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# Arab World unites

AP ■ RAFAH

The Emir of Qatar has urged the international community to take action to restrain Israel in its conflict with Hamas, emphasising that Israeli forces should not be permitted to engage in unrestricted violence in the blockaded Gaza Strip. During his opening speech at the annual session of the Shura Council on Tuesday, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani also expressed concern that the ongoing conflict represents a dangerous escalation that poses a threat to the region. Meanwhile, health officials on Tuesday said, rapidly expanding Israeli airstrikes across the Gaza Strip killed more than 700 people in the past day as medical facilities across the territory were forced to close because of bombing damage and a lack of power. The soaring death toll from Israel's escalating bombardment was unprecedented in the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It could signal an even greater loss of life in Gaza once Israeli ground forces backed by tanks and artillery launch an expected offensive into the territory aimed at crushing Hamas. Gaza's 2.3 million people have been under increasing bombardment and running out of food, water and medicine since Israel sealed off the territory following the devastating October 7 attack by Hamas militants on towns in southern Israel. On Tuesday, Israel said it had



Israeli soldiers gather in a staging area near the border with Gaza Strip, in southern Israel, on Tuesday

AP/PTI

launched 400 airstrikes over the past day, killing Hamas commanders, hitting militants as they were preparing to launch rockets into Israel and striking command centers and a Hamas tunnel shaft. The previous day, Israel reported 320 strikes. Witnesses and health officials said many of the airstrikes hit residential buildings, some of them in southern Gaza where Israel had told civilians to take shelter.

An overnight strike hit a four-story residential building in the southern city of Khan Younis, killing at least 32 people and wounding scores of others, according to survivors. The fatalities included 13 from the Saqallah family, said Ammar al-Butta, a relative who survived the airstrike. He said there were about 100 people there, including many who had come from Gaza City, which Israel has ordered civilians to evacuate.

"They were sheltering at our home because we thought that our area would be safe. But apparently there is no safe place in Gaza," he said. Another airstrike hit a bustling marketplace in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, killing several shoppers and wounding dozens, witnesses said. Men used sledgehammers to break up concrete and dug with their bare hands through the

jagged wreckage to save anyone they could — or at least recover the dead who had been buying meat and vegetables when the explosion hit. A man buried up to his chest in rubble looked up at his rescuers with wide eyes, his face coated in dust from the blast. An oxygen mask was placed on his face as they spent 15 minutes working to free him. Gaza's Hamas-run Health Ministry said the attacks killed at least 704 people over the past day, including 305 children and 173 women. More than 5,700 Palestinians have been killed in the war, including some 2,300 minors, the ministry said, without giving a detailed breakdown. The figure includes the disputed toll from an explosion at a hospital last week. Most of the Palestinians killed since Oct. 7 were in the north and central areas of the enclave that Israel had told them evacuate, the ministry said. The fighting has killed more than 1,400 people in Israel — mostly civilians slain during the initial Hamas attack. As the death toll in Gaza spiralled, facilities to deal with the casualties were dwindling. A total of 46 out of 72 primary health-care facilities, and 12 out of 35 hospitals, stopped functioning, the World Health Organization said. Palestinian health officials said the lack of electricity and fuel to power generators from the Israeli blockade, as well as damage from airstrikes, has forced many of the facilities to close.

# INDIA unity hits roadblock

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■  
 NEW DELHI

The 'tentative' schedule for the November first-week meeting of the Opposition parties bloc INDIA seems to have encountered a roadblock due to the ongoing tension between major stakeholders, the Congress and the Samajwadi Party (SP), over their alliance in poll-bound States. Additionally, a member of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) is facing controversy and has received summons from the Parliamentary Ethics Committee. Sources said the meeting was being planned for November 5 at Nagpur after consultation with all parties, including West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee, who confirmed her availability after Durga Puja followed by Lakhi Puja in October end. Sources said the invitation to all top leaders was extended by Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi during the mid October after a meeting of the two with NCP supremo Sharad Pawar. A consensus was reached for the meeting to be held at Delhi or Nagpur but some of the leaders suggested Nagpur, being a RSS bastion and that Pawar and the Congress are in an alliance in Maharashtra with Uddhav Thackeray led Shiv Sena faction. The schedule was for October end keeping in mind the hectic November Assembly elections in crucial Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Telangana and

Mizoram but the TMC conveyed its problem to be part of it due to festive season in Bengal culminating with Lakshmi Puja which is held six days after Bijoya Dashmi. "The meeting was initially being discussed for November 5 in Nagpur. However, during this time, a controversy involving a TMC member in a 'cash for query' scandal has arisen. Leaders from both sides (the Congress and the TMC) will now engage in talks in the coming days to discuss the details of the next alliance meeting in India," said a Congress leader involved in back channel talks to unite the Opposition parties. While the Congress will be occupied throughout November with the Assembly polls, as they hope to retain Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan while remaining strong contenders in Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, and Mizoram, Bihar alliance partners JD(U) and RJD have expressed that it will be challenging for them to attend before November 10 due to the festive season, which includes Diwali and Chhath Puja celebrations that extend until November 20. Given the circumstances, some of the leaders when contacted said the meeting will take place only by November end, but believed that parties like the Congress, the SP, the AAP will get buffer time to iron out their differences arising over the question of alliance at State and national level. Differences cropped up between the Congress and Akhilesh Yadav led SP when the latter stated that the grand old party did not honour its rights to be part of the alliance in

Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh where Arvind Kejriwal led AAP has also entered the poll fray. In an attempt to placate the agitated SP, senior Congress leader and one of the decision-maker of the party in MP, Digvijay Singh, said his party colleague former CM of State Kamal Nath wanted to have an alliance with the Samajwadi Party "with full honesty", but maintained he does not know how the talks for a tie-up between the two INDIA bloc members got derailed. Digvijay praised Akhilesh for his leadership qualities, but disagreed with Kamal Nath, over his choice of words while dismissing his (Akhilesh) criticism for not leaving any seat in MP for the Uttar Pradesh-based party for the November 17 polls. The former CM said he had suggested Nath to leave four Assembly seats for the SP, which wanted to field nominees in half a dozen segments. Akhilesh had accused the Congress of having "cheated" his party after Uttar Pradesh Congress chief Ajay Rai asked his party to withdraw from MP in favour of the grand old party, saying the SP did not have any base there. Rai also said as an INDIA bloc partner, the SP should rally behind the Congress if it wants to fight the ruling BJP in MP. The SP chief went after the Congress's MP heavyweights and ex-chief ministers, Kamal Nath and Digvijay Singh, charging that they kept the SP leaders waiting till midnight, when they had gone to meet them for seat-sharing talks.

# Lord Ram's arrival imminent: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday announced that the Ram Temple in Ayodhya will be completed in a few months and very soon Lord Ram will arrive. "Bhagawan Shri Ram bas aane hi wale hain (Lord Ram's arrival is imminent)," Modi said addressing a large gathering to mark the occasion of Dussehra celebrations in the national Capital. Asserting that prayers at the Ram Temple during the next Ramnavmi will spread happiness in the entire world, Modi said as Lord Ram is coming under such auspicious signs, after 75 years of Independence, India's fortunes are now going to rise. The temple will be completed in a few months and it marks the victory of people's patience, said Modi. "The construction of the temple is happening amid many auspicious developments like India's successful lunar mission, inauguration of the new Parliament building and the enactment of women's reservation law have taken place. India



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during Dussehra celebrations, at Dwarka in New Delhi, on Tuesday

PTI

is today emerging as the world's largest democracy as well as the most trusted democracy," Modi said amidst the chants of Jai Shri Ram in Dwarka area of south West Delhi where huge effigy of Ravana were consigned to flames. Modi performed the ceremonial burning of the effigies, known as 'Lanka Dahan'. The Prime Minister also worshipped artists enacting the roles of Lord Ram, Goddess Sita, Lakshman, and Hanuman during Dussehra celebrations at the DDA ground in Dwarka, Delhi. The Prime Minister also urged the audience to recognise that the burning of Ravana's effigy should symbolise more than just a ritual, it should signify the eradication of societal ills that threaten mutual harmony. He emphasised the importance of defeating to finish off forces trying to divide the country with casteism and regionalism. The Prime Minister's comments were an apparent swipe at Opposition parties whom he has repeatedly accused of seeking to divide the country in the name of caste and region to draw political mileage.



Devotees carry an idol of Goddess Durga for immersion in Ganga river on Vijaydashami, marking an end to the festivities of Durga Puja, in Kolkata, on Tuesday

PTI

# Rajnath performs Shastra Puja

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
 NEW DELHI/TAWANG  
 (ARUNACHAL PRADESH)

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said given the current global scenario there is no option but to bolster the country's security apparatus, underlining that all efforts are being made by the Government to strengthen the nation's military prowess through indigenous production of defence equipment. He made this assertion after visiting forward posts in Arunachal Pradesh and carried out first-hand on ground assessment of the operational preparedness of armed forces there. Rajnath also performed Shastra Puja with the troops at Tawang, where he reiterated that Dussehra signifies the victory of good over evil. Tawang, last year saw an exchange of blows between the Indian and Chinese troops

when the latter tried to change the status quo at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on December 9. The issue was resolved later after the intervention of senior leadership. In his address, the Defence Minister described the righteousness and dharma of the brave Armed Forces personnel as the living testament to the ethos of the festival of Vijaydashami. He interacted with the troops deployed along the LAC facing China there and celebrated Dussehra with the soldiers. "No amount of appreciation is enough for the way you are guarding the border in difficult circumstances. I want to tell you that people of the country are proud of you," he told the troops. The Defence Minister expressed gratitude to the soldiers for their "unyielding spirit, unwavering commitment and unpar-



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh performs 'Shastra Puja' (worship of the weapons) on the occasion of 'Vijaydashami' during his visit to forward posts in Arunachal Pradesh, in Tawang district, on Tuesday

PTI

alleled courage" while guarding the borders in tough conditions, and ensuring that the nation and its people are safe.

Stressing the need for self-reliance, Rajnath said, "Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

giant strides have been made towards 'Aatmanirbharta' in defence. Earlier, we used to rely on imports to upgrade our military. But today, a number of major weapons and platforms are being manufactured within the country. "Foreign companies are being encouraged to share their technology and produce the equipment in India with domestic industry. In 2014, the value of defence exports was about ₹1,000 crore, but today we are exporting defence equipment worth thousands of crore." The Defence Minister said the valour and commitment of the Armed forces is one of the main reasons behind India's rising stature globally and that it is now among the most powerful nations. He cited India's success in the economic sphere as one of the reasons for the country's growing global profile. But at the same time he noted that if the

Armed forces had not guarded the country's border effectively, then its stature would not have risen. Citing his recent tour of Italy, the Defence Minister recalled his visit to Montone memorial which has been built to honour the contribution of Naik Yaswant Ghadge and other Indian soldiers who fought in the Italian campaign to liberate Montone in World War II. He added that not just Indians, but even Italian people pay their respects at the memorial, which is proof that the bravery of Indian soldiers is recognised globally. Rajnath also visited the Tawang War Memorial, where he laid a wreath and offered tributes to the bravehearts who made the supreme sacrifice during the 1962 war with China. He was accompanied by Army Chief General Manoj Pande, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C) Eastern

Command Lt General RP Kalita, GOC, 4 Corps Lt General Manish Erry and other senior officers of the Indian Army. Rajnath also visited the 4 Corps Headquarters at Tezpur in Assam. During the visit, he reviewed the operational readiness of the formation, which is deployed in one of the easternmost parts of the country. The Defence Minister was briefed on the infrastructure development along the LAC and the employment of cutting-edge military equipment and technology to enhance the operational efficiency of the troops deployed in the frontline. He commended the stellar work and yeoman services being rendered by all ranks of the Corps under challenging conditions. The Defence Minister's celebration of Dussehra with the soldiers at the strategically important location close to the LAC comes at a time when India and

China have been engaged in a bitter standoff in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh for over three years. Rajnath has been performing "Shastra Puja" during Dussehra for the last several years, including during his tenure as the Union Home Minister in the previous NDA Government. Indian and Chinese troops are locked in an over three-year confrontation in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh, even as the two sides completed disengagement from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks. India has been maintaining that its ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas. The Army has significantly bolstered deployment of troops and weaponry along the nearby LAC, including in the Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh sectors following the eastern Ladakh standoff.



# Air quality in Capital improves slightly

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's air quality improved marginally on Tuesday morning but was still in the poor category, according to monitoring agencies. The city's average air quality index (AQI) stood at 220 at 12 noon, improving from 263 at 4 pm on Monday. Delhi's air quality had turned "very poor" on Sunday for the first time since May, mainly due to a drop in temperature and wind speed, which allowed pollutants to accumulate. On Monday, Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai said the government has identified eight more pollution hotspots in addition to the existing 13 in the national capital, and special teams will be deployed there to check pollu-

tion sources. Rai said the government has also decided to use suppressant powder to prevent dust pollution in the city. Dust suppressants could include chemical agents like calcium chloride, magnesium chloride, lignosulfonates, and various polymers. These chemicals work by attracting and binding fine dust particles together, making them too heavy to become airborne. The minister also said the government will re-launch a campaign to curb vehicular pollution on October 26, a year after Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena put it on hold, questioning its effectiveness. Sources in the city government's environment department said the LG's permission will not be required for the



"Red Light On Gaadi Off" campaign this year as the participants will not receive any honorarium, unlike in previous seasons. Rai on Monday had announced that the "Red Light On, Gaadi Off" campaign will start from Thursday. The Minister also said odd-even vehicle rationing is not being considered at the moment. Under the odd-even scheme, private vehicles with registration plates ending in odd numbers ply on odd dates, and even numbers on even dates. The "Red Light On Gaadi Off" campaign, first launched on October 16, 2020, aims to reduce vehicular pollution in the national Capital by encouraging drivers to switch off their vehicles while waiting

for traffic lights to turn green. With the dip in temperature, Delhi's air quality declined to the "very poor" category on Monday. Delhi's air quality turned "very poor" on Sunday for the first time since May. Delhi has recorded the world's most toxic air, with stubble burning, pollution from vehicles, construction and coal-fired power plants said to be the contributing factors to this hazard. According to Bloomberg report, Delhi's air quality index rose to as high as 346 early on Monday, the highest among 110 global cities tracked by IQ Air. As per IQ Air data, Delhi recorded particulate matter (PM 2.5) of 296 micrograms per cubic meter of air, which is almost 20 times the WHO's

recommended level of 15. After a meeting with 28 departments to ensure the effective implementation of pollution mitigation measures in the capital, Rai said the next two weeks which include Dussehra, Deepawali and farm fires, are crucial for the Capital. Rai said district collectors have been instructed to conduct field visits on October 25 and ensure the strict implementation of pollution mitigation measures. Action will be taken against diesel generator sets, said Rai, adding DG sets being used for emergency services are exempt. The minister said directions have been issued to the Delhi Traffic Police to decongest 95 identified traffic junctions which will help reduce vehicular pollution.

## HC to hear on Dec 1 plea against not allowing prayers in Mughal Mosque

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has advanced the date of hearing to December 1 on a petition against the bar on offering prayers in the Mughal Mosque in the Mehrauli area. The managing committee of Mughal Mosque, which was appointed by the Delhi Waqf Board, had approached the high court last year alleging that the officials of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) completely stopped the offering of namaz in the mosque on May 13, 2022 in an "absolutely unlawful, arbitrary and precipitous manner". Allowing an early hearing application by the petitioner, Justice Prateek Jalan said in a recent order, "List on 01.12.2023. The next date of hearing i.e. 30.01.2024 stands cancelled."



they were stopped by the ASI without any notice. Recently, the court had asked the ASI to clarify its policy on allowing prayers by devotees in religious places located inside protected monuments. In its reply to the petition, the ASI has said that the mosque in question comes within the boundary of Qutub Minar and is thus within the protected area and offering of prayers cannot be permitted there. The ASI has cautioned that allowing worship in Mughal

Mosque would "not only set an example but it may also impact other monuments too". "Qutub Minar is a Monument of National Importance and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is submitted that it is not a place of worship, since the time of its protection the monument or any part of it, has not been used for any type of worship by any community. "It is submitted that the Mosque in question comes within the boundary of Qutub Minar Complex," the reply has added

## Home guard dies after pickup van hits police car



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 41-year-old home guard was killed when a pickup van hit a Delhi Police vehicle in Dwarka's Baba Haridas Nagar, police said on Tuesday. On the intervening night of October 22 and 23, assistant sub-inspector Mahesh Kumar and Home Guard Dharampal were on patrolling duty in the area in a PCR van, they said. On the Najafgarh-Bahadurgarh

Road, a pickup van hit their vehicle leaving both of them injured, they said. "The duo was taken to a hospital where Dharampal was declared brought dead while Mahesh was discharged after treatment," an official said. A case under sections 279 (rash driving) and 304A (causing death by negligence) of the Indian Penal Code was registered and the driver of the offending vehicle, Jai Lal (23), was arrested, police said.

## Court quashes man's appeal against grant of interim maintenance to wife

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The intent of the provision of interim maintenance under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act empowers the court to pass such directions as it deems just and proper, said a court here while quashing an appeal against the grant of interim maintenance to a woman. A magisterial court granted the interim maintenance to the woman and her minor child in March this year. Additional Sessions Judge Vishal Pahuja was hearing the husband's appeal assailing the magistrate's order, claiming he was earning Rs 12,500 per month, of which the magisterial court granted Rs 3,000 each to his wife and minor child. The appellant said that the grant of 50 per cent of his income was against the principles of natural justice. "The intent of the provision of interim maintenance (is) that (it) empowers the court to



pass such interim orders as it deems just and proper. The monetary relief is provided to save the aggrieved person from financial crises due to domestic violence and to sustain herself," ASJ Pahuja said in an order passed last week. "The appellant is the husband who has a duty to maintain his wife and child, so his income has to be divided between him and his wife and minor child which is aptly done in this case," he added. The sessions court also agreed with the magistrate's finding

that the husband was earning more than Rs 12,500 per month. It said even otherwise it was not a final order and the magisterial court had merely granted interim maintenance, which was applicable till the case was disposed of. "This court does not find any merits in this argument put forth by the counsel for the appellant, (which) thus, stands rejected," the court said, adding that "present appeal stands dismissed being devoid of merits".



Durga puja pandal in Saket Kali Bari in New Delhi

## Leaders join Dussehra celebrations in Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, former Congress president Sonia Gandhi and several other leaders attended events across Delhi to mark Dussehra festivities on Tuesday. Dussehra marks the end of the nine-day festivities of Navratri. Effigies of Ravana, Meghnad and Kumbhakaran are set ablaze during the celebrations to signify the triumph of good over evil. President Murmu attended Dussehra celebrations hosted by the Shri Dharmik Leela Committee at the ground opposite the Red Fort here, while Prime Minister Modi took part in an event held in Dwarka. The Dharmik Leela Committee has been organising one of the most high-profile Ramlila events of the city since 1924. President Murmu arrived at the venue around 6 pm and offered prayers along with the members of the committee. Murmu was accompanied by former Union Minister Harsh Vardhan. She was later handed



President Droupadi Murmu during Dussehra at Red Fort Ground, in New Delhi on Tuesday  
Ranjana Dimri

a ceremonial bow and arrow to shoot towards the effigies, following which they were set ablaze. Senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi attended Dussehra celebrations at an event hosted by the Nav Shri Dharmik Leela Committee. She was accompanied by Congress leader J P Agarwal and other party leaders. Amid chants of 'Jai Shri Ram', Sonia was gifted a copy of the Ramayana at the event.

## Taking inspiration from Lord Ram, city Govt trying to serve people: Kejriwal



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal aims at the effigy of Ravana as a symbolic gesture with a bow and arrow during Dussehra festival celebration organised by Love Kush Ramlalela at Red Fort Ground, in New Delhi on Tuesday  
Ranjana Dimri

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal joined Dussehra celebrations at the Red Fort here on Tuesday and said his government is trying to serve the people of the national capital, taking inspiration from the ideals of Lord Ram. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Government is ensuring everybody in Delhi gets good education and health services as well as facilities like free electricity, he said at the Dussehra celebrations hosted by the Luv Kush Ramlalela Committee on the Red Fort ground. "Lord Ram is our ideal. There is a lot to learn from his life and his concept of Ram Rajya. Our effort is nobody sleeps hungry and everybody gets a good education, health services and electricity in Delhi," the Chief

Minister said in his address. Kejriwal greeted his people on the occasion and also prayed for their well-being and happiness. "Taking inspiration from Lord Rama and as your son, I have been trying to solve your problems. "Still, if something remains to be done, I seek your apology," he said. The Chief Minister was felicitated with a mace by the organisers at the event. He took part in the tradition of setting the effigies of Ravana, Meghnad and Kumbhakaran ablaze with a ceremonial bow and arrow. People cheered the torching of the effigies which was accompanied by a recorded soundtrack of crackers bursting. Since crackers are banned in Delhi due to pollution, it is no longer used in the effigies torched on Dussehra.

## Grassroots innovators' initiatives help fight climate change threats

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In high-altitude Ladakh, in the far northern Indian Himalayas, volunteers of Leh Nutrition Project, unfazed by extreme weather, are engaged in advancing the development of artificial glaciers to help tackle water security issues for semi-nomadic communities in Changthang region. Artificial glaciers are a simple technique to maximise water harvesting. Far off in the Sunderbans in West Bengal, The Dighir Ganguly Foundation is working with the Munda community to construct specially designed customised structures including hospitals and schools that are disaster-resistant as per the local needs. Similarly, IGSSS is increasing resilience in the face of increasing heat waves within urban communities through the installation of agri-bio



panels and insulators for 30 households in informal settlements in the national Capital. These three innovators among nine other grassroots innovators recently here demonstrated their effective climate change solutions being implemented at the local level across the country under the ambit of the Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS), a not-for-profit organisation through

its initiative 'Flip the Notion'. Clearly, in the face of climate induced threat to humankind, humanitarian innovation and intervention technologies have become an immediate need to contain the pressing challenges being posed at both global and community level as has been showcased by these innovators. Dr Manu Gupta, Co-Founder, SEEDS, explained that their organization is engaged in build-

ing resilient and sustainable communities across boundaries towards disaster and environmental stewardship. "As you know, there are increasing number of climate induced disasters around the world. Our mission, at SEEDS, is to equip the vulnerable to be more resilient. We aim to serve in 225 hotspots in India by 2030, towards building hyper-local resilience eco-system reaching - 315 million lives," he said. In other words, the initiative's focus is climate resilience through innovation. The event which was attended by Kamal Kishore from National Disaster Management Authority (NCMA), Takeshi Komino, General Secretary at CWS Japan, Aruna Pandey, research consultant, Lighthouse Communities held deliberations and importance of transformative solutions for resilient communities,

challenges and innovations for stressed communities, collaborations, and technology-based interventions amongst others. Gupta added that so far they have responded to more than 45 disasters, built nearly 100 schools, more than 60,000 homes, nearly 25 healthcare facilities, more than 110 sanitation units - all this enabled through a people-led programme. "Alongside we have skilled more than one million learners in SEEDS Gurukul Programmes. Local and national organizations possess a unique vantage point, allowing them to grasp the precise vulnerabilities and challenges their communities face amidst the complexities of climate change," he added. The other innovators that showcased their strategy aimed towards climate mitigation and adoption were

Mahila Housing SEWA Trust, ELFA International, Words Rhythms. Images (WRI), Spandan Foundation, Urmul Seemant Samiti, Jaljeevika and OMCAR Foundation. If local women leaders under the umbrella of Mahila Housing SEWA Trust is focused on mitigating the disproportionate impact of heat stress in urban settlements in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, the Centre for Aquatic Livelihood Jaljeevika, an NGO, has initiated a project in Purnia, Bihar with an aim to build resilience to climate change within fisheries and aquaculture communities. Similarly, OMCAR Foundation is working to conserve the Palk Bay ecosystem through participatory marine resource management by building capacity of the locals in conservation efforts and conducting research on coastal resource management.



# Hong Kong court upholds ruling in favour of inheritance rights for same-sex couples

AP ■ HONG KONG

A Hong Kong court on Tuesday upheld a ruling that favoured the granting of equal inheritance rights to same-sex couples, in the latest victory for the city's LGBTQ+ community.

The decision by the Court of Appeal rejected the government's motion against the ruling that said the differential treatment facing same-sex married couples under two inheritance laws in the city constitutes unlawful discrimination.

"The differential treatment based on sexual orientation is apparent," Justice of Appeal Peter Cheung wrote in his judgment.

Currently, Hong Kong only recognizes same-sex marriage for certain purposes such as taxation, civil service benefits and dependent visas. Many of the government's concessions were won through legal challenges in recent years as the city has seen a growing social acceptance of



same-sex marriage. The ruling is a victory for the city's LGBTQ+ movement and is expected to have a strong

impact on the lives of same-sex couples from Hong Kong, who married overseas. Last week, the same court

upheld two earlier rulings that supported the granting of subsidized housing benefits to same-sex married partners. In

September, the city's top court ruled in a landmark decision that the government should provide a framework for recog-

nizing same-sex partnerships. The ruling on Tuesday involved a years-long battle fought by Henry Li and his late partner, Edgar Ng. After they married in London in 2017, Ng bought a subsidized flat as his matrimonial home with Li. He was concerned that if he died intestate, his properties would not be passed to Li. He passed away in 2020 after suffering years of depression. Nongovernmental organization Hong Kong Marriage Equality called on the government not to appeal the judgment. With the recent court rulings, it is clear that the right thing to do is to recognize same-sex partnerships in a comprehensive manner, it said.

In a statement issued by his solicitors, Li also said he hopes the government will respect the judgment. "It added insult to injury - that the government repeatedly argued in open court I am not Edgar's husband and should be treated as a stranger to him, while I was still mourning," he said.



## Tesla: Justice Department expanding probe and issuing subpoenas for information

AP ■ DETROIT

Federal prosecutors have expanded investigations into Tesla beyond the electric vehicle maker's partially automated driving systems, and they have issued subpoenas for information instead of simply requesting it, the company disclosed Monday.

In a quarterly report filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, Tesla said the Department of Justice is looking into "personal benefits, related parties, vehicle range and personnel decisions" without giving details.

The additional investigation topics and the subpoenas suggest that prosecutors have broadened their inquiry, and they have found the need to force Tesla to disclose information, legal experts say.

The filing indicates prosecutors may be investigating Tesla CEO Elon Musk, and whether the company has been candid in describing the features of its vehicles, they say.

In January, Tesla disclosed that the Justice Department had requested documents related to its Autopilot and "Full Self-Driving" features. Both features are classified as driver-assist systems, and the company says on its website that the vehicles cannot drive themselves.

Now, the company is disclosing a probe that is "a lot wider than just looking at Autopilot and FSD features," said Erik Gordon, a University of Michigan business and law professor. "The DOJ often starts with a formal written request and escalates to administrative subpoenas if it

thinks it isn't getting full cooperation," he said.

Specifying additional items that prosecutors are looking at indicates that Tesla lawyers found them serious enough to change the company's public disclosures, Gordon said.

Tesla didn't respond to a request for comment, but the company based in Austin, Texas, said in its SEC filing that to its knowledge, no government agency has concluded that any wrongdoing happened in any ongoing investigation. The Justice Department declined to comment.

For the first time, Tesla said in its filing that the investigations could damage the company's brand. "Should the government decide to pursue an enforcement action, there exists the possibility of a material adverse impact on our business, results of operation, prospects, cash flows financial position or brand," the filing said.

Jacob Frenkel, a former SEC enforcement attorney and ex-federal prosecutor, said specifically pointing out "personal benefits and related parties" suggests a possible connection to Musk. Disclosing that vehicle range is under scrutiny "also reflects a concern about the company's representations about vehicle features," said Frenkel, now a partner with Dickinson Wright in Washington.

It's unclear if Tesla merely considered subpoenas as requests for information in prior quarterly disclosures, Frenkel said. "Now the broader inquiry including relating to the Autopilot and FSD features appears subject to subpoena," he said.



## Extremists with ties to ISIS kill 26 in Congo

AP ■ KINSHASA

Extremists with ties to the Islamic State group killed at least 26 people in eastern Congo, authorities said on Tuesday.

Attackers with the Allied Democratic Forces killed people in the city of Oicha in North Kivu province on Monday, said Beni Charles Ehuta Omeonga, the military administrator for the area.

"Among the victims were seven members from the same family killed by the assailants in their home," he said.

Most of the victims were shot in their homes, said Nicolas Kikuku, a deputy governor in the region, adding that the death toll is likely higher than what's been reported.

Conflict has been simmering in eastern Congo for decades where more than 120 armed groups are fighting in the region, most for land and control of mines with valuable minerals, while some are trying to protect their communities.

ADF has been expanding and intensifying operations in recent years, spreading from North Kivu to Ituri province despite military interventions meant to stop them.

In April, the group/outfit killed more than 30 people between the Irumu and Mambasa territories in Ituri. ADF attacks have killed at least 370 civilians since April last year and abducted several hundred more - including a significant number of children - since April last year, according to the United Nations.

## Miners from rival union hold hundreds underground at gold mine in South Africa

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG

A group of miners from an unregistered, rival union are holding around 500 of their colleagues underground for the second day at a gold mine in South Africa over a union dispute. Some 15 miners have been injured in scuffles, the head of the mine said on Tuesday.

Details were sketchy and there were conflicting statements about what happened.

According to Jon Hericourt, CEO of New Kleynfontein Gold Mine company, which manages the mine, the incident erupted early on Monday when the miners from the unregistered union prevented hundreds of others from leaving after their night shift ended at the Modder East mine in Springs, east of Johannesburg.

He said he did not know exactly how many of the min-



ers were being "held hostage" by others from the rival union. There were all sorts of hammers, picks, shovels and other mining equipment that could potentially be used as weapons, he said.

Police were deployed to the mine but they have not been in contact with anyone underground despite trying to reach them via mine telephones

and two-way radios. Hericourt said there were at least 543 employees underground in various sections of the mine. He added that there was some initial contact early on Monday with the alleged hostage-takers.

"Engineers who were working in the mine on Sunday morning were also caught up (in this)," Hericourt said.

At least one man had sustained a serious head injury in scuffles, Hericourt said. The mine sent a paramedic and a security officer to bring him out on Monday after an agreement that they could, but the two were also taken hostage, he said.

The National Union of Mineworkers, which is the sole recognized union at the mine, said more than 500 of its members were being held against their will underground by what it referred to as "hooligans."

"They are still preventing them from coming to the surface," NUM representative Mlulameli Mveli said, adding there were also female mine employees trapped underground. "NUM calls for the law enforcement agencies in South Africa to intervene and go underground and arrest the hooligans who are holding our members against their

will." Hericourt blamed members of the rival AMCU union, saying it has demanded to be the sole syndicate representing the miners at Modder East.

Meanwhile, AMCU has disputed Hericourt's version of events, saying that there was a sit-in protest by miners in support of the union. New Kleynfontein Gold Mine manages Modder East, which is owned by the Gold One Group.

Rivalry between the NUM and AMCU unions was partly responsible for one of South Africa's most horrific mining episodes, when 34 striking mineworkers were shot and killed by police at a platinum mine in Marikana in the North West province in 2012. Six other mineworkers and two security officials were killed in days of violence that preceded the mass shooting by police.

## Off-duty pilot accused of trying to shut down engines of Horizon Air jet in midflight

AP ■ PORTLAND (US)

An off-duty pilot riding in the extra seat in the cockpit of a Horizon Air passenger jet tried to shut down the engines in midflight and had to be subdued by the crew, according to a pilot flying the plane.

Authorities in Oregon identified the man as Joseph David Emerson, 44. He was being held Monday on 83 counts each of attempted murder and reckless endangerment and one count of endangering an aircraft, according to the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office.

The San Francisco-bound flight on Sunday diverted to Portland, Oregon, where it was met by officers from the Port of Portland, who took Emerson into custody. Seattle-based Alaska Airlines, which owns Horizon, a

regional carrier, did not name Emerson, but said on Monday that the threat was posed by one of its pilot who was off duty but authorised to occupy the cockpit jump seat. The airline said the captain and co-pilot reacted quickly, "engine power was not lost and the crew secured the aircraft without incident." Alaska said in a statement that no weapons were involved.

One of the pilots told air traffic controllers that the man who posed the threat had been removed from the cockpit.

"We've got the guy that tried to shut the engines down out of the cockpit. And he - doesn't sound like he's causing any issue in the back right now, and I think he's subdued," one of the pilots said on audio captured by LiveATC.Net. "Other than that, we want law enforcement as soon as we get on the



ground and parked." The FBI office in Portland said it was investigating "and can assure the travelling public there is no continuing threat related to this incident."

The Federal Aviation Administration said it was

helping law enforcement investigations, but declined further comment about the incident.

FAA records indicate that Emerson has a valid license to fly airline planes. It was not clear on Monday whether he was represented by a lawyer.

There have been crashes that investigators believe were deliberately caused by pilots. Authorities said the co-pilot of a Germanwings jet that crashed in the French Alps in 2015 had practised putting the plane into a dive. In 2018, a Horizon Air ground

agent stole an empty plane at Sea-Tac International Airport in Seattle and crashed into a small island in Puget Sound after being chased by military jets that scrambled to intercept the plane. The man told an air traffic controller that he "wasn't really planning on landing" the aircraft, and described himself as "a broken guy."

Sunday's incident occurred on a 76-seat Horizon Air Embraer 175 that left Everett, Washington, at 5:23 pm. Local time and landed in Portland an hour later. Alaska Airlines did not immediately say how many passengers were on board. Alaska said passengers continued on to San Francisco on a later flight. When the jump seat, a third seat in the cockpit, is occupied it's often filled by an off-duty pilot, but the seat can be used by other airline employees

## 12 Indians hurt in road mishap near Kathmandu

AP ■ KATHMANDU

Twelve Indian pilgrims and a Nepali driver were injured when the SUV they were travelling overturned some 25 km west of Kathmandu on Tuesday morning, police said.

The vehicle carrying the 12 pilgrims, including three children, overturned after the driver lost control at Indrasarwar Rural Municipality, near Matatirtha area in Makawanpur district. The vehicle was heading towards Kathmandu from Birgunj, a southern Nepal town. The injured passengers were taken to Kathmandu for treatment, the police said.

The 25-year-old driver, identified as Anil Kumar Sah, has been detained for the purpose of investigation. They were on a pilgrimage tour of Kathmandu on Hindu festival Vijaya Dashami.

AP ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Malaysia's government said on Tuesday it will allow Lynas Rare Earth to continue to import and process rare earths until March 2026, after the Australian miner proposed a new technology to extract radioactive elements from the waste it produces.

The Lynas refinery in Malaysia, its first outside China producing minerals that are crucial to high-tech manufacturing, has been operating in central Pahang state since 2012. But the company has been embroiled in a dispute over radiation from waste accumulating at the plant. The government had ordered Lynas to move its leaching and cracking processes - which produce the radioactive waste from Australian ore - out of the country by the year's end. It also was

## Malaysia gives nod for Australian miner Lynas to import, process rare earths until March 2026

not allowed to import raw materials with radioactive elements into the country.

Science Minister Chang Lih Kang said the two conditions for renewing Lynas' license had been met after the company proposed a way to extract thorium, the radioactive element, from the rare earths it imports and from the more than 1 million tons of waste sitting at its factory.

The Atomic Energy Licensing Board has studied the Lynas proposal and found it feasible, he said.

Chang said the government's about-turn was not a softening of its stance. He said he considered it a win-win situation as it "fulfills our decision not to allow the continuous accumulation of radioactive waste" at the Lynas plant.

If successful, Chang said the waste can be disposed off quickly and the thorium can be commercialized and sold to nuclear plants overseas or to other industries. Lynas must commit 1 per cent of its gross revenue to research and development, especially on the thorium extraction,



he added. Lynas welcomed Malaysia's decision, with CEO Amanda Lacaze saying it will provide a strong foundation for the further development of Malaysia's rare earths industry. She said Lynas has invested more than 3 billion ringgit (USD 627 million) in Malaysia. Lynas said in a statement it will raise its research and development investment from 0.5 per cent to 1 per cent of its Malaysian gross sales, to develop methods to remove naturally occurring radioactive material from residues.

Lynas insists its operations are safe. It had earlier taken its dispute with the government to a Malaysian court.

Last week, Lynas said it will shut down most of its Malaysian operations for the next two months to upgrade its downstream operations. It said the upgrade was essential if its license was updated to allow the company to continue to import and process raw materials from January 1.

Lynas said it plans to also undertake further maintenance work on the cracking and leaching

facility if operations are allowed to resume as normal.

Rare earths are 17 minerals used to make products such as electric or hybrid vehicles, weapons, flat-screen TVs, mobile phones, mercury-vapor lights and camera lenses.

China has about a third of the world's rare earth reserves but a near monopoly on supplies. Lynas has said its refinery could meet nearly a third of world demand for rare earths, excluding China. Environmental groups have long campaigned against the Lynas refinery, demanding that the company export its radioactive waste. They contend that the radioactive elements, which include thorium and uranium among others, are not in their natural forms but have been made more dangerous through mechanical and chemical processes.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Status quo

EC needs a year to prepare for simultaneous polls, effectively ruling out such an exercise in 2024

The concept of "One Nation, One Election," which envisions simultaneous parliamentary and Assembly elections across India, has been a subject of significant debate. While this idea aims to streamline the electoral process, reduce costs and enhance governance efficiency, it faces a considerable challenge at two levels: Conceptual (various nuances of having all elections at one go) and operational. For now, the Election Commission has made it clear that due to a shortage of semiconductors and chips required for the production of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), it cannot be done in 2024. Semiconductors and chips are the lifeblood of electronic devices, including EVMs. Recent global shortages in these crucial components have created substantial challenges for the EC. The commission has expressed the need for a time of up to a year to ramp up EVM production. Additionally, semiconductors are also required for Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines, an integral part of the voting process. The EC had reported its inability to utilise more than 80 per cent of its budget allocated for procuring EVMs due to semiconductor shortages. This issue has been raised with a parliamentary standing committee, chaired by former President Ram Nath Kovind, tasked with assessing the feasibility of simultaneous elections. Both the parliamentary standing committee and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have endorsed the idea of simultaneous elections. The 22nd Law Commission is also examining the feasibility of this concept; it is expected to propose tentative timelines for elections.

While the concept of simultaneous elections has garnered support for its potential to save public funds and reduce administrative burden, it faces constitutional complexities. The 21st Law Commission, which evaluated this issue in 2018, supported the idea but noted that constitutional amendments would be necessary for its implementation. It emphasised the need for further discussions involving all stakeholders before making final recommendations. Furthermore, additional costs of Rs 5,200 crore and Rs 8,000 crore are estimated to be required for the procurement of additional voting machines necessary to hold simultaneous elections in 2024 and 2029, respectively. This would mean extra burden on the exchequer. These estimates also factor in the projected population increase in India by 2029. The concept of "One Nation, One Election" holds great promise in streamlining the electoral process and improving governance efficiency though there would be a lot of issues to be settled before it can be effectively implemented without bruising the Indian democratic system itself. However, for now, the semiconductor shortage and the need for a substantial budget settles the debate in favour of multiple elections. Addressing these challenges will require coordination among the Government, Election Commission and semiconductor manufacturers. As India's democracy further evolves, the feasibility of simultaneous elections remains an important talking point.

## PICTALK



Devotees carry an idol of Goddess Durga for immersion at the bank of Brahmaputra river, in Guwahati.

## Right to work: A far cry for women

Gender inequality is a harsh reality of the global labour market, with almost one in four women unable to find a job, compared with 16.6 per cent of men



ARCHNA DUTTA

While, in 2016, an ILO and Gallup opinion poll in 142 countries and territories, found that a total of 70 per cent of women and 66 per cent of men would prefer that women work at paid jobs, which included a majority of women who are not currently in the workforce, and that it holds good in almost all regions worldwide, including the Arab regions, which traditionally have a low rate of women's labour force participation. Now, despite such willingness for women to go for paid work, the women's global labour force participation rate is now over 50%, compared to 80% for men. In India, it is just 37% (PLFS-2022-23).

Moreover, around 2.4 billion women of working age are being deprived of equal economic opportunity, as 178 countries still maintain legal barriers that prevent their full economic participation. In 86 countries, women face some form of job restriction and 95 countries do not guarantee equal pay for equal work. The gap between men's and women's expected lifetime earnings globally is US\$172 trillion, nearly two times the world's annual GDP (Women, Business and Law, World Bank, 2022). While, globally, for each dollar of labour income men earn, women earn only 51 cents, which in low and lower-middle-income countries further go down to 33 cents and 29 cents on the dollar, respectively (ILO, 2023). Further, women face several limitations in their job search, confront different challenging situations than men, and are unable to take up employment on short notice, leading to the 'jobs gap', which stands significantly higher for women at 15%, as against men's 10.5%. Even when women secure employment, it is often a 'last resort' option, mainly, in the informal sector, without legal protections, social security or decent working conditions. Out of every five jobs created for women, four are within the informal economy, whereas for men, the ratio is two out of every three jobs (ILO). The 2023 LinkedIn global data



across 163 countries revealed women's persistent skewing in the workforce across industries, with a predominant presence in Healthcare and Care Services (64.7%), Education (54.0%) and Consumer Services (51.8%), while remaining under-represented in Retail (48.7%), Entertainment Providers (48.4%), Administrative and Support Services (46.5%), Real Estate (44.7%), Accommodation and Food (43.3%) and Financial Services (42.4%), Oil, Gas and Mining (22.7%) and Infrastructure (22.3%). In the STEM occupations that are well-remunerated and expected to grow in the future, women are only 29.2% of all STEM workers. In the emerging field of AI, as of 2022, it has 30% of female talent, which is likely to have serious implications, with the creation of biased algorithms without women's perspectives. LinkedIn data also indicated that women hold 32.2% of senior leadership positions in 2023, and continue to be outnumbered by men across all industries. Nevertheless, as per the World Economic Forum's 2023 Future of Jobs Survey, more than two-thirds of the organisations surveyed have implemented a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programme, introducing specific programs such as mentoring, sponsorship, leadership train-



THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF ECONOMIST OF THE WORLD BANK GROUP, RUED THAT 'WOMEN CANNOT ACHIEVE EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE, IF THEY ARE ON AN UNEQUAL FOOTING AT HOME

ing, caregiving policies, and increased flexibility of working arrangements as a pathway to closing workplace gender gaps. The World Bank's 2022 report, however, highlighted that the Pay, Parenthood and Workplace indicators have registered the lowest average scores, rising 0.9 and 0.7 points, respectively, in the last year, and the gains in the Parenthood indicator have largely been around paternity leave and shared parental leave. The Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of the World Bank Group, rued that 'women cannot achieve equality in the workplace, if they are on an unequal footing at home ...and that having children doesn't mean they are excluded from full participation in the economy'. Across the world, 118 economies guarantee 14 weeks of paid leave for mothers, and 114 of the economies mandate paid leave for fathers, but the median duration is just one week. Now, this year's Economics Nobel laureate, Claudia Goldin's research, asserted that women's employment has a 'U-shaped' relationship with structural changes in the economy, as well as evolving social norms, especially about marriage and parenting. While, another researcher contended that 'some of the gender gap in employment and earnings is due to extra barriers that women face, such as cultural

norms'. Though gender roles and the pressures to conform to them vary across regions, religions and households, it is of special concern in the Middle East, North Africa, and India. While, social analysts suggest that they can be countered through behavioural change strategies by means of socialisation, communication and monitoring, targeting not only women but also their partners, parents, family and community members, who, most of the times, cast influence on attitudes and norms around women's work, while policy-making should also be attuned to cultural norms. Now, the Global Gender Gap Report, 2022, drew attention to the large-scale disruption of economic opportunities for women in skilling, wealth accumulation and overall well-being in order to bridge the broader gender gaps in households, societies and economies. As the labour markets get reconfigured in the post-pandemic era, apart from embarking on frontier technologies, education and capacity-building for better employability, productivity and wages, there should also be increasing efforts in establishing new working arrangements to enable men and women to balance caregiving responsibilities around work. (The writer is an educationist, freelance writer, and an ex-civil servant, views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## My land, your land, no man's land



A conflict drawn from myriad hearths, Arabs, Jews trying to claim the earth Whose claim to land is it? Towns like Sinai, Gaza mire the minds West Bank, delineated for refugees back in 1949. Many centuries ago, the feud began Yet again, over a piece of land Infamous now, Palestine. How it has left the common man, Arab, Palestinian, Jew; displaced, claiming a strip of land. Occupation, I call it, of the mind Broken dreams, Hopes crushed. The sound of the sirens, Made those dream rushed. A gloomy atmosphere, Filled with violence. Enter the Hamas, and ballistics follow, The Palestinians are stranded, feeling hol-

low, There is an eerie silence, Left behind from Ottoman times. It was once peaceful, Yasser Arafat he led, Our land, which the Israeli's claim. As refugees and displaced were bombarded with missiles, Pitifully facing, calisthenics of the Israeli kind. 21st century here we are Abandoned homes, no let-up in mortar Empty streets, stricken faces, women, children, Looking for hope vacant eyes plead, Anyone, giving any heed? Once they woke up, Hopeful to see. The rising sun, One Last time. Upon seeing their houses destroyed, It makes them speechless, no endgame in sight? Nowhere to go, Hope is all humans know Can we co-create a peaceful life? The humanitarian mandate is ours to know, Not just policies that should flow Let us stand as one with this one goal Even as the displaced strive to stay alive. Shaurya Bhatnagar | Noida

coalition. While opposition to the BJP can act as a binding force, a viable alternative necessitates a more cohesive solution, one that envisions the nation's development. TKR Noori | Mumbai

## INDIA BEAT NEW ZEALAND

India triumphed over New Zealand by four wickets in a World Cup match in Dharamsala on October 22, marking their first victory against the Black Caps in an ICC event in 20 years. India can take pride in breaking the New Zealand jinx as they passed a significant test. Shami's impressive five-wicket haul in his first match of the prestigious ICC World Cup raises questions about his exclusion when Hardik returns. It was

a remarkable team effort with everyone contributing, showcasing exemplary dedication and fielding skills. Heartfelt congratulations to the Indian team for their historic win against New Zealand! Keep the momentum going and reignite the memories of 2011. India's resounding triumph over New Zealand in the recent cricket match stands as a testament to the unwavering spirit and skill of the Indian cricket team. With exceptional teamwork, dazzling performances, and a never-say-die attitude, they showcased their mettle on the pitch. Tauqueer Rahmani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Household chores over the right to play

While the country is making remarkable strides in development, antiquated attitudes toward girls still remain prevalent in the society

Recently, India celebrated a significant milestone at the Asian Games, with the country achieving a century of medals for the first time. This historic success isn't solely attributed to male athletes but underlines the invaluable contributions of India's female athletes. By excelling in traditionally male-dominated sports such as horse riding, the country's women athletes have defied traditional norms and emerged as fresh role models for the younger generation. However, a bitter reality persists, revealing a deep-seated gender bias in our society, particularly towards women and girls. Despite progress in various fields, there's a reluctance to change traditional gender norms and expectations, which often confine women to household duties and limit their overall development. India is making remarkable strides in development, yet antiquated attitudes toward girls remain prevalent. Initiatives like "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" and "Kanya Uthyan Yojana" have been



introduced to empower girls, but regressive mindsets persist. As we explore space and technological advancements, we must simultaneously confront the deeply ingrained prejudices that persist against girls and women. Girls are frequently denied the freedom to play and enjoy their childhood, burdened instead with household chores from a very young age, a practice especially pronounced in rural regions. This mindset prevails both in urban and rural areas, with even more pronounced gender disparities in the latter. In Paroo and Sahebganj block, 65 kilometres from Muzaffarpur district in Bihar, girls from economically disadvantaged farming and labour families bear the brunt of household responsibilities. They shoulder tasks

like sweeping, grinding flour, tending to livestock, cleaning the courtyard, and working in others' fields from a young age. This inequality persists as their brothers remain untouched by such obligations. The implicit message is clear: if you're a girl, you have no right to play, and even when girls seek to play, they are often denied this opportunity. Chanda (name changed), a 10-year-old girl from Husepur village in Sahebganj block, is among those affected by these gendered biases. She is the only girl among her two older brothers. While her brothers are exempt from household chores, she is burdened with tasks like sweeping, grinding flour, and cutting vegetables. "When I ask my mother to share household chores equally among us, she says, 'They are boys, let them play,' I really want to play too, but I can't play much." Sanjay Kumar, a science teacher at Dharphari High School, says that sports contribute to the mental and physical development of children. He says that society must challenge deep-rooted prejudices that

deprive girls of these opportunities. It is crucial for parents to encourage their daughters to play freely and embrace the physical and mental development it offers, fostering teamwork, leadership skills, and decision-making abilities. Childhood games contribute to balanced muscular and bone development, and girls should have the same opportunities as boys to engage in them. While progress has been made, there's still a long road ahead to address the gender disparities prevalent in many rural areas. Despite government initiatives and efforts to promote sports, these deeply entrenched gender biases must be actively challenged. The transformation of societal perspectives and the empowerment of girls are essential steps to ensure their equitable participation in all aspects of life. Rural girls deserve a childhood filled with play and equal opportunities, free from the fear of societal backlash. (The author is a young writer from Bihar. Views are personal. Charkha Features)



SIMRAN SAHNI

## DELHI-NCR RAPID RAIL

Sir—The introduction of India's inaugural rapid rail service in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) promises to trigger a transformative change on multiple fronts. Most notably, it pledges to revolutionise travel by significantly reducing commute times, providing individuals with more quality time for family and friends, personal interests, or much-needed rest. Additionally, the rapid rail system will enhance connectivity across the NCR, enabling people to live and work in various cities within the region. This newfound mobility opens doors to a plethora of job and housing opportunities, simplifies visits to loved ones in different cities, and boosts economic growth by streamlining business operations and job accessibility. The environmental benefits of the rapid rail are substantial, as it offers a more sustainable mode of transportation with reduced energy consumption and emissions, contributing to improved air quality and a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions. Sabita Kumari | Hazaribagh

## ROADBLOCKS TO OPPOSITION UNITY

Sir—The Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance, or INDIA, a coalition of 28 parties aiming to remove the BJP from power in 2024, seems to face challenges in maintaining a united front during the upcoming Assembly elections scheduled for November in five states. They are deeply entangled in seat allocation, and internal dynamics within the Congress also create obstacles to seat sharing. To succeed, they must be willing to allocate more seats to regional parties. Building a formidable front against the BJP demands a stronger Congress at its core, along with a deeper understanding and trust among its leaders. This should encourage them to reach out beyond their personal ambitions and engage with parties such as the BSP, which is not currently part of the



## FIRST COLUMN

## NOW IS THE TIME FOR HARMONY

He who lives in harmony with himself, lives in harmony with the world: Marcus Aurelius



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ

We all want to be happy all the time, but is it that easy? Not really! Because we cannot be happy unless there is harmony in our life. It is said that the one who lives in harmony with self lives in harmony with the whole universe. All of us are a part of a big human rosary which is tied up by a common thread of 'Relationship'. It's a fact that our relationship with others is one of the most important key areas in our life. As soon as we are born, our relationship starts with our mother till the time we die when we are cremated by our relatives. However with modern day development, the whole relationship pattern between humans has changed due to which the traditions and practices which created harmony in society and in personal relations, are dying. It's unfortunate though, but it's a harsh reality that needs to be accepted. Our desire for a big car, a big house, a big salary & a bigger self ego is eroding our value system, making us more materialistic than a real modern personality. It's so paradoxical that on one hand we are getting modernized but on other hand we are losing human touch. Today nobody cares to help a poor person, nor does one care to look after their elders at home. This shows the level of degradation in our society which is beyond repair. Since we have forgotten the importance of the positive traits of our personality, we are losing all that we had gathered from our ancestors.

Our relationship with nature too is suffering as a result of which we are facing nature's wrath in the form of drought, famine, floods, cyclones etc.. As a result, our situation is fast changing from bad to worse, neither do we live, nor let others live in harmony. So who is to be blamed for this downfall? For this first of all we need to



understand the causes of lack of harmony & then we must ponder on the prerequisites of creating harmony in society. To put it in simple words, harmony means friendliness & togetherness. So, if we work for the welfare of others and have love and sympathy towards them, it would be considered a good contribution to create harmony in society. If we listen to other persons viewpoint patiently, we surely create rapport with them and win their respect and love & when selfless love and regard blossom in society, these foster compassion, peace, bliss and happiness. All our interactions and relations are then based on love, understanding and unity which would ultimately create a harmonious society. Remember!! those human beings who work for creating goodwill, cooperation and cohesion in society are true servers of society and of Almighty Supreme. Last but not the least, we all should realize that the most appropriate time to create harmony is now because never before in the history of humanity had there been such a steep decline in values. Hence, if we as enlightened beings can stop this degradation and work hard to steer the society to a new direction of positivity, purity and prosperity, then our future generations will surely remember us for this valuable contribution towards a very noble cause. So c'mon let us all take a pledge to save the treasure of our culture and moral values which were bestowed upon us by our ancestors and fill them in each and every human being which would enable them to become a symbol of inspiration for everyone.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist, views are personal)

## Beyond compliance for disability inclusion



ARMAN ALI

The road to equality for disabled individuals in the workplace has been paved with both promise and pitfalls. Differently abled must be given their dignity to work



Inclusivity has long been hailed as a cornerstone of any progressive society. It is an assertion that we as a nation, time and again, aspire to uphold. However, as we take stock of the employment ecosystem in India, the lens through which we view inclusivity has often overlooked a significant portion of our population - persons with disabilities. The road to equality for disabled individuals in the workplace has been paved with both promise and pitfalls. As we delve into the present status of disabled people in India's employment landscape, we uncover a complex tapestry of challenges, a world of untapped potential, and the beacon of hope represented by initiatives like the NCPEDP-LT Mindtree Helen Keller Awards.

**Challenges and Opportunities**  
At the all-India level, 36% of the total disabled persons are workers. Among male disabled persons, 47% are working, while among female disabled individuals, only 23% are part of the workforce (DEPwD, MSJE). These figures underscore the disparity between genders in disability employment, emphasizing the urgent need for more inclusive policies. Rural India shows some promise, with 25% of female disabled individuals participating in the workforce, while in urban areas, the corresponding figure drops to 16%. This urban-rural disparity highlights the need for region-specific strategies to improve employment opportunities for disabled people. In the pursuit of employment, people with disabilities (PWDs) face significant challenges that hinder their entry into the corporate sector. This stark contrast between employable disabled individuals and those who are actually employed calls for immediate action to tap into this vast potential.

According to the latest workforce data reported by Nifty 50 constituent companies as part of their annual disclosures, the situation remains grim. Only five out of these

50 companies have more than 1% of people with disabilities on their rolls, with four of them being public sector companies. It's worth noting that public sector companies are required to reserve 4% of all jobs for disabled people in compliance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 - a target which all the analysed companies fall short of. In a research paper titled 'Moving Beyond Compliance: Inclusion of Persons With Disabilities in Business' (2019) published by Oxfam India in collaboration with NCPEDP findings indicated that low literacy levels, lack of access to skills and technology, ignorance, Misinformation, and prejudice, access to information on job opportunities and Inadvertent exclusion are significant challenges faced by persons with disabilities in seeking employment.

Moreover, the study highlighted various hurdles faced by disabled individuals in their employment. These challenges encompass issues like ineffective integration processes, limited career growth, skill-related job losses, inadequate grievance mechanisms, poor job identification, unsuitable work assignments, lack of workplace accessibility, insufficient budget allocation for disability-related technology, and a tendency to limit inclusion efforts to CSR. Persistent barriers include negative attitudes, social integration challenges, feelings of indebtedness, and ongoing transportation issues. Addressing these challenges requires a fundamental shift in perspective and practice within the govt/corporate world. It necessitates the recognition that disabled individuals

bring valuable skills, unique perspectives, and a strong work ethic to the table. Overcoming the hurdle of attitude demands a commitment to changing workplace cultures, fostering empathy, and championing diversity and inclusion. One effective means of achieving this transformation is through the practice of reasonable accommodation. Reasonable accommodation involves making necessary adjustments to the workplace environment and job duties to enable disabled employees to perform their tasks effectively. This can encompass a range of measures, from providing assistive technologies to accommodating flexible work hours. To address the present challenges, India needs a multifaceted approach. Public and private sector organizations must undertake awareness campaigns and sensitization programs to combat stereotypes and biases against disabled individuals. Changing perceptions is only the first step towards fostering a more inclusive work environment. The private sector should actively implement the provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 and provide reasonable accommodations to disabled employees. Mandatory reporting on the hiring and inclusion of disabled individuals can ensure accountability. Private sector companies must not only meet legal compliance but also set aspirational goals for disability inclusion, aiming to go beyond the minimum requirements.

As India establishes itself as a thriving centre for startups and entrepreneurship, it is essential to shine a spotlight on self-employment

opportunities for individuals with disabilities. This necessitates substantial investment. Customized training schemes and initiatives aimed at enhancing skills can provide disabled individuals with the tools necessary for success in the job market. The significant pool of employable disabled individuals should be tapped into through specific efforts, vocational training, and programs designed for skill enhancement.

Empowering individuals with disabilities to choose between remote and in-office work recognizes their diverse capabilities and needs. Rather than assuming remote work as the sole solution, it's important to provide choices and decision-making power. To achieve this, organizations should adopt accessible communication tools and provide comprehensive training to all employees. This approach promotes inclusivity and respects individual preferences, allowing disabled individuals to thrive in a workspace that aligns with their unique needs and talents.

The present status of people with disabilities in India's employment ecosystem is a mixed bag of challenges and opportunities. We have a long way to go to create a truly inclusive workforce, but the path is illuminated by promising initiatives and the potential of disabled individuals to contribute meaningfully to society and the economy. By embracing reasonable accommodation and promoting an inclusive culture, organizations can unlock the untapped potential of persons with disabilities and build a more inclusive India.



ACCORDING TO THE LATEST WORKFORCE DATA REPORTED BY NIFTY 50 CONSTITUENT COMPANIES AS PART OF THEIR ANNUAL DISCLOSURES, THE SITUATION REMAINS GRIM

(The writer is executive director, National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, views are personal)

## Menstrual hygiene policy, 2023: Need to walk the talk

There is need to develop mechanisms to ensure access to affordable and safe menstrual hygiene products, especially for those from low-income groups

Riya Akhtar has had to manage her periods with whatever material she could find. Even if this meant reproductive tract infections, buying sanitary napkins was never an option as it would put a strain on her father's meagre income. Akhtar and her three sisters are among the thousands of vulnerable adolescent girls and women in South Asia who are unable to manage their periods due to lack of monetary resources, poor access to menstrual products and cultural taboos surrounding menstruation. However, an innovative use of blockchain technology in Bangladesh is helping to break these barriers and support girls like Akhtar to better understand their bodies and menstruation and to choose



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

(The writer is a senior journalist; views expressed are personal)

safer ways to improve their menstrual health.

Since February 2022, life has changed for 3,300 adolescent girls like Akhtar, her three sisters and women between the ages of 15-49 living in two urban slums Bhashantek and Duaripa, in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Thanks to a blockchain-based Building Blocks app that leverages a cash and voucher assistance programme, they are able to buy menstrual hygiene products on a regular basis from local shops close to where they live. The huge increase in uptake of menstrual pads from 32% to 96% between February 2022 and January 2023 is an indication of the period of poverty that existed. Under this Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) project,

women and girls receive a printed QR code card for the household along with a PIN code to redeem monthly value vouchers against various brands of menstrual pads. This is being implemented through a collaborative partnership between the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Bangladesh, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and a local NGO partner, the Concerned Women for Family Development (CWFD). The CVA project was able to piggyback the Building Blocks (BB) aid app designed by WFP as it enables individuals to receive various types of assistance from multiple organizations simultaneously. Since these families were existing beneficiaries of WFP having

been assessed as highly vulnerable and food insecure, it helped UNFPA to upload its menstrual hygiene cash voucher entitlements.

Under the BB, a data and transaction management system, women and girls have individual accounts where their menstrual hygiene voucher entitlements from UNFPA are loaded. When they visit a participating shop to make a purchase, they simply enter their PIN code into the BB application on the shopkeeper's smartphone. The transaction is recorded directly in the BB system. The transaction is connected to an inventory system and provides confirmation to the shopkeeper that the transaction is valid. The selected menstrual products along with

an accompanying information poster were handed out with no money changing hands. The application works like a cash register to select the products, and their quantity and then check out. Transactions can be verified for audits and for different parties to produce invoices and payments.

In Bangladesh, cash and voucher transfers are a popular way of assistance. The government also uses cash transfers extensively in various social protection schemes. UNFPA Bangladesh has been implementing various projects with CVA, including for emergency responses as it is a member of the cash working group at the national country level. This innovative CVA-BB combo approach has helped

promote social behaviour change in menstrual hygiene practices. Access to products in the form of menstrual pads has also vastly improved since the shopkeeper only requires a smartphone connected to the BB application to participate in the project. This means that small shops located close to the homes of women and girls recipients and ones they are accustomed to using on a daily basis can be one-stop centres. The increased demand for menstrual products boosts the incomes of the local shopkeepers and ensures their availability in the slums.

So, can this model be replicated in India? In India, cash transfer schemes are also widely used by the government for various social protection programmes. The country has

also shown remarkable and enterprising use of blockchain technology.

Additionally, the aim of the draft menstrual hygiene policy, 2023, by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, is to promote the health and empowerment of all individuals who menstruate. It seeks to develop mechanisms to ensure access to affordable and safe menstrual hygiene products, especially for those from low-income and marginalised communities and in remote, rural and difficult-to-reach locations. One of its main objectives is to foster innovative practices with social entrepreneurs and the private sector to address issues of access and affordability, equity and inclusivity by leveraging research and expertise.

Trump compares himself to Mandela, rails against Biden

AP ■ CONCORD (US)

Former President Donald Trump compared himself to anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela on Monday as he cast himself as the victim of federal and state prosecutors he alleges are targeting him and his businesses for political reasons.

Peace Prize. "I don't mind being Nelson Mandela because I'm doing it for a reason," Trump told an amped-up crowd of supporters at a sports complex in Derry, New Hampshire.

the commemorative poster at the statehouse in Concord that all the candidates are asked to sign. Candidates this year have until Oct. 27 to officially sign up, and dozens are expected to do so.



something new. Also new was the security surrounding his visit. Only supporters selected by the campaign were allowed to line the hallway to the secretary of state's office at the Statehouse, and access to the building was restricted.

On Monday, he touted his wide lead in current New Hampshire polls and noted that support for Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has dropped significantly.

White House, he will order the construction of a state-of-the-art missile defense shield over the U.S. That he said would be "capable of blasting Chinese, Russian, and Iranian missiles out of our skies."

an allegory of what he says are the dangers of illegal immigration, and claimed Biden would turn the country "into a hotbed for jihadists and make our cities into dumping grounds resembling the Gaza Strip."

Chinese FM Wang Yi to visit US ahead of likely Biden-Xi meeting

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi will visit Washington on Thursday for high-level talks, the US state department has announced, as the two countries try to "responsibly manage" their fraught relations.



Adviser Jake Sullivan during his stay here, according to US media reports. Blinken spoke with Wang on October 14 and urged China to use its relationships with countries in the Middle East to stop the conflict in Israel from spreading.

early 2018, raising import tariffs on each other's goods. The United States will continue to use diplomacy to advance its interests and values, address areas of difference, and make progress on shared transnational challenges, the statement said.

defend the Philippines in the event of an armed attack, as stipulated in a 1951 treaty. This statement followed a maritime incident on Sunday when Chinese ships blocked and collided with two Filipino vessels near Second Thomas Shoal.

7 dead in massive vehicle crashes in south Louisiana due to 'superfog'

AP ■ NEW ORLEANS

At least seven people were killed Monday morning after a "superfog" of smoke from south Louisiana marsh fires and dense fog caused multiple massive car crashes involving a total of 158 vehicles, authorities said.



Advocate. Coll could smell smoke as he heard other drivers calling for help and the sounds of crashing cars and popping tires. He was able to kick open his passenger door to escape and then helped others - pulling out one person through a car window.

cars and extensive debris on both northbound and southbound lanes of the elevated interstate, which passes over swamp and open waters between lakes Pontchartrain and Maurepas.

China removes Defence Minister missing for 2 months with little explanation

AP ■ TAIPEI

China has replaced Defense Minister Gen. Li Shangfu, who has been out of public view for almost two months with little explanation, state media reported on Tuesday.

Women in Iceland including Prime Minister go on strike



AP ■ HUSAVIK

Iceland's prime minister and women across the volcanic island nation went on strike on Tuesday to push for an end to unequal pay and gender-based violence.

heavily affected by the walkout. National broadcaster RUV said it was reducing television and radio broadcasts for the day. Tuesday's walkout, which lasts from midnight to midnight, is being billed as the biggest since Iceland's first such event on October 24, 1975, when 90 per cent of women refused to work.

China prods Bhutan to establish diplomatic relations, settle border issues soon

PTI ■ BEIJING

China has asked Bhutan to establish diplomatic ties with it and resolve the boundary issue "as soon as possible" to transform the relations between the two neighbours into "legal form".

"The conclusion of boundary negotiations and the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Bhutan fully serve the long-term and fundamental interests of the country and nation of Bhutan," Wang said.

release said. The Chinese Foreign Ministry press release quoted Dorji as saying that Bhutan and China have enjoyed a traditional friendship. He thanked China for its strong support and assistance to Bhutan.

4 suspected North Korean defectors found in small boat in South Korean

AP ■ SEOUL

Four North Koreans were found in a small wooden boat in South Korean waters on Tuesday in what is likely a rare case of North Koreans taking a risky sea voyage to flee to the South, Seoul officials said.

Tuesday morning, after a report by a fishing boat. The four people on board identified themselves as North Koreans, coast guard officials said. South Korea's military said it secured the custody of the North Koreans in coordination with the coast guard, after chasing their boat along the sea border.

wear military uniforms when they were found. South Korea's Unification Ministry declined to provide personal details of the four, saying an investigation was underway.

EPA proposes banning cancer-causing chemical TCE used in automotive care and other products

AP ■ WOBURN

The US Environmental Protection Agency on Monday proposed banning the cancer-causing chemical trichloroethylene, which can be found in consumer products including automobile brake cleaners, furniture care and arts and crafts spray coating.

EPA's recent risk-evaluation studies found that as much as 250 million pounds of TCE are still produced in the United States annually. One of the first places the chemical raised concern was in Massachusetts, where it was linked to contaminated drinking water in the city of Woburn.



across America," said Michal Freedhoff, the EPA's assistant administrator for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention. "Today, EPA is

to ban TCE, welcomed the move. "With this rule, we can see a future where we will no longer be manufacturing, processing and distributing a chemical known to be deadly," Markey said.

we have been partners in the effort to clean up Woburn, to get justice for her son, and to save other families from seeing their children fall sick as a result of contamination," Markey said.



# 16 killed as boat catches fire in western Congo

AP ■ KINSHASA

At least 16 people were killed on Monday when a boat caught fire on the Congo River, local officials said. The boat was carrying fuel and was on its way to the city of Mbandaka from the eastern part of the capital, Kinshasa, said Papy Epiana, the provincial deputy. At least 11 people were rescued and it's unclear if more are missing. The accident comes two days after a boat capsized also on the Congo River, killing at least 40 people. Boat accidents are common on the Congo River and on the nation's lakes because of the prevalent use of makeshift boats that are often overloaded. The majority of the population in the country's northwest use the rivers to travel because of a lack of good roads and because it is less expensive. The accidents in the country's west come amid rising insecurity in the conflict-riddled east. At least 30 people were killed and their homes burned Sunday night in Rutshuru Territory in



North Kivu province, according to local authorities. The attack was perpetrated by the M23 rebel group, said Justin Kaleghesere, vice president for the Rutshuru Territory Youth Council. The M23 rebel group, largely comprised of Congolese ethnic Tutsis, rose to prominence 10

years ago when its fighters seized Goma, eastern Congo's largest city on the border with Rwanda. Its name derives from a March 23, 2009 peace deal, which it accuses the Congo government of not implementing. The rebel group was dormant for nearly a decade before resurfacing late last year. Failed peace talks and broken cease-fires have led to continued violence that has displaced tens of thousands of people. During Sunday's attacks, officials say victims were killed with machetes or shot when M23 launched attacks against the Wazalendo, a local self-defense group.

# Sharif gets bail in Toshakhana case; his jail-term in Al-Azizia case suspended

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

For the first time since his return from London after four years of self-exile, former premier Nawaz Sharif on Tuesday appeared before the Islamabad accountability court, which confirmed his bail in the Toshakhana corruption case. Sharif, 73, the three-time prime minister and supremo of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), returned to Pakistan on Saturday. Ahead of Sharif's arrival on October 21, his legal team approached the Islamabad High Court, which granted him a protective bail until October 24 in the Avenfield and Al-Azizia corruption cases. Also, an anti-corruption court suspended his arrest warrant in the Toshakhana case. The court cases, which stopped due to his absence, have resumed. On Tuesday, Sharif marked his attendance in the Accountability Court of Judge Muhammad Bashir, who had suspended his arrest orders in the Toshakhana case last week to facilitate his return to Pakistan. The attendance was significant to show that he had surrendered before the court. He was allowed to leave after the judge witnessed



his presence in the courtroom. During the hearing, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutor contended that Sharif had surrendered, therefore, his arrest warrant should be cancelled. "If the warrants are cancelled then the trial can move forward," he said. The judge subsequently confirmed Sharif's bail in the case against surety bonds of Rs 1 million. The hearing of the case was adjourned till November 20. The case is based on allegations that Sharif, former president Asif Ali Zardari and ex-prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani received luxury vehicles and gifts from the Toshakhana. In another relief to Sharif, the

Punjab government on Tuesday suspended his sentence in the Al-Azizia case. Punjab's interim Information Minister Amir Mir and Sharif's lawyer Amjad Parvez confirmed the development, Dawn newspaper reported. Mir said that the caretaker government had done this by "using its constitutional powers" under Section 401 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which deals with suspensions, remissions and commutations of sentences. Sharif was convicted in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills corruption case and sentenced to seven years in jail in December 2018. He was allowed to go to London in November 2019 on medical

grounds and he returned about four years later on Saturday. He was also convicted in July 2018 by an accountability court in the Avenfield properties case and sentenced to 10 years in jail. He was arrested and put in jail but set free after being given bail while his appeals against acquittal in the case were pending. His daughter Maryam Nawaz was also sentenced to seven years in jail in the case but was acquitted in September 2022 along with her husband Muhammad Safdar. The IHC declared him a proclaimed offender in both cases in December 2020. Earlier today, Sharif's counsel Qazi Misbah in the Toshakhana case filed three different applications in the accountability court, which include the restoration of the PML-N supremo's annexed property in the case; appointment of Sharif's pleader in the case; and an application to submit the politician's bail bonds. Sharif was disqualified in 2017 and later in 2018 convicted in the two cases of corruption. He has always denied allegations of any wrongdoing and termed his conviction orchestrated by the powerful establishment in collusion with the judiciary.



# Ukraine's leader says Russian naval assets no longer safe in Black Sea near Crimea

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy claimed on Tuesday that recent Ukrainian attacks have denied the Russian fleet safe bases and secure maritime corridors in the western part of the Black Sea, as Kyiv's troops look to squeeze the Kremlin's occupying forces out of the Crimean Peninsula. Crimea provides rear support for Moscow's battlefield efforts further west and has been a frequent target for Ukrainian forces during the war since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "The Russian fleet is no longer capable of operating in the western part of the Black Sea and is gradually retreating from Crimea," Zelenskyy claimed, without providing evidence. "This is a historic achievement." Ukraine is keen to show that billions of dollars' worth of weapons supplied by its Western allies have allowed it to make progress in the fighting, as the conflict enters its 21st month amid a broad stalemate. With the war poised to extend into another winter and likely deep into next year, Kyiv is pushing its allies to provide it with more military assets. Ukrainian officials, meanwhile, are competing for the world's attention with the Israel-Hamas war. Ukraine's forces are not yet able to strike at any target in Crimea and its waters but that capability is coming closer, Zelenskyy told a meeting of the Crimea Platform, a diplomatic forum, in Prague via video link. He did not elaborate. The Russian Defense Ministry

said its forces hit three Ukrainian sea drones in the Black Sea early Tuesday. Russia annexed Crimea, in eastern Ukraine, in 2014. In February last year, it launched a full-scale invasion that also aims to annex the Ukrainian provinces of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia. Since the collapse last August of a deal allowing Ukraine to safely export grain despite the war, Zelenskyy said, a new Black Sea export corridor has allowed some 50 ships to set sail, with more than 50 more departures expected. He did not provide details.

**IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:**  
■ German defense conglomerate Rheinmetall and Ukrainian Defense Industry have formed a joint venture, Ukraine Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal announced during the German-Ukrainian Business Forum in Berlin. He called it "a significant event that elevates cooperation between our countries to a qualitatively new level." The joint company will provide maintenance and repair services for the equipment supplied to Ukraine by its partners.  
■ Ukraine's air force said it shot down six Russian drones over the central and southern regions of the country on Monday night. Russia launched the drones from Crimea, the Ukrainian army said. Russian shelling killed two Ukrainian civilians in the south of the country and injured at least 20 other in the southeast, the presidential office reported.

# Pak general elections date likely to be announced soon: PM Kakar

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Asserting that there will be a level playing field for all political parties in the next general election, Pakistan's caretaker prime minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar has expressed hope that the election commission will shortly announce the date of the polls. Without mentioning the exact date, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) last month announced that general elections would take place in the last week of January 2024. "It seems that the date of the elections will be announced quite soon," Kakar told reporters at a news conference, three days after returning from China, where he had attended Belt and Road Forum (BRF) conference on the 10th anniversary of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Commenting on the issue of equal political space for parties in the country, Kakar said, "No political party has been left out of the political process and that the caretaker government is doing its best to assist the electoral process." "We want no political party, entity and its associated political players to be out of the (election) process, but if any restriction is imposed by the court, we have to obey the orders," he said as former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is facing legal challenges and some of the top leaders of the party are in jail. "Can't comment if level playing field means ensuring a particular party's win. (We) remember the level playing field of 2018 when the South Punjab front came into being," Kakar was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper on Tuesday.



Refuting the allegations that level playing field was not available to all political parties, but one, Kakar said: "What attempt the caretakers can do in two months which will help any party to get 171 seats (of the National Assembly in elections)." Kakar was talking to media amid demands by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for a level playing field two days after the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz

(PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif returned to Pakistan ending his self-imposed exile. However, Dawn also reported that Kakar replied with "I abstain" when asked "why an extraordinary protocol was given to Sharif on his return and why the Pakistani high commissioner in the UK was at the airport to see him off." The International News quoted Kakar, who was asked if there was a possibility of some leading Baloch Awami Party (BAP) politicians joining the Pakistan Muslim League (N) before the forthcoming elections, as saying: "If any politician wants to join a particular political party, he or she has a right to do it independently." GeoTV reported that earlier in the day, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa - while hearing the petitions seeking timely elections within 90 days of the dissolution of the assemblies - had observed that it was "not possible" to meet the 90-day deadline for holding elections. The apex court has adjourned the hearing till November 2, it said. The news channel also quoted Kakar as saying, "The PML-N supremo is a political reality" and that "his adversaries should face him in politics."



# At least 1 sailor dead, 4 missing as 2 cargo ships collide off Germany coast

AP ■ BERLIN

Two cargo ships collided in the North Sea off the coast of Germany on Tuesday and one of them apparently sank, German authorities said. One sailor died and four were missing. The vessels collided around 5 a.m. About 22 kilometres southwest of the island of Helgoland, Germany's Central Command for Maritime Emergencies said. The site of the collision was about 31 kilometres northeast of Langeoog island, which is just off the German mainland. One of the ships - the British-flagged Verity, which had seven people on board - is believed to have sunk. Two sailors were rescued. The body of one man was recovered, while four were still missing by midday, the emergency command said. The emergency command said the Verity, which was 91 metres (299 feet) long and 14 metres (46 feet) wide, was headed from Bremen, Germany, to the English port of Immingham. The other, bigger ship - the Bahamas-flagged Polesie - remained afloat and had 22 people on board. None of them were believed to be injured. The vessel was heading from Hamburg to A Coruna, Spain. The Polesie is 190 metres (623 feet) long and 29 metres (95 feet) wide. There was no immediate word on the cause of the collision. Vessels supporting the rescue effort included a cruise ship, the Iona, that has doctors on board and could treat people if needed, the emergency command said.

# Prince William to travel to Singapore for Earthshot Prize announcement on climate projects

AP ■ LONDON

Prince William will travel to Singapore next month to name the winners of his Earthshot Prize, a global competition to find solutions to the challenges of climate change. William created the prize three years ago to encourage inventors and entrepreneurs to develop technologies to combat global warming and mitigate its impact on the environment. Singapore was chosen to host the latest annual awards ceremony because of its role as a "hub for innovation" in Southeast Asia, William's office at Kensington Palace said in a statement. During his four-day trip to Singapore, the prince will meet with local groups to learn how they are working to protect and restore the planet. William will also attend the United



for Wildlife global summit, featuring representatives of law enforcement agencies, conservation groups and corporations that are working to combat the trade in illegal wildlife products, which is estimated at USD 20 billion annually. The Earthshot Prize is named after the late President John F. Kennedy's 1962 "moonshot" speech, which challenged Americans to reach the moon by the end of that decade. The speech inspired William and his partners to set a similar goal for finding solutions to climate change and other environmental problems by 2030. Earthshot offers 1 million pounds (USD 1.2 million) in prize money to the winners in each of five categories: nature protection, clean air, ocean revival, waste elimination and climate change. The winners and all 15 finalists receive help in expanding their initiatives to meet global demand.

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

President Ramchandra Paudel and Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" on Tuesday greeted the Nepalese people on the occasion of Vijaya Dashami, and said that such occasions have kept the cultural unity and identity of Nepal intact. Dashain, a 10-day long festival, is celebrated across Nepal to worship goddess Durga and Vijay Dashami is the last day of the festival. President Paudel said that Vijaya Dashami signifies the victory of virtue over vice, and mutual goodwill, fraternity, and reunification in society, will inspire everyone to promote social harmony, unity, solidarity, justice and equality. "Such festivals that are celebrat-

# Nepal Prez Paudel, PM Prachanda greet nation on Vijaya Dashami

ed with great enthusiasm in our country have contributed to further strengthen our geographical, cultural, and linguistic diversities, keeping our cultural unity and identity intact," he said. Extending best wishes to the people on the occasion, Prime Minister Prachanda said that Nepal's government is actively working to drive the nation towards the path of prosperity and bring positive changes to the people's lives with the institutionalisation of good governance and social justice.



"The public support to all the efforts of the government is very significant for building a prosperous Nepal," he said. As part of the Hindu rituals during Dashain, various temples in the country also witnessed the sacrifices of animals. Nepal's Rajdevi Temple in Nepal's Janakpur city witnessed the sacrifices of over 15,000 goats on the 8th and 9th day of Dashain which are known as Ashami and Navami and are of equal importance as Vijaya Dashami.

# A court in Kenya extends orders barring deployment of police to Haiti for 2 more weeks



AP ■ NAIROBI (KENYA)

A court in Kenya has extended orders blocking the deployment of Kenyan police to Haiti to lead a U.N Security Council-approved mission to combat gang violence in the Caribbean nation. The High Court on Tuesday said that it would rule

on the case on November 9. Former presidential candidate, Ekuru Aukot, filed a petition on October 9 against the deployment of Kenyan forces, arguing that the law allowing the president to do so conflicted with articles of the constitution. Aukot's petition also faulted President William Ruto for agreeing to lead the international peacekeeping mission while Kenya struggles with security issues arising from militant attacks and most recently ethnic clashes. The U.N Security Council resolution, drafted by the United States and Ecuador, authorizes the force to deploy for one year, with a review after nine months. Kenya's national assembly has yet to schedule a debate on the motion to deploy the contingent, which is expected to be made up of about 1,000 police officers. The non-U.N. Mission would be funded by voluntary contributions, with the U.

# 'India to surpass Japan to be 2nd largest economy in Asia by 2030'

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
India, the world's fifth largest economy in the world, is likely to overtake Japan to become the world's third-largest economy with a GDP of USD 7.3 trillion by 2030, S&P Global Market Intelligence said in its latest issue of PMI. After two years of rapid economic growth in 2021 and 2022, the Indian economy has continued to show sustained strong growth during the 2023 calendar year. India's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to grow 6.2-6.3 per cent in the fiscal year ending in March 2024, being the fastest-growing major economy this fiscal

year. Asia's third-largest economy grew by a stellar 7.8 per cent in the April-June quarter. "The near-term economic outlook is for continued rapid expansion during the remainder of 2023 and for 2024, underpinned by strong growth in domestic demand," S&P Global said. The acceleration of foreign direct investment inflows into India over the past decade reflects the favourable long-term growth outlook for the Indian economy, helped by a youthful demographic profile and rapidly rising urban household incomes. "India's nominal GDP measured in USD terms is forecast to rise from USD 3.5 trillion in 2022 to USD 7.3 trillion by

2030. This rapid pace of economic expansion would result in the size of the Indian GDP exceeding Japanese GDP by 2030, making India the second largest economy in the Asia-Pacific region," it said. By 2022, the size of the Indian GDP had already become larger than the GDP of the UK and also France. By 2030, India's GDP is also forecast to surpass Germany. The US at present is the world's largest economy with a GDP of USD 25.5 trillion. It makes up for a quarter of the world's GDP. China is the second largest economy with a GDP size of about USD 18 trillion, which is almost 17.9 per cent of the world GDP. Japan is a distant third with



USD 4.2 trillion GDP, followed by Germany with USD 4 trillion GDP. S&P Global said the long-term outlook for the Indian economy is supported by a number of key growth drivers. "An important positive factor for India is its large and fast-growing middle class, which is helping to drive consumer spending. The rapidly growing Indian domestic consumer market as well as its large industrial sector have made India an increasingly

important investment destination for a wide range of multinationals in many sectors, including manufacturing, infrastructure and services," it said. The digital transformation of India that is currently underway is expected to accelerate the growth of e-commerce, changing the retail consumer market landscape over the next decade. This, S&P Global said, is attracting leading global multinationals in technology and e-commerce to the Indian market. "By 2030, 1.1 billion Indians will have internet access, more than doubling from the estimated 500 million internet users in 2020," it said. "The rapid growth of e-com-

merce and the shift to 4G and 5G smartphone technology will boost home-grown unicorns like online e-commerce platform Mensa Brands, logistics startup Delhivery and the fast-growing online grocer BigBasket, whose e-sales have surged during the pandemic. The large increase in FDI inflows to India that has been evident over the past five years is also continuing with strong momentum evident even during the pandemic years of 2020-2022. "India's strong FDI inflows have been boosted by large inflows of investments from global technology MNCs such as Google and Facebook that are attracted to India's large,

fast-growing domestic consumer market, as well as a strong upturn in foreign direct investment inflows from manufacturing firms," it said. Overall, India is expected to continue to be one of the world's fastest-growing economies over the next decade. "This will make India one of the most important long-term growth markets for multinationals in a wide range of industries, including manufacturing industries such as autos, electronics and chemicals to services industries such as banking, insurance, asset management, health care and information technology."

## Goyal participates in Future Investment Initiative in Riyadh



**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday participated in the seventh edition of Future Investment Initiative (FII) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. "Deliberated on new pathways for investment with the goal to create a positive global impact and navigate new frontiers of growth and prosperity," Goyal

## Little more optimistic about India's economic growth than few months ago: RBI MPC member

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
RBI MPC member Jayanth R Varma on Tuesday said that he is 'little more' optimistic about India's economic growth than a few months ago, though concerns remain as the country is now 'disproportionately' dependent on household spending with other components of demand encountering headwinds. Varma further said that India should be willing to accept inflation between 4 per cent and 5 per cent for several quarters as the price of avoiding a growth shock. "I am a little more optimistic about growth than I was 2-4 months ago. My cautious optimism stems from improved consumer confidence and various indicators that point to the continuation of the growth momentum," he told PTI in a telephonic interview.

While keeping the global growth projection for FY24 unchanged at 3 per cent, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently revised its growth projection for India upwards by 20 basis points to 6.3 per cent in October. "However, the outlook remains fragile because demand is now disproportionately dependent on household spending with other components of demand encountering headwinds," the eminent economist emphasised. Explaining further, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member said while external demand is weak due to the sluggishness in the world economy, the revival in private capital expenditure is still too tentative and muted. "Fiscal consolidation amounts to a withdrawal of the pandemic era government spending stimulus," Varma, current-



ly a professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad noted. India's GDP growth in 2022-23 was 7.2 per cent, lower than 9.1 per cent in 2021-22. According to the Reserve Bank of India's projections, India's GDP is likely to grow at 6.5 per cent in the current fiscal year. Asked when inflation will fall back to the RBI's target of 4 per cent, Varma said August inflation was high, but September inflation is within the band and October inflation is also

expected to be low. Pointing out that India has been experiencing a lot of volatility in commodity and food prices over the last couple of years, he said in this context, a sharp rise or drop in inflation in one or two months does not mean anything. "I am confident that we will achieve this goal, but I think it will take a few more quarters... We should be willing to accept inflation between 4 per cent and 5 per cent for several quarters as the price of avoid-

ing a growth shock," Varma said. The eminent economist noted that a more rapid pace of reduction could impose an intolerable growth sacrifice. Annual retail inflation, called CPI or consumer price index, rose 5.02 per cent in September from 6.83 per cent in the previous month on the back of softer vegetable prices. Recently, Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das has said that the fundamental goal of the monetary policy is to align inflation with the 4 per cent target and anchor inflation expectations. RBI MPC in its last meeting earlier in the month, decided to keep the benchmark lending rate at 6.5 per cent, for the fourth time in a row, in a bid to keep retail inflation under check. Responding to a question on the implication of high crude oil prices on the government's subsidy figure and inflation, Varma stressed that there is no question that the conflicts in the Middle East pose risks to the world economy. "What I find reassuring is that oil prices have remained range-bound in the face of these conflicts," he said, adding this is in his view suggestive of depressed global demand putting a lid on prices. Varma, however, warned that of course, a bigger flare up in the region that takes us back to 1973 would be a very different situation, but as of now there is ground for guarded optimism. "These conflicts would slow the fall in inflation but would not reverse its decline," he opined. The Israeli military has been carrying out retaliatory air strikes on Gaza following the unprecedented attack on Israel on October 7 by Hamas.

## Cello World sets IPO price band at ₹617-648 per share

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Household products and stationery manufacturer Cello World Ltd has fixed a price band of Rs 617-Rs 648 per share for its Rs 1,900-crore initial public offering (IPO), market sources said on Tuesday. The issue will open for public subscription on October 30 and conclude on November 1, and the anchor book of the offer will be opened for a day on October 27, according to the red herring prospectus. The issue is a complete offer for sale (OFS) by promoters and other selling shareholders, with no fresh issue of equity share component. The offer includes a reservation of shares worth up to Rs 10 crore for subscription by eligible employees. The company has raised the size of its IPO size to Rs 1,900 crore from Rs 1,750 planned earlier. The OFS comprises the sale of equity shares by Pankaj Ghisulal Rathod, Gaurav Pradeep Rathod, Pradeep Ghisulal Rathod, Sangeeta



Pradeep Rathod, Babita Pankaj Rathod and Ruchi Gaurav Rathod. The Mumbai-based Cello World has a product portfolio across three key categories -- consumer houseware, writing instruments and stationery, and moulded furniture and related products. In 2017, it ventured into the glassware and opal ware business under the 'Cello' brand. The company has 13 manufacturing facilities in five different locations -- Daman, Haridwar (Uttarakhand); Baddi

## Gold rises ₹50, silver declines ₹500



**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Gold price rose Rs 50 to Rs 61,650 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the yellow metal had ended at Rs 61,600 per 10 grams. Gold price fluctuated within a small range, as investors looked for fresh developments regarding the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas, Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. However, silver declined Rs 500 to Rs 74,500 per kilogram. In the global markets, both gold and silver were down at USD 1,975 per ounce and USD 22.92 per ounce, respectively. Traders believe gold price will consolidate in the upper end range before the key US macro data, Gandhi said. Meanwhile, in futures trade, the December contract of gold plunged Rs 332 to Rs 60,267 per 10 grams. Also, December contract of silver tumbled Rs 521 to Rs 71,554 per kg on the MCX.

## Global solar projects set to win over \$380 billion investment this year

**PTI ■ SINGAPORE**  
Investment is increasing in global solar energy projects, and is expected to be more than USD 380 billion this year, the International Solar Alliance (ISA) Director General Dr Ajay Mathur has said. Mathur made these remarks on Monday on the sidelines of the Singapore International Energy Week. "The good thing is that investment flow is increasing. It was about USD 310 billion for the whole of last year, and USD 235 billion investment has come in during the first half of this year," Dr Mathur told PTI. "We expect it to be more than \$380 billion this year." Elaborating on ISA work, he said, "Our goal is that in every member country, we make solar the energy of choice. ISA will have 120 member countries by the end of this year, up from 116 currently. The challenge is to get investments for small solar plants to reach out to the remote regions as approximately 74 per cent of the investment so far has gone



to large-scale projects in the OECD and China, Dr Mathur informed. "All of Africa has received just 2-3% from these funds." Two-thirds of the investments have gone into large solar plants and not into smaller projects. "We need to have a lot of investments in energy storage facilities as well as solar, hydro, and battery among others. Dr Mathur said ISA is also focused on capacity building, such as training and certifying people to implement and design solar projects and plants in the future. He underlined the need to train bankers on how to assess loan applications for solar development. The ISA works with member countries and "hand-hold" them through the project management process as well as helps in creating policy and regulatory frameworks that are needed for the ecosystem to happen. Dr Mathur also sees the Middle Eastern countries playing a bigger role in the development of energy and cited the example of Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company, MASDAR, which has invested in renewable energy projects in 40 countries since it was established in 2006.

## India's demand for electricity for ACs to exceed total power consumption of Africa, says IEA

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
India's demand for electricity for running household air conditioners is estimated to expand nine-fold by 2050 and will exceed total power consumption in the whole of Africa today, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Tuesday. In its latest World Energy Outlook, IEA said India will see the largest energy demand growth of any country or region in the world over the next three decades. It projected India's energy supply to rise from 42 exajoules (EJ) in 2022 to 53.7 EJ in 2030 and 73 EJ in 2050 under stated policies scenarios and 47.6 EJ by 2030 and 60.3 EJ by 2050 as per announced pledges. Oil demand is seen rising from 5.2 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2022 to 6.8 million bpd in 2030 and 7.8 million bpd in 2050 under stated policies scenario. Under announced pledges, this

demand is seeking 6.2 million bpd in 2030 and 4.7 million bpd in 2050. IEA said over the past five decades, India witnessed over 700 heatwave events, which have claimed over 17,000 lives. Fuelled by its geographic and meteorological conditions, air conditioner ownership in India has been steadily rising with growing incomes, tripling since 2010 to reach 24 units per 100 households. "The impact of cooling needs on electricity consumption is already clear," the Paris-based agency said. "Electricity demand is sensitive to temperatures, and in India's case there is a sharp increase in demand as temperatures cross the 25-degree Celsius threshold. Electricity consumption due to space cooling increased 21 per cent between 2019 and 2022, and today nearly 10 per cent of electricity demand comes from space cooling requirements. "Household air conditioner



ownership is estimated to expand ninefold by 2050 across the IEA scenarios, outpacing the growth in ownership of every other major household appliance including televisions, refrigerators and washing machines," it said. "Residential electricity demand from cooling increases ninefold in the Stated Policies Scenario (STEPS) by 2050. IEA said by 2050, "India's total electricity demand from residential air conditioners in the STEPS exceeds total electricity consumption in the whole of Africa today. In the Announced Pledges Scenario (APS), how-

ever, electricity demand for air conditioners is nearly 15 per cent lower in 2050 as it is in the STEPS as a result of increased use of energy-efficient air conditioners and thermal insulation in buildings. "This reduction itself is larger than the total electricity generation by several countries today, such as that of the Netherlands." The growth in ownership and use of air conditioners and other cooling equipment is one of the key drivers of the increase in peak electricity demand in India. In the STEPS, peak electricity demand rise around 60 per

cent from the 2022 level by 2030 and cooling accounts for nearly half of this increase. In the APS, however, the implementation of building codes, the use of more efficient appliances and the adoption of demand response measures enable the same cooling needs to be met with less energy. This reduces peak electricity demand growth by nearly one-quarter compared to the STEPS. Given that the electricity system is sized to meet peak demand, lower peak demand helps to lower electricity investment needs and system costs. Although solar PV matches well with daytime cooling needs, cooling demand is also significant in India during the late evening and at night. "Lowering cooling demand through energy efficiency policies therefore reduces the need for investment in batteries or expensive standby generation capacity, and thus helps to integrate renewables more cost

## BYJU'S CFO quits after audit, Golani gets additional charge of India CFO



**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Educational technology company BYJU'S Chief Financial Officer Ajay Goel has quit after completing the audit process for the financial year 2022 and will return to Vedanta, the company said in a statement. The edtech major has roped in industry veteran Pradip Kanakia as the senior advisor, and President (Finance) Nitin Golani has been given additional responsibility as India Chief Finance Officer (CFO) to handle the finance function of the company. "I thank the founders and colleagues at BYJU'S for helping me assemble the FY'22 audit in three months. I appreciate the support received during a short but impactful stint at BYJU'S," Goel said. He will transition after completing the formalities of the financial year (FY) 2022 audit, the statement said.





# DE KOCK, KLAASEN POWER SOUTH AFRICA TO 383/5 AGAINST BANGLADESH

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**

Quinton de Kock's magnificent 174 and a brutal 49-ball 90 from Heinrich Klaasen underlined South Africa's batting prowess as they ended with a mammoth 382/5 against Bangladesh in a World Cup game here on Tuesday.

De Kock pumped 15 fours and seven sixes to not only record his third century in five innings, but his 140-ball knock which witnessed a fantastic late acceleration, also had the opener record the ninth highest individual score in the tournament's history.

Even though he was not required to do the heavy lifting after a stunning ton against England, a two-day break had Klaasen back at his best - cracking eight huge sixes and two fours - for his quickfire effort.

In his 150th ODI, de Kock flayed the Bangladesh bowlers in hot and humid conditions to bat almost through the end, but certainly missed an opportunity to become the first South African to record an ODI double ton. Nevertheless, de Kock was particularly striking with quick hands and

compelling footwork after a slowish start, as the 'keeper-batter unleashed some spectacular hits all around the park.

En route his 20th ODI ton, de Kock went past India's Virat Kohli for most runs and also eclipsed Australia's David Warner (163) to record the highest individual score in this World Cup.

And as has been the case a few times in the recent past, South Africa went ballistic in the last 10 overs to add another 144 runs with David Miller making an unbeaten 15-ball 34.

With Shakib Al Hasan back, there was a visible change in Bangladesh's approach with spin being introduced with the new ball from the second over whereas after the powerplay, close-in fielders at unorthodox spots ensured the flow of runs was in check.

Mehidy Hasan Miraz's tidy start had him finding an outside edge off Reeza Hendricks' (12) bat in the second over but Tanzid Hasan could not grab the opportunity.

But Bangladesh did not have to wait for long. After squaring up de Kock just outside the off-stump with a jaffa, Shoriful got one to sneak through the



defence of Hendricks in the seventh over for the first breakthrough.

The second wicket followed soon in the next over as Mehidy trapped Rassie van der Dussen (1) in front of the wickets. To their credit, Bangladesh bowlers did well to keep the scoring rate in check in the power-play (44/2).

But de Kock led South Africa's recovery with Markram in tow. With Shakib opting for a full-fledged spin attack in the middle overs, South Africa batters found accelerating a little difficult with close-in fielders in place.

However, to their credit, South African batters did not miss any opportunity to pick up the odd boundary. Markram batted fluently for his 67-ball 60, using his hands adroitly to produce seven boundaries but an inside-out lofted hit found Das at long on in the 31st over off Shakib, with the third wicket stand producing 131 runs for the Proteas.

The fourth-wicket stand was even bigger and better - 142 runs off just 87 balls between de Kock and Klaasen - as Bangladesh were left with a mountain to climb.



## It inspires another generation of players to take up cricket: Afghanistan coach on Pak win

**PTI ■ CHENNAI**

The historic victory against Pakistan in the World Cup will inspire the next generation of Afghans to take up cricket, feels Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott.

Afghanistan notched up a memorable first-ever ODI win over Pakistan, prevailing by eight wickets, a little over a week after they stunned defending champions England.

"I think it just shows the amount of talent in the side for the country again, as when we were fortunate enough to beat England," Trott said at the post match press conference on Monday.

"It inspires another generation of players to pick up a cricket bat and a cricket ball, work on their fielding and their fitness." Afghanistan had come close to beating Pakistan a few times recently but never managed to cross the line.

"It doesn't take a lot to see the passion and the rivalry between them. I'm just glad today we were in the game again, and we managed to get across the line."

"Hopefully, will now have that self-belief that we can go on and trust our games and be very confident for the games coming forward."

The 42-year-old, however, refused to call the wins against the two former champions "upsets".

"Not sure I'd say upset if I'm honest. I think it's a disservice to the guys in the changing room. I think maybe you'd say, when we go into a side, you say underdogs or whatever, but it's not an upset."

"We played well, these guys

work hard, and they deserve to win. If we play good cricket. And for me, I think we've just got to make sure we keep playing good cricket and not get too far ahead of ourselves."

The win against Pakistan has elevated Afghanistan, who were languishing at the bottom, to sixth on the points table. Trott feels that there is still room for improvement.

"We need to be more consistent in the things that we do. We know the areas we need to work on and those things that will help us have evenings like this and be more consistent and beat the big teams. But, every game that we go into this World Cup, we got a chance of winning it."

### PLAYING IPL HELPED NOOR

Making his World Cup debut, 18-year-old wrist spinner Noor Ahmed picked up three wickets that included the crucial scalps of Pakistan skipper Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan.

Trott feels that playing in pressure situations, in front of big crowds in the IPL has helped Noor, who plays for Gujarat Titans in the lucrative league.

"I thought we got it right with Noor today coming in and the way that he bowled, certainly for a youngster as well. The way that he bowled and started really well and then got a few wickets and a bit of momentum. "Again, there's always things we can work on but you know that's what the likes of the IPL does for countries like Afghanistan. Exposes players from a young age to playing in front of big crowds and under pressure situations.



## Resurgent Australia face tenacious Netherlands in World Cup

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Bolstered by the revival of their batting firepower, a rejuvenated Australia will look for another dominating show but need to be cautious when they face a tenacious Netherlands in their next World Cup match here on Wednesday.

After a disappointing start to their campaign, the five-time champions turned it around with two solid performances against Sri Lanka and Pakistan but they know very well that they can ill-afford to take the Dutch lightly in what is turning out to be a World Cup of upsets.

The Netherlands have been one of the success stories of this showpiece event as they stunned an in-form South Africa at Dharamsala after returning to the World Cup following a 12-year hiatus. They will look to take a cue from Afghanistan's win over Pakistan to keep their story alive.

However, it will be easier said than done, especially after the marauding show of the Aussies against Pakistan.

The reasons behind the turnaround include their top-order batting might, the return to form of spinner Adam Zampa and the consistent performances

of pacers Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc.

The return to form of David Warner and Mitchell Marsh is good news for Australia as they can blow away any opponent with their sheer ruthless batting. A case in point is the 259-run opening partnership that the two shared against Pakistan.

Marsh has scored 351 runs at a strike rate of 108.3 in seven innings as an opener, grabbing the opportunity with both hands in place of an injured Travis Head, while the ever-dependable Warner has looked in ominous touch. But Australia will need to add firepower in their middle order, especially with Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne struggling at the moment.

While Smith has crossed the 30-mark only once in his last four innings, Labuschagne has fared slightly better though he is yet to score a half-century in the tournament and has a low strike rate of 64.70.

With Head nearing his full fitness, the Delhi game could be a final test for Smith and Labuschagne to prove themselves as another failure might see one of them lose their place to the returning Head, who also provides the team with a handy off-spin option.

## I will remember this World Cup for the rest of my life: Naveen-ul-Haq

**PTI ■ CHENNAI**

Afghanistan pacer Naveen-ul-Haq will remember the ongoing World Cup for the rest of his life for his team's inspiring success but the fast bowler won't reverse his decision to retire from the One-Day format at the end of the tournament.

Afghanistan created ripples with their win over defending champions England last week and on Monday the team from the strife-torn nation exceeded expectations by drubbing Pakistan with consummate ease. The 24-year-old Naveen had made a shock announcement last month that he would quit the ODIs at the end of the World Cup in India.

He took the decision to prolong his T20 career.

Now that Afghanistan's performance has created a huge impact, he was asked if he would rethink his retirement decision.

"Not at all. That's the final decision I have made. Luckily, I will remember this World Cup for the rest of my life," Naveen-ul-Haq told reporters after Afghanistan's first ever



victory over Pakistan. Naveen dedicated the victory to his people back home.

"It does mean a lot back home to the people of our country. We all know the situation back home. There was also an earthquake that happened a few days ago. "There is not a lot of happiness in the country without cricket. So, at least we have given them some moments of happiness tonight. Going deeper into the tournament, every game and two points count. The win tonight (Monday) is quite big for us."

Naveen admitted that there are areas that they still need to improve, majorly being leaking runs at the closing stages of the innings, as Pakistan scored 101 runs in the last ten overs.

"We still have a lot of things to be improved, especially the way we conceded a few runs at the back end of the innings. They played well, but we can improve and do well in the upcoming games."

Naveen, who plays for Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL, also gave credit to the tournament for shaping their players for this World Cup.

"That's true. IPL happens here in India, and along with that experience, coming and playing here (in Chennai) or any other venue does give you a lot of confidence."

Afghan spinner Noor Ahmad returned with impressive figures of three for 49 on his World Cup debut on Monday.

While he disclosed that he is very close to all-rounder Mohammad Nabi, who has been giving him healthy tips, he admitted that it is not easy to get a chance in the playing XI alongside fellow spinners Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Rashid Khan.

"Getting a chance alongside Mujeeb and Rashid is very tough. But, somehow I got the chance to play, and I just wanted to deliver my best."

## 'It was tough to live up to billing of champions after '83 triumph'

**PTI ■ BENGALURU**

Former India batter Dilip Vengsarkar on Tuesday reminisced that living up to the tag of champions was as much, or perhaps, an even tougher task for the 1983 World Cup winning squad.

Vengsarkar had played just two matches in that Prudential Cup in England, but remains proud of the triumph, which he termed the result of ultimate team work.

"It was extremely difficult, and we went into the tournament without having any real chances (to win). But then we emerged champions, and immediately after that we hosted West Indies at home. "They came prepared and dominated us, winning the Test and ODI series. The dom-

ination started with the first Test at Kanpur (WI won by an innings and 83 runs). "In the ODI at Jamshedpur, (Gordon) Greenidge and (Viv) Richards were competing against each other to hit the ball longer as we just watched," said Vengsarkar during the launch of the book 'The Lords of the Wankhede - Tales Between Two Titles', co-authored by former India batter WV Raman and veteran cricket writer R Kaushik. Greenidge (115 off 134 balls) and Richards (149 off 99 balls) made hundreds as Windies posted 333 for 8 in 45 overs, and won the 4th ODI by 104 runs.

Vengsarkar said it was a new experience for the whole team to go into the 1987 World Cup at home as favourites.

## Pakistan spinners have been ineffective, says Iftikhar

**PTI ■ CHENNAI**

Pakistan all-rounder Iftikhar Ahmed has conceded that the side's spinners haven't been effective which has led to hat-trick of defeats in the ongoing World Cup.

Pakistan fell to an eight-wicket loss to Afghanistan here on Monday, their third on the trot in the marquee-event. Spin has been Pakistan's biggest weakness. Notably, the 1992 champions do not have a proper finger spinner in the side with all-rounders Iftikhar and Mohammad Nawaz sharing the duties.

"We do have finger spinners in our team, including me and (Mohammad) Nawaz. Yes, the role of our spinners hasn't been that effective here. But we will keep trying to improve. That's all we can do," he told reporters after the loss.

Pakistan put up 282/7 on the board after electing to bat first

option we have for now. If you are playing against a world-class side, you have to perform at a similar level across departments. Only then you will be able to survive."

The Men in Green have now entered the 'must-win' stage. They have to win their remaining games as well as need some favourable results to make it to the semi-finals but Iftikhar thinks there is still time left to bounce back.

"We can definitely bounce back. There's no doubt that we possess the abilities, and we have world-class players in our side."

"We made a lot of mistakes during our fielding, I admit. But, we need to improve; that's the only



# We'll address it: Marsh on late batting collapse against Pakistan

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Australia will not brush aside the late collapse against Pakistan and will look to address their batting frailties in the back end when they face the Netherlands in their World Cup match, said in-form all-rounder Mitchell Marsh on Tuesday.

David Warner (163) and Marsh (121) smashed superlative hundreds, forging a 259-run stand for the opening wicket but a late collapse saw them eventually finish at 367 for 9 against Pakistan.

"I think individually everyone would have addressed that. To be honest I thought Pakistan bowled really well and gave us a bit of a blueprint on how to go about it certainly towards the

back end of the innings," Marsh said during the pre-match press conference.

"They're a very good outfit and we were able to get on top of them in the first half of the innings, but they came back strongly, and you expect that from teams like Pakistan."

"So, we'll address it, and hopefully moving forward, we can have a great last 10 overs and apply some pressure to other teams," he said ahead of Australia's match against the Dutch here on Wednesday.

### BATTING AT NUMBER 3

Travis Head, who had injured his left hand during a World Cup warm-up match in South Africa, is firming up for a return after

hitting the nets here ahead of the Netherlands clash.

Asked if Head will play tomorrow, Marsh said: "Yeah, I think that decision will be made this afternoon/tonight. He looked good, a bit of range hitting last night. He says the hand feels good. So, I'm sure if he's fit, he'll be available for selection in the team."

"I'm not sure who he'll replace at this stage, but I presume that if he's fit and he gets through today that he'll play, but that decision will be made tonight."

Marsh also said he has no issues slipping back to No. 3 in case Head regains his opening slot.

"I'm very happy to go back down to three. I've obviously batted there a lot over the last



couple of years, so I feel really comfortable at three. And if and when Head comes back in, I think that's the best position for me to play for this team," he said.

It has been a World Cup of upsets with Afghanistan stun-

ning defending champions England and Pakistan, while the Netherlands shocking South Africa the other day.

"Yeah, teams have got better. I think that's great for world cricket, certainly in tourna-

ments like this that can sometimes be pretty long. And you see a lot of games that are not exactly close or competitive," he said.

"But we've said it multiple times now in this tournament this year, there's absolutely no easy games. And you go into every game having done all the appropriate homework and hopefully you can come out with a win."

"So, tomorrow is no different for us. We respect the Netherlands; they're playing some good cricket and that will be a tough challenge."

Talking about his evolution as a cricketer, Marsh said: "I've still worked hard for a long period of time to hopefully keep improving. And there's no doubt

that I've had probably more opportunities at the top of the order and more time to bat in the white ball format.

"Not a whole lot's changed, I've just probably not given up on the fact that I was striving for something and kept working hard through periods of time that were tougher than others."

"In the last couple of years, I feel I've been as consistent as I could have been, which was something I was always striving for. I guess all the best players in the world that you look up to, and certainly in our team, they're so consistent. And that's what I was."

It has been a long season for Australia but Marsh said the experience of the players have

helped them to be in great frame of mind despite the initial reversals.

"India probably play the most cricket out of anyone. And I guess from our point of view and from my point of view, it's leaning on experience of the past," he said.

"We've got a team full of a lot of experience at the moment, guys who've played 12 months of the year for the last probably six or seven years. So, we're not in unfamiliar territory, whilst we had a slow start and we were put under pressure at times, the vibe in the team is great."

"We've played really good cricket in the last two games and hopefully that's the case tomorrow."