killing hundreds of people, in the biggest escalation in the conflict in decades. Israel has already responded with a wave of air strikes on Gaza, killing over 800 people.

Biden said the US has also enhanced its military force posture in the region.

"This was an act of sheer evil. More than 1,000 civilians were slaughtered — not just killed, slaughtered — in Israel. Among them, at least 14 American citizens were killed. Parents butchered (who were) using their bodies to try to protect their children. Stomach-turning reports of babies being killed. Entire families slain. Young people were massacred while attending a musical festival to celebrate peace," he said.

Asserting that Hamas' action in Israel was terrorism,

Biden said they resemble the "worst rampages of ISIS".

"It's abhorrent. The brutality of Hamas — this blood-thirstiness — brings to mind the worst, the worst rampages of ISIS. This is terrorism. But sadly, for the Jewish people, it's not new," he said.

"This attack has brought to the surface painful memories and the scars left by a millennia of antisemitism and genocide of the Jewish people. So, in this moment, we must be crystal clear. We stand with Israel. We stand with Israel. And we will make sure Israel has what it needs to take care of its citizens, defend itself, and respond to this attack. There is no justification for terrorism. There is no excuse," the US president said.

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said that he will travel to Israel and Jordan from October 11-13, where he will meet with senior officials.

"The Secretary will reiterate his condolences for the victims of the terrorist attacks against Israel and condemn those attacks in the strongest terms. The Secretary will also reaffirm the United States' solidarity with the government and people of Israel. He will also discuss measures to bolster Israel's security and underscore the United States' unwavering support for Israel's right to defend itself," said the State Department.

Blinken spoke with Israeli President Isaac Herzog to reaffirm unwavering the US' support for Israel's right to defend itself. He reiterated his condolences for all those killed or injured and for those still missing.

In his address, Biden said that Hamas does not stand for the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-determination.

Its stated purpose is the annihilation of the state of Israel and the murder of Jewish people, and added that they use Palestinian civilians as human shields, he said.

'No specific info on role of Iran in Hamas attack'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The White House said Tuesday that there is no specific information about the role of Iran in the latest terrorist attack against Israel by Hamas, but it is complicit "in a broad sense" for funding the military wing of the militant group. "We have said since the beginning that Iran is complicit in this attack in a broad sense because they have provided the lion's share of the funding for the military wing of Hamas. They have provided training. They have provided capabilities. They have provided support and they have had engagement and contact with Hamas over years and years," US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan told reporters Tuesday.

"All of that has played a role in contributing to what we have seen. Now, as to the question of whether Iran knew about this attack in advance or helped plan or direct this

attack, we do not, as of this moment I'm standing here at the podium, have confirmation of that. We are talking to our Israeli counterparts on a daily basis about this question," he said.

The NSA said the US is trying to gather from its intelligence holdings on whether they have any further information on that. "We're looking to acquire further intelligence. And if there's an update to that, I'll share it with you," Sullivan said.

"While Iran plays this broad role, sustaining a deep and dark role in providing all of this support and capabilities to Hamas, in terms of this particular gruesome attack on October 7th, we don't currently have that information. We will continue to look for it," he added. Palestinian militant group Hamas launched a wave of attacks on Israel on Saturday, killing over 1,000 people, in the biggest escalation in the conflict in decades.

Waving Palestinian flag may not be legitimate: Braverman

London (PTI) Home Secretary Suella Braverman has warned that activities that are considered legitimate under usual circumstances may not be legitimate, including the waving of Palestinian flags on British streets if the purpose is to "glorify acts of terrorism" in the context of the conflict in Israel.

In her letter to police chiefs in England and Wales on Tuesday, the Indian-origin Cabinet minister called on police to use the full force of the law against displays of support for Hamas, a banned terrorist group, and attempts to harass or intimidate British Jews. It came as the Israeli flag was unfurled at the Home Office building in central London as a show of solidarity with Israel.

"At a time when Hamas terrorists are massacring civilians and taking the most vulnerable (including the elderly, women, and children) hostage, we can all recognise the harrowing effect that displays of

their logos and flags can have on communities," reads Braverman's letter to the police chiefs.

"Context is crucial. Behaviours that are legitimate in some circumstances, for example, the waving of a Palestinian flag, may not be legitimate such as when intended to glorify acts of terrorism. Nor is it acceptable to drive through Jewish neighbourhoods, or single out Jewish members of the public, to aggressively chant or wave pro-Palestinian symbols at," she said. Where such harassment is identified, the minister called on police forces to take swift and appropriate enforcement action. "There can be no place for antisemitism or glorification of terrorism on the streets of Britain. I therefore expect the police to use the full force of the law against displays of support for Hamas, other proscribed terrorist groups or attempts to harass and intimidate British Jews," she added.

The appeal came as a video emerged online from northern England, showing a man scaling the Sheffield Town Hall building to replace an Israeli flag with a Palestinian one. South Yorkshire Police said no arrests had been made following the protest on Tuesday as enquiries remain "ongoing".

"Everyone has the right to safe and peaceful protest but we cannot support the events that took place during the protest outside Sheffield's Town Hall. Protesters put themselves and others in serious danger," said Tom Hunt, Leader of Sheffield City Council.

Many UK government buildings have been flying the Israeli flag since the Hamas strikes triggered a deadly conflict in the Middle East over the weekend. Downing Street projected a flag as a show of solidarity before British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak addressed a synagogue in London to condemn the acts of terror.

Initial shipment of advanced US weapons lands in Israel

Tel Aviv (PTI): The first shipment of advanced US weapons and equipment have landed in Israel to boost the US ally in its war with Hamas, the Israel Ministry of Defence said on Wednesday.

The video footage and images released by Israel's Ministry of Defence showed the landing of a cargo plane that delivered the initial shipment of equipment procured and brought to the country through a joint operation.

The Ministry of Defence's Directorate of Production and Procurement, the US Procurement Mission, and the International Transportation Unit within the Israel Defence Ministry in the operation oversaw the mobilisation of the cargo plane, ensuring the direct transport of armaments from the US, Mayan Lazarovich from the Ministry of Defence Spokesperson's Office, said in a statement.

Strong quake shakes Af again

AP ■ CHAHAK

Another strong earthquake shook part of western Afghanistan on Wednesday morning after an earlier quake killed more than 2,000 and flattened whole villages.

The latest magnitude 6.3 earthquake was about 28 kilometres outside Herat, the capital of Herat province, and 10 kilometres deep, according to the US Geological Survey.

Wednesday's quake has injured at least 80 people and a landslide has blocked the main Herat-Torghondi highway, Information Ministry spokesman Abdul Wahid Rayan said.

It also flattened all 700 homes in Chahak village, which was untouched by the tremors of previous days. There are mounds of soil where dwellings used to be. But there were no deaths initially reported in Chahak because people have taken shelter in tents this week, fearing for their lives as tremors



A man cleans up rubble after an earthquake in Zenda Jan district in Herat province, western Afghanistan, Wednesday. AP/PTI

continue to rock Herat. The epicentre of Saturday's quake was about 40 kilometres northwest of the provincial capital, and several aftershocks have been strong, including another of magnitude 6.3 on Saturday.

Taliban officials said more than 2,000 had died across Herat after the earlier quakes. They subsequently said the quakes killed and injured thousands but didn't give a

breakdown of casualties.

Besides rubble and funerals after Saturday's devastation, there is little left of the villages in the region's dusty hills.

In Naib Rafi, a village that previously had about 2,500 residents, people said almost no one was still alive besides men who were working outside when the quake struck.

Survivors worked all day with excavators to dig long trenches for mass burials.

Foreign Minister Saud to fly to Israel to bring back stranded Nepalese

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

The Nepal government has decided to send a Nepal Airlines aircraft to Israel to bring back over 250 Nepalese students who are stranded in the country following the surprise attack by Hamas militants.

An aircraft of Nepal Airlines, the national flag carrier, will leave Kathmandu for Jerusalem at 2 a.m. on Thursday to bring back 288 Nepalese students, who have registered their names in the Nepalese Embassy in Israel, expressing their desire to safely return their home, according to Foreign Ministry spokesperson Sewa Lamsal.

Foreign Minister N.P. Saud will also travel on the same flight.

However, the dead bodies of 10 Nepalese students killed by Hamas during Saturday's



terror attack will not be brought on the aircraft.

As the process of handing over the bodies of those killed is not yet completed by the Israeli government, we have to wait for some time to bring back the dead bodies, Lamsal said during a press conference.

"We will give priority to students while repatriating Nepalese nationals from the war-torn country," spokesper-

son Lamsal said.

"Nobody will be left stranded and if needed we will arrange other commercial flights to bring those Nepalese who wish to be rescued," she added.

Ten Nepalese students were killed when the Hamas militant group launched a sudden strike at a farm in Israel's Kibbutz.

There were 17 Nepalese students on the farm where the Hamas launched the attack. Ten Nepalese nationals were killed, six escaped and one went missing in the incident.

Four of the students who sustained injuries in the incident are currently undergoing treatment in a hospital with the assistance of the Israeli government, according to a foreign ministry source. Besides 265 agriculture students, who have gone to Israel

from different universities in Nepal under the 'Learn and Earn' internship programme, there are 450 other Nepalese working in different fields in Israel.

The Nepal government will bear the airfare to bring the students back home, the source said.

Israel has vowed an unprecedented offensive against the Islamic militant group Hamas ruling Gaza after its fighters broke through the border fence and stormed into the country's south through air, land and sea on October 7.

On the fifth day, the Israeli military said more than 1,200 people, including 155 soldiers, were killed in Israel.

In Gaza, 950 people, including 260 children and 230 women, have died so far, according to authorities there.

Sikh man who fed Khalistani militants allowed into Canada: Report

PTI ■ TORONTO

An immigration tribunal in Canada has ruled that a Sikh man who "housed and fed Khalistani militants in India" over a decade should be allowed into the country because he did so "mostly out of necessity" and fear of retribution, a media report said on Wednesday. According to the National Post newspaper, Immigration and Refugee Board tribunal member Heidi Worsfold in a recent ruling said the government did not have reasonable grounds to declare Indian citizen Kamaljit Ram inadmissible to enter Canada based on the belief he had provided a "safe house" and "logistical support" to Khalistani militants. The immigration tribunal ruled that the Sikh man who "housed and fed" armed Khalistani militants in India over a decade should be allowed into Canada because he did so "mostly out of necessity" and fear of retribution, the paper said. The original decision to bar Ram from Canada by the federal government came after he told Canada Border Services Agency officers during an interview that he sheltered and fed armed Sikh militants at his farm in India on-and-off between 1982 and 1992.

Worsfold found the government went well too far in its assessment of Ram's support for the armed militants at the time, namely omitting to note that he reportedly said he accepted to host the armed individuals because he "feared the consequences" of being on the wrong end of the group. The ruling comes amid a diplomatic standoff between India and Canada following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations of "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar on June 18 in British Columbia, a claim rejected by India as "absurd" and "motivated".

Akshardham Temple, billed to be 2nd-largest in world inaugurated

PTI ■ ROBINNVILLE (US)

A Hindu temple, billed to be the second-largest in the world, and the largest in the Western Hemisphere, has been inaugurated in the US state of New Jersey.

Spread over a sprawling 185 acres, the Akshardham Temple in Robbinsville City New Jersey stands at 191 feet high.

The temple, situated 99 kilometres south of New York City, was inaugurated on October 8 in the presence of Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan (BAPS) leader Mahant Swami Maharaj, with several thousand people attending the event.

"It was Pramukh Swami Maharaj's divine wish to construct an Akshardham in North America, where people can

come and visit, irrespective of race, creed or religion," said Mahant Swami Maharaj.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Delaware Governor John Carney and Congressman Steny Hoyer.

"It is the second largest Hindu temple on this globe planet and of course, the largest in the Western Hemisphere, which was inaugurated on October 8th, on the 90th birthday celebrations of Mahant Swami Maharaj. It was dedicated to this society, to humanity," Gnanvatsaldas Swami, senior BAPS leader and motivational speaker, told PTI.

"The basic purpose of creating temples is to inspire people with values. Dharma, gyan, vairagya and bhakti, are the four pillars of ekantik dharma that according to the Indian scriptures, was well prescribed

by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. So, this is a monument dedicated to Indian culture and tradition. It's a monument dedicated to Bhagwan Swaminarayan's life and teachings," he said.

"The surprising element of this in the United States is that 12,500 volunteers ranging from 10 days of service to more than three years, five years of service have come together to build this Akshardham," Gnanvatsaldas Swami said.

The temple has the story of Ramayana, Mahabharat carved on its stones. It has more than 150 Indian musical instruments and all the major dance postures on its pillars and walls.

"The best way to preserve art is regeneration. The BAPS has in its own humble way, been able to regenerate ancient

art. In doing that, they've also given the skills back because those skills are needed. Thousands of artisans have once again begun to carve and their art is being valued so that art is preserved for the next generation," said Brahmaviharidas Swami, who is in charge of the under-construction Abu Dhabi Akshardham. The senior BAPS leader is currently in the US as part of the inaugural ceremony.

The temple reflects universal values, said Yogi Trivedi, a scholar of religion and media at Columbia University and a volunteer spokesperson at Akshardham Temple.

Stones from seven different countries, including India, Bulgaria, Italy, Greece and Turkey were used in the temple construction.



Blue Man Group appears at Edge New York to celebrate 17,000 performances on Tuesday in New York. AP/PTI

I haven't played with this much pain in my life: Prannoy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The image of HS Prannoy breaking down and hugging coach Pullela Gopichand after battling excruciating back pain to seal his maiden bronze medal in Hangzhou was one of the most emotional moments of the Hangzhou Asian Games.

It was a culmination of years of toil as the 31-year-old fought against his body and battled inner demons to lead India to a first-ever silver in men's team championships and also ended a 41-year-old wait for a men's singles bronze.

"Sometimes people don't know what happens behind the scenes. They don't know what struggle we go through to just play and Gopi bhैया has known me for the last 15 years. He knows my struggles, what issues I had in my career," Prannoy told PTI in a freewheeling interview.

"He knows how difficult it was for me to play that particular match (quarterfinals) considering the conditions, and opponent (Lee Zii Jia). The shuttles were slow, so you had to hang in there for 30-40 shot rallies, so the pain was mentally tough to bear."

Prannoy played with taping and a belt on his lower back under his shirt and dished out a performance for the ages to assure a bronze.

Prannoy could have sealed it in straight games but he squandered two match points to see it almost slip away.

"I could see that disappointment on his (Gopichand) face after I lost the second game because he knew it would get tougher for me to win from that situation. He knows how hard I fought for that medal. So it was a culmination of all those emotions," Prannoy said.

"To have a medal in the Asian Games is not easy. The fact that no one won in 41 years shows how tough the competition is. To eventually have a medal in my hand was an emotional moment for me and him also, because we knew the value of that medal."

For far too long, the man from Thiruvananthapuram has been defying injuries and health issues but never it has been this tough just to turn up on the court.

"It has been the toughest tournament in the last 6-7 years. I haven't played with this much pain in my life, to have such doubt every single point, if it will



be possible to push through each point," said Prannoy, who fought blisters in his leg, gut issues and after-effects of COVID-19 to rise like a phoenix in 2022.

"There was a sense of doubt because there was hardly any training due to my back. The physio said that the back won't be able to take more load than a match. So just trust and belief that pushed me through those two weeks.

"There was a lot of responsibility, a lot of people had hopes and I didn't want to disappoint them."

In Prannoy's absence, India lost to China in the team final despite leading 2-0 at one stage as Kidambi Srikanth and Mithun Manjunath couldn't produce the goods.

"Post the semifinal match, the back pain got aggravated a bit and the medical team felt it would be risky to play in the final. It was decided that since there were fit players, like Mithun, who has been playing consistently.

"So someone fresh and able to play 100 percent was a better choice as I wasn't really in great shape."

The experience of going

through bouts of pain due to his health issues in the past made it a bit easier to endure the last two weeks, said Prannoy.

"During the COVID time, I had issues with my right rib, which also used to be excruciating pain. I felt whatever comes now will be easier to handle, if I was able to play with that pain, then I'll be able to manage this one."

It wasn't just Prannoy, the entire team went through some tough times in Hangzhou when a few players were down with flu.

"A lot of bad things were happening for us there with three players falling sick. So it was quite scary to see all of a sudden people getting sick.

"So it was a tournament where a lot of things were tested, mentally for me and also for Chirag and Satwik. Chirag was down with flu and to come back from there and win the title, shows how much mentally we wanted to get that medal for the country."

Prannoy had ended a long wait for a BWF title when he won the Malaysia Masters in May and claimed his maiden bronze in the World Championships in August before securing the Asian Games medal.

"This Asian Games was much more mentally tougher because there was a lot of uncertainty all around. The team event helped to have that positive energy. Standing on the podium gave me a lot of happiness and it helped to push through in individual events.

"In World Champions, I had to dig deep from the first round itself. So both were from different scenarios. But to get two of the biggest medals in my career in just over a month is something else, it is something I have never dreamt of."

SETTING A TEMPLATE FOR FUTURE GENERATION

Prannoy said he and Srikanth want to leave a template for the future generation about team bonding and competing in team events.

"It takes effort to bring all together. So me and Srikanth are trying our maximum to build it for the next generation, trying to tell them this is how a team event needs to be done.

"Going forward, even if you don't have seniors around, there will be lots of juniors who will come up in the next 4-5 years, so this is what you need to do. Hopefully we can win more team events."



Injured Chanu rested from India's ACT squad

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Experienced midfielder Sushila Chanu has been rested from India's 20-member squad for the upcoming women's Asian Champions Trophy (ACT) hockey tournament due to a suspected Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) injury.

Sushila, who led India at the Rio Olympics, was part of the Indian women's team that won a bronze medal at the Hangzhou Asian Games last week.

According to a Hockey India source, Sushila will soon consult a doctor to know the extent of the injury.

"Sushila has been rested because she has a suspected ACL issue. She needs to be checked by a doctor. Sushila is a vital member of the team and she needs to be fully fit ahead of upcoming important tournaments," the source told PTI.

Baljeet Kaur has replaced Sushila in the squad.

The Asian Champions Trophy will be held in Ranchi from October 27 to November 5.

Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke,

who too was in the Asian Games squad, has been named as a replacement player along with Sharmila Devi and will travel with the squad as back-up option.

Besides Sushila, there were no surprises as such in the squad to be led by goalkeeper Savita.

Defender Deep Grace Ekka will continue to be Savita's deputy.

Bichu Devi Kharibam is the other goalkeeper in the squad, while Nikki Pradhan, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary, and Deep Grace will be in charge of the defence.

Nisha, Salima Tete, Neha, Navneet Kaur, Sonika, Monika, Jyoti, and Baljeet will form the midfield line-up, while Lalremsiami, Sangita Kumari, Deepika, and Vandana Kataria are the strikers.

Besides India, Japan, China, Korea, Malaysia and Thailand are the other participating nations.

India will open their ACT campaign against Thailand October 27, followed by matches against Malaysia (October 28), China (October 30), Japan (October 31) and Korea (November 2). The semifinals and final are scheduled for November 4 and 5.

"It is an important tournament for us to continue our momentum and our steady improvement as a team. While we performed well at the Asian Games to claim the bronze medal, the upcoming tournament will give us a chance to further improve our standings against our Asian challengers," India's chief coach Janneke Schopman said.

"We will get a chance to put our learning from Hangzhou into action and test ourselves once again."

SQUAD:
Goalkeepers: Savita (captain), Bichu Devi Kharibam
Defenders: Nikki Pradhan, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary, Deep Grace Ekka (vice-captain)
Midfielders: Nisha, Salima Tete, Neha, Navneet Kaur, Sonika, Monika, Jyoti, Baljeet Kaur
Forwards: Lalremsiami, Sangita Kumari, Deepika, Vandana Kataria
Replacement players: Sharmila Devi, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke.

Nadal, Osaka, Wozniacki set to return to 2024 Australian Open

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Three former Australian Open champions - Naom Osaka, Caroline Wozniacki and Angelique Kerber - are set to return to Melbourne Park in January following maternity leave, joined by 2022 winner Rafael Nadal and hometown favorite Nick Kyrgios.

Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley told the tournament launch Wednesday that Nadal (left hip flexor) and Kyrgios (knee, wrist) are expected to return from major injuries in a bid to challenge Novak Djokovic's dominance at Rod Laver Arena, where he's clinched 10 of his record 24 Grand Slam titles.

"Our 2022 champion Rafa Nadal has been working hard on his rehab for most of this year," Tiley said.

"He always brings his best to Melbourne and no one can doubt how hard he competes. I've been in touch with his team and he's now back on the court and looking forward to returning to Melbourne in January."

Tiley said Djokovic and No. 2-ranked Carlos Alcaraz are expected to lead the men's contingent, while leading players Aryna Sabalenka and Iga Swiatek and U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff are also expected to play in the women's draw.

The tournament will run from Jan. 14-28, with its opening day of play on a Sunday for the first time. The Australian Open joins the French Open as the only tennis majors to be held over 15 days.

Tiley also announced that the tournament will honor Australian legend Evonne Goolagong Cawley on the 50th anniversary of the first of her four Australian Open title victories in 1974. She also won Wimbledon twice and the French Open once.

Tiley said Goolagong Cawley's image will feature on the coin used before matches at the Australian Open and at all warm-up tournaments in Australia in advance of the first major of the year.



LIV Golf loses its bid to earn ranking points over questions about a closed shop

AP ■ NEW YORK

LIV Golf is playing only for cash, not world ranking points, after the Official World Golf Ranking board determined it could not fairly measure the 48-man league with the other 24 tours around the world.

The OWGR rejected the application from Saudi-backed LIV Golf, first submitted in July 2022 after the league already had played two of its 54-hole, no-cut events.

"We are not at war with them," Peter Dawson, chairman of the OWGR board, said when contacted by The Associated Press.

"This decision not to make them eligible is not political. It is entirely technical. LIV players are self-evidently good enough to be ranked. They're just not playing in a format where they can be ranked equitably with the other 24 tours and thousands of players trying to compete on them."

PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan, European tour CEO Keith Pelley and Keith Waters of the International Federation of PGA Tours previously recused themselves from the LIV Golf decision to avoid any conflict of interest.

The committee that rejected LIV's application comprised leaders from Augusta National, the PGA of America, the U.S. Golf Association and The R&A, which run the four majors. The majors use the OWGR as part of their qualifying criteria.

It notified LIV Golf of its decision with a letter the OWGR later posted on its website.

"OWGR's sole objective is to rank the best players across the globe. Today's communication makes clear that it can no longer deliver on that objective," LIV Golf said in a statement.

LIV said a ranking that doesn't fairly represent all players regardless of where they play would deprive fans and players. Noting that majors rely on the world ranking, "It also robs some traditional tournaments of the best fields possible."

"Professional golf is now without a true or global scoring and ranking system," the LIV statement said.

"There is no benefit for fans or players from the lack of trust or clarity as long as the best player performances are not recognised."

LIV Golf, which has two events left in its second season, has 48 players competing over 54 holes with no cut and a USD 20 million purse, with an additional USD 5 million awarded in a simultaneous team competition.

Dawson, a non-voting member of the committee, said the OWGR could work around some of the requirements, such as a 36-hole cut and having an average field size of 75 players over the course of a season.

But the committee could not get past what amounts to a closed shop.

LIV Golf has the same 48 players for the entire season (with alternates in case of injury) and not enough turnover. While the top 24 players are assured a spot the following season, LIV Golf signed several players to lucrative contracts that assure them a spot on the roster regardless of their performance.

Among those currently outside the top 24 are Phil Mickelson, Lee Westwood, Bubba Watson, Paul Casey and Ian Poulter.

Three players are to be added for the 2024 season through a promotions tournament, with a fourth player - Andy Ogletree - advancing through the International Series on the Asian Tour. LIV Golf can choose to add others by recruiting, such as signing up Mito Pereira and Thomas Pieters ahead of the 2023 season.

Most tours around the world typically have a turnover rate of 20 percent to 25 percent.

LIV Golf made its debut in June 2022, and the lack of world ranking points has taken an enormous toll. Players who joined the rival league were suspended by the PGA Tour and European tour, and their only access to points came during the majors and Asian Tour events.

When LIV Golf complete its inaugural season, it had 12 players from the top 50 in the world (led by British Open champion Cameron Smith) and 24 of the top 100. In this week's ranking, Smith (No. 15) and PGA champion Brooks Koepka (No. 18) are the only players from the top 50, and LIV has only six players among the top 100.

Among those no longer in the top 100 are Dustin Johnson, Bryson DeChambeau and Talor Gooch, who has three LIV Golf victories this year. LIV players have mocked the OWGR for not being credible without offering them ranking points.

"Dustin Johnson, Sergio Garcia, of course they should be in the ranking," Dawson said.

"We need to find a way to get that done. I hope that LIV can find a solution - not so much their format; that can be dealt with through a mathematical formula - but the qualification and relegation."

The OWGR committee also raised concerns over the team aspect of LIV, particularly a moment involving Sebastian Munoz at a LIV Golf event in Florida a week before the Masters.

Messi a doubtful starter for Argentina

AP ■ SAO PAULO

Lionel Messi is again a doubtful starter for Argentina in the next World Cup qualifying match against Paraguay.

The Argentina captain scored in the opening 1-0 win over Ecuador but skipped the 3-0 win at Bolivia last month because of muscular pains that have also sidelined him from several matches for Inter Miami in the MLS.

The World Cup champions are due to host Paraguay on Thursday at Buenos Aires.

Vinicius Jr missed Brazil's first two games in South American qualifying but is back in the starting lineup after recovering from an injury. The Selecao will take on Venezuela in Cuiba.

Argentina and Brazil are 2-0 in qualifying for the 2026 World Cup after victories last month. The intercontinental arch-rivals are due to meet in November.

Colombia is in third spot in the 10-team standings with four points. Uruguay and Venezuela each have three points, followed by Paraguay, Peru and Chile



loss to Cincinnati. Tuesday's training suggested he will face Paraguay, but it wasn't clear whether he'd start or come off the bench.

Coach Lionel Scaloni didn't indicate who would replace

Argentina will not count on Ángel Di María, who is recovering from injury. Nico González is likely to be the veteran's replacement once more.

Paraguay's new coach Daniel Garnero will have his debut against Argentina. He took over from Guillermo Barros Schelotto last month after the first two qualifiers.

The 54-year-old Garnero, an Argentine like Schelotto, has coached several Paraguayan teams since 2016 and shown preference to more balanced teams in a country where defending is seen as an art.

"We need to play it clever, use the strategy of our coach for this match and take one point. And why not three?" defender Junior Alonso said. His hopes are not false; Argentina has failed to beat Paraguay in the two latest editions of South American World Cup qualifying.

Messi if he doesn't start. He will also have to make other selection decisions, including whether to start Nicolás Tagliafico or Marcos Acuña at left-back, or Julián Álvarez or Lautaro Martínez up front.

BRAZIL vs VENEZUELA

Brazil's new coach Fernando Diniz showed at Tuesday's training that Vinicius Jr is fully recovered from injury and will

start against Venezuela in the city of Cuiba. Raphinha was the starter at right-wing in the two first matches but is now injured.

The status of the 23-year-old Vinicius at home has grown since the last World Cup, as he continues to thrive at Real Madrid and fans see Neymar playing in a less-competitive league in Saudi Arabia.

"Vinicius is important for his club, he is important for the national team. And he is only a boy," striker Gabriel Jesus told a press conference.

"He came back from injury scoring goals and helping Real win matches. He is just great."

Renan Lodi, who is also out due to injury, is likely to be replaced by Guilherme Arana.

Richardson is expected to start against Venezuela despite his goal drought for the national team. His most recent goal for Brazil came in the 4-1 win against South Korea in the round of sixteen of the World Cup in Qatar.

Also on Thursday, Colombia will face Uruguay, Bolivia will host Ecuador, and Chile will take on Peru.

