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PEACE PREVAILS IN MAHARASHTRA, JHARKHAND POLLS

MAHAYUTI VS MVA, AND URBAN APATHY

FINAL PHASE OF JMM VS NDA CLASH

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Barring stray incidents of violence, clashes among the rival party workers and a few natural deaths, polling in the Assembly elections passed off peacefully in Maharashtra, as 58.22 per cent of the total 9.7 crore voters exercised their franchise till 5 pm across the state. Like always, the voter turnout was low in urban areas, particularly in cities like Mumbai, Pune and Thane. At 5 pm, Mumbai city recorded a dismal 49.07 per cent of polling, while 51.76 per cent voters turned out for polling in Mumbai suburbs. Thane recorded 49.76 per cent polling, while in Pune, 54.09 per cent voters exercised their rights. However, in Nagpur, 56.05 per cent of electors cast their votes. The Election Commission of India (ECI) said that it would update the voter turnout figures at 11.45 pm. The counting of votes will take place on November 23. In all, 4136 candidates are contesting for the 288 Assembly seats. "Despite a range of measures by the Commission for ease of voting, and motivational campaigns, urban voters in the state continued their dismal record of low participation in cities like Mumbai, Pune and Thane. Simultaneous polling for all 288 Assembly constituencies in Maharashtra in a single phase," an ECI spokesperson said.



People wait in a queue to cast votes at a polling station during the Maharashtra Assembly elections, in Solapur district

The main battle in the polls is between the ruling MahaYuti and Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in the polls. There are also candidates from several smaller and Independents - many of whom are rebels from the six major parties which constitute MahaYuti and MVA. The Bharatiya Janata Party, which heads the ruling MahaYuti, is contesting 148 seats. Its allies - Eknath Shinde-Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar-led NCP - are contesting 80 seats and 53 seats respectively. On the other hand, the Congress, which heads the MVA, is contesting 103 seats, while its allies Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) has fielded candidates in 89 constituencies and Sharad Pawar's NCP (SP) is contesting 87 seats. The MVA has allotted the remaining six seats to its smaller allies. The Mayawati-led Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) fielded the largest number of 237 candidates followed by

Prakash Ambedkar-led Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi from which 200 are in the race. The Raj Thackeray-led Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) is contesting 128 seats. **Continued on page 2**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RANCHI

Polling was peaceful as nearly 68 per cent voter turnout was recorded till 5 pm in 38 constituencies in Jharkhand where voting for the second and final phase of the Assembly elections ended. The ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led INDIA Bloc is seeking to retain power riding on its welfare schemes, while the Bharatiya Janata Party-headed National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is trying to wrest it. The first phase of elections was held on November 13, and the counting of votes will take place on November 23. A total of 1.23 crore voters,



People wait in a queue to cast votes at a polling station during the final phase of Jharkhand Assembly elections, in Ranchi district

including 60.79 lakh women and 147 third-gender electors, were eligible to exercise their franchise on Wednesday, another official said. Altogether 528 candidates are trying their luck in the second phase of the elections. A total of 57 leprosy patients also voted for the first time at Jamtara in the State Assembly elections and expressed hope that the new government will solve the problems faced by them. They exercised their franchise at a dedicated booth, decorated with confetti, set up for them at Snehpur Community Building in Mihijam, during the second and final phase of Jharkhand Assembly polls on Wednesday. Ramgarh registered a turnout of 71.98 per cent, followed by Dumka 71.74 per cent, Godda 67.24 per cent, Sahebganj 65.63 per cent, Giridih 65.89 per cent, Hazaribagh 64.41 per cent and Dhanbad 63.39 per cent. The lowest turnout was

recorded in Bokaro district at 60.97 per cent till 5 PM. As far as Assembly constituencies are concerned, the Maheshpur seat registered the highest voter turnout at 79.4 per cent, followed by Nala segment at 78.75 per cent and Sarath in Deoghar at 77.94 per cent. Silli in Ranchi from where BJP ally All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) Party's chief Sudesh Mahto is contesting recorded a turnout of 76.7 per cent. The Barhait seat where Chief Minister Hemant Soren is contesting reported a 66.13 per cent voter turnout. The Gandy Assembly constituency, where the chief minister's wife Kalpana Soren is seeking re-election, registered 72.83 per cent polling. Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged electors to participate in the great festival of democracy in Jharkhand, and asserted that "your every vote is the strength of the state". **Continued on page 2**

BYPOLLS

- Over 50 per cent voter turnout in by-polls
- A voter turnout of over 50 per cent was recorded in the bypolls to 15 Assembly seats spread across Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Kerala and Uttarakhand on Wednesday amid stray incidents of violence and complaints of irregularities against police officials and misuse of government machinery.
- The Election Commission's update at 5 pm showed the voter turnout at: Ghaziabad (33.30 per cent), Katehari (56.69 per cent), Khair (46.43 per cent), Kundarki (57.32 per cent), Karhal (53.92 per cent), Majhawan (50.41 per cent), Meerapur (57.02 per cent), Phulpur (43.43 per cent), Sisamau (49.03 per cent).
- In neighbouring Uttarakhand, a voter turnout of 56.78 per cent was recorded in the Kedarnath Assembly bypoll till 5 pm. The Kedarnath Assembly seat in Rudrapur district fell vacant after the death of BJP MLA Shaila Rani Rawat in July.
- In Punjab, a voter turnout of 59.67 per cent was recorded till 5 pm in the bypolls to four Assembly segments. The Gidderbaha seat recorded 78.10 per cent polling, Dera Baba Nanak 59.80 per cent, Barnala 52.70 per cent and Chabbewal 48.01 per cent. A minor clash took place between the AAP and Congress supporters at Dera Pathana village in the Dera Baba Nanak segment. Workers of both parties were also engaged in heated arguments. In Kerala, polling in the Palakkad Assembly by-election saw a turnout of 54.64 per cent.



Delhi under toxic shroud, 50 per cent govt staff to WFH

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Half of the staff in Delhi government offices will work from home, while private organisations have been urged to follow suit amid alarmingly high air pollution in the National Capital. Nearly 80 departments and different agencies in the Delhi government, including the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), employ approximately 1.4 lakh people. The government in Haryana, a major corporate and industrial hub, announced a temporary work-from-home directive for corporate offices and private institutions in Gurugram. Companies such as Coca-Cola and Nestlé are already offering hybrid work options to their employees. Toxic pollutants continued to shroud Delhi in a thick blanket of smog as the air quality remained in the 'severe' range on Wednesday, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) measurements reported an average AQI of

419, with AQICN Air real time measurement reporting over a 569 at Delhi Institute of Tool Engineering. In the morning, the air quality remained in the "severe" category, with an average AQI of 427 at 10 am, making it the most polluted city in India, according to CPCB data. All but one of the 38 monitoring stations in the national capital were in the red zone. The Lodhi Road station was not in the red zone, recording an AQI in the "very poor" category. Shallow fog was reported on Wednesday, with the lowest visibility of 500 metres recorded at Safdarjung, followed by 600 metres at Palam. PM2.5 levels ranged between 287.2 to 422.2 µg/m³, significantly above the national limit of 60 µg/m³. PM10 levels were also alarmingly high, peaking at 578.6 µg/m³. Meanwhile, the minimum temperature touched a season low of 11.2°C, a degree below normal. It was 12.3°C a day earlier. **Continued on page 2**



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during a bilateral meeting with Chinese Defence Minister Dong Jun, in Vientiane, Laos

Work to rebuild mutual trust: India, China Defence ministers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and China on Wednesday agreed to work towards a roadmap for rebuilding mutual trust between the two countries, weeks after India and Chinese militaries completed disengagement of troops from two last face-off points in eastern Ladakh. The Defence Ministry said both sides agreed to work together towards a roadmap for rebuilding mutual trust. In the delegation-level talks, Singh highlighted that amicable relations between

India and China would have positive implications for global peace and prosperity, it said. "Considering that both countries are and will continue to remain neighbours, he mentioned that "we need to focus on cooperation rather than conflict," it said. Singh called for reflecting on the lessons learnt from the "unfortunate border clashes" of 2020 during talks with his Chinese counterpart Dong Jun. The two Defence Ministers met in Vientiane, the capital city of Laos, weeks after India and Chinese militaries completed disengagement of troops from two last face-off points in eastern Ladakh. The Defence Ministry said both sides agreed to work together towards a roadmap for rebuilding mutual trust and understanding," it added. **Continued on page 2**



Chak diya! India beats China, becomes Asian Champions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA/RAJGIR (BIHAR)

Indian women's hockey team retained the Asian Champions Trophy title with a narrow 1-0 win over Olympic silver medallist China in a pulsating final here Wednesday. Young striker Deepika scored the winner for India from a penalty corner in the 31st minute to finish as the tournament's highest goal getter with 11 strikes. India had earlier stunned China 3-0 in the league stages of the tournament. It was India's third ACT title after winning the top honours in 2016 and 2023. China, on the other hand, will have to settle for their third runner-up finish. Japan finished third on the

podium after defeating Malaysia 4-1 in the third-fourth place classification match earlier in the day. It was a neck-and-neck fight between the two sides throughout the contest. Both India and China made many promising circle penetrations but the backline of both the sides was rock solid in the first two quarters. The 17-year-old Sunelita Toppo was brilliant with her dribbling skills and defence splitting runs from both flanks for India. Three minutes into the second quarter, China secured the first penalty corner of the match but India's second goalkeeper Bichu Devi Kharibam made a terrific diving save to keep out Jinzhuang Tan. **Continued on page 2**

In the next two minutes the Indians earned as many as four penalty corners but as has been the case in the tournament so far, they failed to utilise a single with Deepika taking most of the chances. Penalty corner conversion has been a concern for India in the tournament as in the semifinal against Japan they managed 13 set pieces, but failed to find the net even once. In the 23rd minute, it was India's turn to concede another penalty corner but the first rusher defended bravely to deny the Chinese. Minutes later, skipper Salima Tete created a fine ball for Sharmila Devi whose first time hit to the near post went wide as the deadlock continued at half-time. **Continued on page 2**

Flight delayed? Now take a walk!

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Air passengers can now move around in the event of a flight delay due to fog. Earlier passengers were kept seated on board so that the plane could start taxiing as soon as it got permission to do so, for takeoff when the fog lifted. The new rule allows passengers to disembark the aircraft and move to the departure terminal if their flight gets delayed due to bad weather. Besides, if the replacement flight arrives later than three hours after the scheduled arrival time, passengers may also be able to claim compensation. The Ministry of Civil Aviation said, "Airlines have been instructed to proactively communicate with passengers about potential delays/cancellations due to visibility issues and to ensure that correct passenger contact information is recorded during ticket booking. The flight has to be cancelled if the delay is exceeding three hours". Union Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu on Wednesday conducted a high-level meeting to assess the preparedness of airlines, Delhi airport and the Airports Authority of India (AAI), considering the premature arrival of fog and smog in the National Capital Region. The meeting, officials said, was aimed at ensuring uninterrupted flight operations and better passenger comfort. The meeting was attended by Vumlunmang Vualnam, civil aviation secretary and other senior officials from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), Indian Meteorological Department (IMD),



Delhi operator and airline officials. "The preparations for managing visibility-related challenges this winter are moving in the right direction with good progress made in resolving the bottlenecks," the civil aviation ministry said in a release. According to the release, airlines have confirmed that they will adhere to the DGCA guidelines with respect to deploying CAT II/III compliant aircraft and pilots for Delhi and other airports that could be impacted by fog. Out of the four runways at the Delhi airport, which is also the country's busiest airport, three have CAT III ILS (Instrument Landing System) that will permit flight operations at low visibility levels. The CAT II/III compliance will allow pilots to operate aircraft at low visibility conditions. Proper facilitation of passengers is the priority during times of flight delays and cancellations. Airlines should ensure that all check-in counters at airports are fully staffed to minimise passenger inconvenience, the minister said at the meeting. **Continued on page 2**

Kerala gets ready to say 'swaagatham' to legend Lionel Messi

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government announced on Wednesday that the Argentina national football team, led by legendary player Lionel Messi, will visit the state next year for an international friendly match. Addressing a press conference, Sports Minister V Abdurahiman said that the world-renowned team would play two friendly matches in Kerala, with the event being conducted under the complete supervision of the state government. The venue and the opponent team would be decided at a later stage, Abdurahiman said, reacting to a query.

"The world's number one football team, Argentina, including Lionel Messi, is coming to Kerala... There will be two matches," he said. The management of the Argentina team would make an official announcement in this regard upon arriving in the state, Abdurahiman said. Representatives of the football team are expected to visit the southern state within one and a half months, the minister said. "We (government) have decided to make a joint announcement in this regard with the Argentina national team management," he said. The minister said that he had recently visited Spain to hold discussions with representatives of the

Argentina national team and to extend an official invitation for their visit to the state. He said that talks were held with individuals associated with the team, who agreed to visit India in 2025 and participate in the friendly match event. Responding to a question, he said that the decision regarding the team's arrival has been finalised, and there are no changes to it. He noted that the government would directly oversee the match, security, and other arrangements. The minister said that the match would take place next year, but the date would be announced by the Argentina Football Association (AFA) in accordance with their



procedures. Making it clear that the match would be held in a stadium with a capacity of at least 50,000 people, he indicated

that Kochi is likely to be the venue. The minister pointed out that India has the largest support base for the Argentina

football team, with one-fourth of the fans residing in Kerala. This is the primary reason for the Argentina team's decision to visit the state. Financial support for organising the high-profile football event will be provided by the traders of the state, he added. Abdurahiman also expressed confidence in Kerala's capability to host this historic occasion. In September this year, a delegation from Kerala, led by Abdurahiman, visited Spain to seek collaboration with the Argentine Football Association (AFA). After holding a meeting with its office-bearers in Madrid, Abdurahiman said that the

collaboration with AFA would be a significant investment for Kerala and expressed his desire to make it a reality as soon as possible. "The possibility of considering Kerala as a venue for international friendly matches was discussed. As part of this, the association representatives expressed interest in visiting Kerala soon. AFA also expressed interest in setting up football academies in Kerala in collaboration with the state government," he had said in a Facebook post. Commenting on their meeting, the AFA had said: "Together with the delegation from the Government of Kerala, headed by V

Abdurahiman, Minister of Sports, we had the opportunity to share initiatives and projects that will surely materialise in the short term. In recent years, the association has established itself as one of the most important and popular sports brands in this strategic market through its global expansion strategy," it had said in a statement. "In this context, our institution is working on developing sports and commercial projects in different parts of the country, with the aim of continuing to expand our brand and being closer to the fans of the Argentine National Team in India," it had added.

PMAY-G to focus on linking women beneficiaries to National Rural Livelihood Mission

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Narendra Modi government's flagship rural housing scheme, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), has become a source of convergence for several other schemes and the focus is now on linking women beneficiaries with National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) to empower them economically, a senior official said.

Over the last two years under the PMAY-G, all the new houses have been sanctioned in the name of women beneficiaries or in the joint ownership of a male and female members of the household. According to senior officials of the Rural Development Ministry, 27 per cent of all beneficiaries are women, while 46 per cent houses are under joint ownership.

Around 74 per cent of the sanctioned houses are owned by women solely or jointly, the official said. "For the last two years, houses have been sanctioned in the name of women members of the family or in joint-ownership. This has become a major tool for women empowerment at the grassroots level," said a senior official who did not want to be named.

"Now we are trying to bring these women beneficiaries within the folds of NRLM, so that they can be further economically empowered," the official said. The NRLM is a poverty alleviation project implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development. It helps rural poor to be organised into Self Help Groups (SHGs) for improvement of their income.

The 'Lakpatti Didi' initiative of the government aims at enabling women members of SHGs to earn Rs 1 lakh per annum. The PMAY-G, under



which Rs 1.20 lakh is given for the construction of a house in the plain areas and Rs 1.30 lakh in the northeastern region states and hill states, has also become a source of convergence of several other schemes.

For the construction of a house under PMAY-G, 90 days skilled labour wages are provided under the Mahatma

Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), while Rs 12,000 is given under the Swachh Bharat Mission for construction of toilets. The PMAY-G is also linked with other schemes like Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana for giving LPG connections to women of below poverty line (BPL) category and Jal Jeevan

Mission for water connection. Now it is also being linked with the PM Surya Ghar scheme for solar power. The PMAY-G scheme has also facilitated masonry training to locals in the villages, the official added. "So far, around 2.80 lakh rural masons have been trained. They also get a certificate of the training," the official said. The PMAY-G,

launched in 2016, had a target of constructing 2.95 crore pucca houses in five years. According to the Rural Development Ministry, 2.67 crore houses have been constructed under the scheme so far, while around 77 lakh houses pending under the Indira Gandhi Awas Yojana have also been completed.

The Rural Development Ministry observed Awaas Diwas on Wednesday on the 8th anniversary of PMAY-G. The flagship scheme was launched by Prime Minister Modi on November 20, 2016 in Agra, Uttar Pradesh.

According to government officials remaining 35 lakh houses not completed till March 31 would also be completed to achieve the cumulative target of 2.95 crore houses of the previous phase. The second phase of the scheme, approved by the Union cabinet earlier this year, targets construction of additional two crore houses.

Govt revises performance norms in PSU Banks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has introduced a revised performance-linked incentive scheme for senior executives of public sector banks, including return on assets and non-performing assets (NPA) levels among parameters. The eligibility of banks for the scheme will be assessed by a government-appointed committee on the basis of four parameters, including that Return on Assets (RoA) should be positive and lower net NPA. In a circular, the Finance Ministry said the scheme, which aims to suitably reward and motivate employees for significant value creation for various stakeholders, will be effective from financial year 2023-24.

The committee, headed by Department of Financial Services (DFS) Secretary, will have Additional Secretary (DFS), Joint Secretary (Banking) and Chief Executive of Indian Banks' Association (IBA) as members. According to the communication, the panel shall assess the governance mechanism in the banks for the PLI evaluation period with respect to occurrences of any major/serious cases of violations, malpractices or those severely impacting bank credibility and reputation.

"The committee shall after assessment, list out the banks which shall be eligible to be considered under the PLI scheme. The committee may also decide on (in) eligibility of officer(s) for PLI scheme," it said. As per the circular, PLI for EDs and MDs of nationalised banks and DMDs, MDs and chairman of SBI will be up to 100 per cent of annual basic pay. It also specifies 4 criteria, including positive RoA, for banks to be eligible to operate the PLI scheme. Banks will have to meet at least three of the 4 criteria. The circular revises the August 2018 norms related to PLI.

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Lava mobile MD gets bail

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday granted bail to Hari Om Rai, the MD of Lava International mobile company, in a money laundering case involving smartphone-maker Vivo. Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri granted relief to the Lava official, who was in custody since his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in October last year.

The HC considered the period of custody as well as the fact that all the other accused persons had been granted bail and the trial was at a "nascent stage", and directed that Rai be released on regular bail on a personal bond of Rs one lakh with one surety of the like amount.

The court also said it was prima facie satisfied that the "twin conditions" for grant of bail, as enumerated in Section 45 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), were met in the present case.

Rai was arrested on money laundering charges in the case



against Vivo-India and others. He was represented by senior advocate Vikas Pahwa and lawyer Abhay Raj Varma. In the 25-page judgement, the HC reiterated that Section 45 of the PMLA could not be used as a tool for incarceration and an accused in a money laundering case could not be equated with those facing offences like

murder, cases of rape, dacoity, etc., which are punishable with death or life sentence. "Section 45 of the PMLA, while imposing additional conditions to be met for granting bail, does not create an absolute prohibition on the grant of bail. When there is no possibility of trial being concluded in a reasonable time and the accused is incarcerated for a long time, depending on the nature of allegations, the conditions under Section 45 of the PMLA would have to give way to the constitutional mandate of Article 21," it said.

In the present case, the court said that there were multiple accused persons, thousands of pages of evidence and several witnesses and, therefore, the trial was not expected to end anytime in the near future.

"It is directed that the applicant be released on regular bail subject to him furnishing personal bond in the sum of Rs 1,00,000/- with one surety of the like amount each to the satisfaction of the concerned Jail Superintendent/Trial Court/Duty J.M./link J.M. And

subject to.. Conditions," ordered the court.

The ED had earlier filed a chargesheet against Chinese smartphone maker Vivo-India and others under criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. A trial court had in September refused to grant bail to Rai, saying no grounds for relief were made out.

The ED has claimed the alleged activities of the accused enabled Vivo-India to make wrongful gains that were detrimental to the economic sovereignty of the country. It has been alleged that a whopping Rs 62,476 crore was "illegally" transferred by Vivo-India to China to avoid payment of taxes in India.

The company has rejected the allegations, saying it "firmly adheres to its ethical principles and remains dedicated to legal compliance". The anti-money laundering agency had raided Vivo-India and persons linked to it earlier in July 2022 and claimed to have busted a major money laundering racket involving Chinese nationals and multiple Indian companies.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 47-year-old woman was crushed under the wheels of a Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) truck after she fell from a scooter that was hit by an unidentified vehicle near Nauroji Nagar area here on Wednesday. According to the police, the woman's husband sustained minor injuries in the accident that took place in the evening. "A PCR call regarding a fatal accident near Nauroji Nagar was received at Safdarjung Enclave police station. When the police reached at the spot

in front of WTC Ring Road, he found that DL1GC7087 Subhash Nagar Depot Garbage Truck hit scooter No DL3SCN4325 and a lady (pillion rider) died on the spot while scooter driver was safe," the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Surendra Choudhary said.

Har Devi and her 49-year-old husband Shyam Charan were on their way to Nangloi when the unidentified vehicle hit them from behind. Devi, who was riding pillion, fell down and was mowed down by the MCD garbage truck following them, Charan told police.

The truck driver identified as 34-year-old Jaan Mohammad fled the spot but was arrested later, police said. Talking to reporters, Charan said, "My wife fell onto the road and a dumper coming from behind ran over her resulting in her instant death. The driver had the time to stop the vehicle but he failed".

A senior police officer said that teams have been formed to catch the driver of the unidentified vehicle. A case under section 281 (Rash driving or riding on a public way) and 106 (death caused by negligence) of BNS.

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MahaYuti Vs MVA, and urban apathy

From page 1

The BJP is involved in direct fights with the Congress in at least 75 constituencies across the state. In Vidarbha alone, the two major parties are slugging out against each in as many as 36 out of the total 62 constituencies in the region. While the Shinde Shiv Sena will slug it out with the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena in as many as 39 seats. The feuding NCPs, one led by Ajit Pawar and another headed by Sharad Pawar himself, will take on each other in 36 constituencies.

Meanwhile, but for some stray incidents, the polling passed off peacefully across Maharashtra. In Beed, an independent candidate Balasaheb Shinde, 45, suffered a massive heart attack at a polling station where he had gone to cast his vote. He was declared dead

upon admission to a nearby hospital.

A 67-year-old man Shyam Dhaigude died of a cardiac arrest at a polling booth in Morve village in Satara district in western Maharashtra. In the third tragic incident, 39-year-old Suman Yadav, serving as an ASHA worker in the Vasavi-Virar Municipal Corporation, was killed in a train accident while she was on way to perform her polling duty.

After heated arguments, the supporters of BJP candidate Suresh Dhus and Nationalist Congress Party (SP) candidate Maheebub Shaikh in Bedarwadi village of Ashti constituency in Beed district. Tension prevailed for some time in the sensitive Kolhapur North constituency after clashes between workers of the ruling Shiv Sena and the Shiv Sena (UBT).

However, the situation came under control after the intervention of senior Congress MLC Satej D. Bunt Patil. Nashik's Nandgaon constituency saw heated arguments and a scuffle between Independent contestant Sameer Bhujbal and the SS (UBT) candidate Suhas Kande.

In Yeola constituency of Nashik district, NCP (AP) Minister Chhagan Bhujbal was physically stopped from visiting some areas in Kharwandi by supporters of rival candidates including NCP (SP) nominee Manikrao Shinde.

In Mumbai, some persons allegedly prevented ruling Shiv Sena candidate Sanjay Nirupam from going around in his Dindoshi constituency, which led to angry exchanges with supporters of the SS (UBT) strongman and rival Sunil Prabhu.

Final phase of JMM Vs NDA clash

rom page 1

While Chief Minister Hemant Soren also said the second phase of polling would "play an important role in the creation of golden Jharkhand, Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi also urged voters to participate in polling for a better future.

Of the total 14,218 polling stations, the responsibility of the entire voting process at 239 was in the hands of women and 22 were manned by persons with disabilities (PwDs), Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) K Ravi Kumar said.

Jharkhand BJP MP Nishikant Dubey said he had filed a complaint with the Election Commission against a presiding officer for allegedly "favouring a ruling party candidate" in Madhupur Assembly constituency during voting. Dubey claimed that following his complaint, the officer was arrested.

However, the Deoghar administration said the officer, identified as Ramanand Kumar Paswan, was replaced after being found too close to the voting compartment, which is against Election Commission rules.

Beldanga: Cops detain BJP Minister enroute to riot spot

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Sukanto Majumdar was detained on Wednesday enroute to violence hit Beldanga in Murshidabad district. Majumdar, also a junior Union Minister, was detained at Krishnagar about 80 km from Beldanga. While police denied reports of his arrest a senior police officer said that he had been prevented and detained from visiting Beldanga as "he was breaking law by defying the prohibitory orders and his visit to the area may spark fresh tensions."

Prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (Section 144 of the repealed CrPC) had been clamped in the area and all the internet services had been suspended since Saturday-Sunday following reports of violence between two communities around a Kartik Puja procession.

At least 20 people were injured in the violence that led to stone pelting and torching of shops. Majumdar who squatted on the road along with his followers after being stopped by the police alleged that it was not him but the police that were breaking the laws. "They arrested us near Krishnagar which is 70 km away from where Section 163 (BNSS) has been clamped," he said writing on the X that "raising the voice of Hindus has become the biggest crime under Mamata Banerjee's rule in Bengal. My arrest today stands as proof of this. Mamata Banerjee's

regime is ruthlessly tearing apart Bengal's social fabric. Tyranny will not silence us!"

The arrest came within hours of the Calcutta High Court directing the State Government to submit a report on the Beldanga riots. The Court has been deliberating on petitions seeking deployment of central forces in the area apart from an investigation conducted by the National Intelligence Agency.

The Court in its order said, "the alleged incident between the two rival religious communities erupted on the eve of Kartik Puja, where several persons were injured, the houses were set ablaze and the hate messages through social media as well as by way of display through neon sign board spreading profanity amongst the section of the society. Several posts uploaded on social media have corroborated such incident; some of which are annexed with the instant petitions."

The Court said that it would give appropriate directions after getting the reports from the Government. State Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari too had demanded a NIA investigation in the Beldanga incident. "I, for Bengal BJP, wrote to Bengal DG to allow one leader of the party to allow me to visit Beldanga in Murshidabad," Adhikari said, adding there were incidents of violence during Durga Pujas also and that the BJP MLAs had written to the Chief Secretary about the incidents and police inaction after that. Meanwhile, expressing concern

at the Government's lackadaisical approach in providing information sought by his office on various issues including that related to Beldanga, Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose highlighting the provisions of Article 167 of the Constitution said how the Article required the Chief Minister to furnish details on administrative matters to the Governor.

He expressed his disappointment at not being supplied with reports despite having asked for them. Raj Bhavan sources had earlier said that the "Governor has sought an immediate action taken report from Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on the incident in Beldanga in Murshidabad district. He is very disturbed and expressed his anguish about the developments there," adding Bose might visit Beldanga if the situation warranted.

Clashes had erupted at Beldanga about 180 km from Kolkata late on Saturday night when some youth from a particular community assembled outside a Kartik Puja pandal and objected to some message that had popped up on the digital display board on the gate erected for the festival hurting their sentiments.

Soon a rival group assembled in the area and the two sides resorted to stone pelting. In the clashes several houses and shops were vandalized and torched and crude bombs were hurled. The police resorted to lathi charge after one of their vehicles was attacked by the angry mobs.

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Work to rebuild mutual trust: India, China Defence ministers

From page 1

The Singh-Dong meeting took place on the sidelines of a conclave of 10-nation ASEAN grouping and some of its dialogue partners. Indian and Chinese militaries completed the disengagement exercise in Demchok and Depsang in eastern Ladakh late last month after the two sides reached an agreement following a series of negotiations to resolve the festering border row.

The two sides also resumed patrolling activities in the two areas after a gap of almost four-and-a-half years. Singh began his three-day visit to Vientiane on Wednesday, primarily to attend a meeting of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus).

The ADMM-Plus is a platform comprising 10-

nation ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and its eight dialogue partners, India, China, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States. Laos is hosting the meeting in its capacity as the current chair of ADMM-Plus.

On Monday, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi held delegation-level talks in Rio de Janeiro on the sidelines of the G20 Summit, in the first high-level engagement since the militaries of the two sides disengaged from Demchok and Depsang.

The two ministers felt it was imperative that the focus should be on stabilising ties, managing differences and taking the next steps, according to the Ministry of External Affairs.

Chak diya!...

From page 1

India kept up the pressure on the Chinese defence and secured their fifth penalty corner with the first move after the change of ends.

Deepika this time finally found the net with a reverse hit after building on from a miss-trap push. In the 42nd minute Deepika had a bright chance to increase her tally when she earned a penalty stroke for a deliberate push inside the circle.

But Chinese goalkeeper Li Ting pulled off a stunning reflex save to deny the star Indian striker. Minutes later, Ting once again came to China's rescue as she saved Sushila Chanu's shot from India's sixth penalty corner. Trailing by just a solitary goal, the Chinese employed high-pressure hockey thereafter and also managed to breach inside the Indian circle on a few occasions but the home team's defence didn't break.

Delhi under toxic shroud...

From page 1

Delhi Environment minister Gopal Rai, in a post on X, said 50 per cent of the staff in government offices will work from home. However, essential services such as healthcare, sanitation, public transport, fire services, law enforcement, power supply, water treatment, and emergency response operations will continue to work in full capacity to ensure public services remain unaffected. He also urged private offices, industries and businesses to implement similar measures to help mitigate the city's air pollution crisis.

Rai suggested that private entities consider shifting office hours to begin between 10.30 am and 11.00 am to reduce vehicular congestion during peak hours. Rai also held a meeting with all stakeholders such as CII, ASSOCHAM, and FICCI.

To address vehicular pollution, the government has advised companies with a large workforce to arrange shuttle bus services for employees, similar to the measures the Delhi government has implemented for its own staff.

"We are continuously working to reduce pollution levels and today's decisions are part of that effort. We hope the situation improves in the coming days," Rai said. He also criticised the Bharatiya Janata Party-led governments in neighbouring states, including Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, for "failing" to take adequate measures to control pollution.

"Delhi is surrounded by BJP-ruled states and their lack of proactive action is affecting us. I urge them to participate in these efforts to combat pollution, just as the Delhi government is doing," Rai said.

The Decision Support System for Air Quality Management in Delhi pointed out that the transport sector is the most significant contributor at 19,644 per cent. While the residential sector contribution is 3,123 per cent, industries contributed 4,634 per cent, construction 2,956 per cent, energy sector 1,627 per cent, waste burning 1,864 per cent, and road dust 1,502 per cent. Predicted maximum mixing depth of northwest wind is likely to be 1450 m and the ventilation index lower than 6000 m2/s with average wind speed less than 10 kmph is unfavourable for dispersion of pollutants.

Meteorological experts said fog was weakening in the region, allowing both dispersion to increase and the sunlight to penetrate through to the surface. The number of 'poor' days (AQI over 200) in the same period has declined from 200 in 2016 to 121 in

2024, with the worst yet to come for this year. This further underlines that meteorological conditions will continue to play an outsized role in tipping over the air quality in Delhi, from the concerning to the catastrophic. Unlike even five years ago, there is a wealth of publicly available analytical tools, private and public sources that can track, even at a daily level, the sources of pollution.

The city has been under Stage IV restrictions of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) since Monday. These restrictions include a ban on construction and demolition activities, curbs on diesel vehicles, school closures and a prohibition on the entry of heavy goods vehicles into Delhi, except those transporting essential goods. Industrial operations contributing to air pollution have also been restricted.

Flight delayed? Now take...

From page 1

Delhi airport operator DIAL (Delhi International Airport Ltd) has been advised to install LED screens at prominent locations for providing real-time updates on visibility conditions to passengers. Besides, it has been asked to ensure increased availability of 'Follow Me' vehicles to guide aircraft during low visibility conditions.

While emphasising on having a passenger-centric approach, Naidu mentioned the importance of real-time coordination between Air Traffic Controllers (ATCs), airlines, ground handlers and airport operators to ensure seamless operations.

75 per cent Delhi-NCR families report at least one member with pollution related ailment: Survey

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A recent survey has revealed that a staggering 75 per cent of families in the Delhi NCR region, which is grappling with deteriorating air quality, have at least one member suffering from sore throat or cough. The survey, conducted by LocalCircles, an online community platform, found that 58 per cent of the surveyed families reported experiencing headaches due to rising pollution levels, while 50 per cent had a family member dealing with breathing difficulties or asthma.

The survey gathered responses from over 21,000 residents of Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Faridabad, and Ghaziabad of which 63 per cent of respondents were men and 37 per cent were women. Some among the 9,905 respondents to the question indicated more than one health issue. The largest group, 75%, indicated "sore throat and/or cough"; 58% indicated "headache"; 50% indicated "breathing difficulty/asthma"; 42% indicated "difficulty sleeping"; 33% indicated "runny nose and/or congestion"; 33% indicated "burning eyes"; and 33% indicated "anxiety and/or difficulty in concentrating". To sum up, 75% of Delhi-NCR families have one or more members with a sore throat or cough, while 58% have a headache due to rising levels of pollution; 50% have someone having breath-



ing difficulty or asthma due to highly toxic levels of pollution. Every family has someone with one or more ailments due to the toxic air. The percentage of families surveyed who reported that they or some family members are unwell has increased from 69% on 1 November to 75% on 19 November; however, compared to one month back, more than double the families have indicated that they or family members have been impacted due to rising pollution levels in Delhi-NCR. Around 16% of respondents indicated that they are "travelling/planning to travel out for some or most part of this month"; 8% indicated that they "stay indoors, increase

intake of immunity foods/drinks and bear it"; 27% indicated that they "stay indoors, increase intake of immunity foods/drinks, use air purifiers"; 8% indicated that they "carry on routine activity and wear a mask when outdoors"; 11% indicated that they "carry on routine activity and wear a mask when outdoors, and increase intake of immunity foods/drinks"; 27% stated that they "will not do any of the above and just live with it"; and 2% of respondents did not give a clear answer. To sum up, 27% of Delhi-NCR families surveyed are using air purifiers to reduce the impact of pollution; a large majority just live with it by increasing their intake of

immunity foods and drinks; 23% are not doing anything to protect themselves. The percentage of families using air purifiers has increased substantially from 18% on 19 October to 27% a month later, which shows that those who can afford it are investing in technology to bring them some relief from rising air pollution. "Given that the AQI reached new peaks earlier this week in Delhi NCR and PM2.5 of up to 1500 was reported in parts of Delhi, LocalCircles has conducted a new survey to find out how those residing in Delhi NCR are coping with elevated levels of air pollution, which is being compared to living in a gas chamber," the survey stated.

Cops slap fines worth Rs 20 crore in five days for non possession of PUC certificates

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has issued challans worth more than Rs 20 crores against vehicle owners for non-possession of Pollution under Control (PUC) certificates in just five days till Tuesday complying with the anti-pollution measures under the third stage of Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP). On Tuesday alone, the Delhi Traffic Police imposed 4,825 challans on Tuesday for violations regarding PUC certificates while in the previous four days since November 15, since GRAP-III was invoked, a total 18,838 challans were issued by the department. A fine of Rs 10,000 is imposed on motorists for not having a valid PUC certificate. These challans get released from courts.



Under the GRAP stage 3 guidelines imposed across Delhi on Tuesday to deal with the worsening air quality, the traffic police issued 5,070 challans for violation of a ban on the plying of BS III petrol and BS IV diesel vehicles, including 1,097 challans for BS III petrol and 3,973 challans for BS IV diesel vehicles, amounting to Rs 10.14 crores. On Tuesday, the police issued 185 challans for BS III petrol and 885 for BS IV diesel vehicles. According to Section 194(1) of

the Motor Vehicles Act 1988, vehicles violating the GRAP III restriction would be fined Rs 20,000. During the restrictions, Diesel and petrol interstate buses, except for BS VI diesel, from the NCR cities to Delhi are also banned. For End of Life Vehicles (ELVs), which creates more pollution on the roads, the department also imposed 941 challans in five days, including 151 challans on Tuesday. No vehicle which is older than 15 years is allowed to operate on Delhi roads, according to orders issued by the National Green Tribunal (2015) and the Supreme Court (2018). For diesel vehicles, this time period is 10 years. A total of 158 challans were imposed on vehicular owners carrying uncovered construction and demolition (C&D) material

Update arrest memo to include grounds of arrest: HC tells Police Commissioner

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has asked the police commissioner to ensure that a column for providing grounds of arrest to an individual is included in the arrest memos, saying this information serves as a fundamental basis for the arrested person to seek legal advice. The high court said providing the grounds of arrest to the person being arrested is of utmost sanctity and significance. "It is no longer res integra (an entirely new thing) that grounds of arrest must be communicated in writing to the arrested individual expeditiously. Providing the grounds of arrest to the person being arrested is of utmost sanctity and significance. This information serves as the fundamental basis for the arrested individual to seek legal advice, challenge the remand and apply for bail," Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma said. The court said there was an urgent need to update the arrest memo forms being used as the existing forms clearly revealed that there was no column for recording the grounds of arrest related to the accused. "This court considers that a revised arrest memo form or some annexures are to be



added to ensure effective compliance with Section 50 CrPC and the corresponding Section 47 of BNSS, 2023. The Commissioner of Delhi Police may ensure that necessary actions are taken for the said modification," it said. The provisions of law state that anyone being arrested must be promptly informed about the specific offence and reasons for the arrest. The court's order came while deciding a man's plea challenging his arrest by the Delhi Police on November 4 in a matrimonial dispute. In the FIR, the wife had alleged that the couple entered into a secret marriage but differences arose between them over time. She raised allegations of mental, physical and sexual abuse against the husband and his parents. The man challenged his arrest saying it was in contravention of the principles of law as the grounds for arrest were not communicated to him.

He submitted that the investigating agency had failed to comply with the mandatory requirements of law and that the arrest memo prepared at the time of his arrest did not disclose any grounds of arrest. The police claimed in the court that though the arrest memo did not explicitly mention the grounds of arrest specific to the accused, he was duly informed about the grounds. The high court declared his arrest to be illegal and granted him bail saying that the "grounds of arrest" in compliance of Section 50 of CrPC has to be supplied to an accused "forthwith" and at the earliest. The courts, while examining the implementation of procedural safeguards emanating out of the constitutional rights, have to give strict interpretation to the law, it said. The court made it clear that the order has been passed for release of the petitioner on the technical non-compliance of Section 50 CrPC and it has not gone into merits of the case. The prosecution or the victim has the liberties to proceed with the investigation and take all the steps for a smooth probe of the case in accordance with law, it said.

City auto, taxi drivers asked to wear uniform, behave courteously in Traffic cops' new initiative

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Traffic Police has launched an initiative where the auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers at key locations like the airport and railway stations are being encouraged to maintain proper attire and exhibit courteous behaviour when interacting with visitors ensuring that they leave the city with a positive impression. A senior police officer said that this initiative was started from this month. "We conduct briefings where we specifically instruct the drivers on how to engage with visitors in a respectful and professional manner. During these sessions, we emphasise the importance of wearing their uniforms correctly and maintaining a neat and presentable appearance," the officer said. "In addition, we remind them that their vehicles should be kept clean and well-maintained, with a pleasant smell to create a comfortable environment for the tourists. Most importantly, we stress that their behaviour should be polite, courteous and patient," he added. When a person visits Delhi, their first point of contact is often with auto-rickshaw or

cab drivers. The way these drivers behave can significantly influence the visitor's perception of the city. If they interact courteously and professionally, the tourists are more likely to leave Delhi with a positive impression and a better overall experience, the officer said. The initiative aims to ensure that the city's first impression on the visitors is a good one, showcasing the warmth and hospitality of its people, the officer said, adding the initiative is being actively implemented at the airport, railway station and areas near the Parliament, and the response is overwhelmingly positive. According to the police, they also issue challans to the drivers who do not wear their dress while driving in the city. As of November 4 this year, a total of 4,481 challans have been issued to the taxi drivers and 384 to the auto-rickshaw drivers in the New Delhi range for plying without uniforms. In comparison, during the same period in 2023, the numbers were higher, with 5,106 challans issued to the taxi drivers and 1,012 to the auto-rickshaw drivers, they said.

LG reviews status, performance of DDA's sports complexes

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Wednesday reviewed the status and performances of Delhi Development Authority's (DDA) sports complexes in the city while issuing a series of directions to promote sports and set a target to win a minimum of five medals from the Olympics-2036. A statement by the DDA said, "One of the key initiatives in this direction would be the introduction of the LG Cup for Archery and Shooting, modelled on the successful LG Cup for Golf, so as to promote competitive sportsmanship. The LG directed that these tournaments be elevated to national and international levels, showcasing Delhi's potential as a sporting hub." It added that to further encourage citizens' involvement and participation in sports complexes, the DDA has been instructed to float 2000 club memberships for the newly constructed DDA Golf Club in Dwarka at a cost of Rs. 245 Crore, which is set to be inaugurated on December 18 by the Lieutenant Governor. "Saxena observed that since the Dwarka Golf Club is one of its kinds in the country, its club and restaurant services would also be of high standard. Accordingly, he directed the DDA to float a tender, altering the criteria for vendors so as to ensure that the vendor finally selected for providing various services, like restaurant, etc. at this Golf Club should be of high standard," it added. The statement said, "Recognizing the need for diverse recreational options, the LG asked for establishing



an ice skating rink in one of the DDA's sports complexes in the city. Officers were asked to undertake the necessary exercise in this direction." A senior official said that this, the LG emphasized, would provide local children and adults with easy access to winter sports, eliminating the need to travel outside the city. "Additionally, the LG has also proposed the launch of hot air balloon rides in scenic locations like Baansera and Asita, the recently developed green spaces along the Yamuna floodplains. To promote indigenous sports, the DDA has been asked to prioritize sports facilities for football, Kabaddi, and Kho Kho also," he said. "Following his visit in August, 2024, to the DDA's Yamuna Sports Complex in Surajmal Vihar, Saxena had mandated a comprehensive makeover and revamp the premises within a two-month timeframe. Reviewing the progress so far, the LG directed that provision of boarding and lodging facilities for award-winning medalists and archers training at the Yamuna Sports Complex, be put into place at the earliest. This initiative aims at not only enhancing the complex's infrastructure and overall appeal, but also developing it as a Centre of Excellence for training of archers," the statement added.

HC pulls up forest official over plea for transplantation of trees from deemed forest

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday pulled up a forest department official for filing a plea seeking permission to transplant three trees from a "deemed forest" for the construction of a flyover. Justice Jasmeet Singh asked the Deputy Conservator of Forest (DCF) concerned to file an affidavit explaining if the aspect of the area being a "deemed forest" was considered by him before filing the application for removal of the trees. The departments faced

court's ire, a day after the Supreme Court censured the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) for Delhi and adjoining areas for delaying the imposition of Graded Response Action Plan (Grap) 3 and 4 curbs. In the application, the DCF said that the PWD had sought the transplantation of three trees for the construction of a flyover between Anand Vihar and Dilshad Garden and the removal of trees was necessary in that area to facilitate smooth flow of traffic. The amicus curiae, lawyer



Gautam Narayan, and the counsel for the petitioner, lawyer Aditya N Prasad, submitted that the stretch in question was a deemed forest, as disclosed in an affidavit filed by the city authorities in the Supreme Court, and the felling of trees, therefore, cannot be permitted there. As the counsel for the applicant DCF sought the court's permission to withdraw the application, the court asked the authority to first file an affidavit in the matter. "You file an affidavit. I am not permitting you to withdraw today.

How can you move an application for cutting trees in a deemed forest? First check, tell me was this inquiry done," Justice Singh asked. "Let a clarification be filed on affidavit indicating whether this aspect was considered by the applicant before filing the application," the judge ordered. In August 2023, the court had ordered that no permission for felling of trees would be granted, while noting that the authorities were recklessly granting permission for cutting trees and there was total non-application of mind.

Claims for revisions in electoral rolls can be submitted until Nov 28: Delhi CEO

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Delhi assembly elections slated to be held early next year, the state Chief Electoral Officer P. Krishnamurthy on Wednesday reminded citizens that claims and objections for additions, deletions, or modifications in electoral records can be submitted until November 28 in preparation for the publication of the final electoral roll on January 6 next year. He added that the Special Summary Revision (SSR) of the Electoral Roll with respect to January 1, 2025, as the qualifying date, commenced on October 29. "This process is actively underway across all 70 Assembly Constituencies in the NCT of Delhi. However, the submission of forms for continuous updating will remain open beyond November 28. The citizens of Delhi are actively participating in these campaigns," he said. Krishnamurthy emphasized that claims and objections can be filed conveniently through multiple channels. "Online submissions are accepted via the Election Commission of India's Voters' Portal at <https://voters.eci.gov.in> or through the Voter Helpline App and Saksham App (for Divyangjans). Alternatively, forms can be submitted offline at designated Voter Centers," a statement said. "As part of the SSR process, special campaigns are being organized at all polling station locations in the NCT of Delhi to facilitate public participation. The first round of campaigns, held on November 9 and 10, witnessed an overwhelming response from citizens submitting their forms for updates," the Delhi CEO said, adding that the next round of special campaigns is scheduled for November 23 and 24. Krishnamurthy urged the public to participate actively in these campaigns to ensure their



electoral details are accurate and updated, further contributing to the strength of the democratic process. He highlighted the importance of vigilance in electoral processes and said that citizens must ensure that their names are not listed in multiple constituencies or appear more than once in a single constituency, as this is a punishable offence under Sections 17 and 18 of the Representation of People Act, 1950. "Those with duplicate entries should apply for deletions using Form-7," he said, clarifying that merely possessing a Voter Identity Card does not guarantee the right to vote and voters must verify that their names are included in the electoral roll.

DUSU election results postponed again, counting pushed to November 25

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi University has further delayed the announcement of the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) election results, pushing the counting of votes to November 25, just a day before the High Court's deadline. The decision comes as the Delhi University (DU) struggles to complete the clean-up of election-related defacement across the campus, officials said. According to an official notification, the vote counting for DUSU's central panel will now take place on November 25 at the Conference Center near the Botany Department, North Campus. The college-level vote counting will be conducted a day earlier on November 24. The delay is attributed to incomplete clean-up efforts, with 190 locations identified for defacement removal. An inspection committee found the progress unsatisfactory, prompting the administration to postpone the



results once again. Giving information in this regard, Prof. Satyapal Singh, Chief Election Officer of DUSU Elections 2024-25, said that the Delhi High Court has directed Delhi University to conduct the counting of votes on or before November 26, 2024, provided that all the distortions are removed. He informed that on conducting the survey, it has been found that the distortion has not been completely cleaned at some places yet. Prof. Singh informed that the university has decided to clean all the places itself. "Our teams are still working on the clean-up efforts. While the campuses have largely been cleaned, defacement in other

parts remains. We are working rigorously to complete the process as soon as possible," said an official. The DUSU election results were originally scheduled for September 28 but have been delayed by nearly three months. The postponement follows a directive from the Delhi High Court, which required the DU to submit a status report on the clean-up and allowed the counting to proceed only if the work was completed to its satisfaction. Previously, the DU had planned to hold counting for both the central panel and college-level elections on November 21, but the persistent defacement issues have pushed the timeline further.

Bitcoin row: BJP targets Maharashtra Opposition leaders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

BJP on Wednesday intensified its attack on Maharashtra opposition leaders Supriya Sule and Nana Patole for their alleged involvement in using Bitcoins illegally to fund elections, and claimed their roles will surface during the probe. BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra also targeted Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, and asked the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha to hold a press conference on the issue. In a press conference, Patra rejected the opposition's claim that the BJP was behind the "conspiracy" to target them amid the Maharashtra polls as he claimed that the suspected crypto currency fraud occurred years back and the opposition alliance used the money in previous elections as well. It appears that the money involved so far in this scam is Rs 235 crore, he claimed. Sule has rejected the charges, including the audio records purportedly featuring her voice, as fake and said she has filed complaint with the Election Commission and the Maharashtra Police.



"Familiar tactics of spreading false information to manipulate the righteous voters," she said. "The intent and mala fide actors behind it are amply evident, condemn-worthy that such practices are taking place in a healthy democracy guided by the Constitution of India," he said. Patra claimed that the matter came to light as Gaurav Mehta, a person involved in crypto currency trade and an alleged link to this case, decided to go public because he feared danger to his life after he encashed the Bitcoins to help opposition leaders. The BJP leader claimed that

the matter has its roots in a crypto currency fraud in 2018, and a former IPS officer Ravindranath Patil, who had joined private sector and was tapped as an expert to help the investigation, ended up getting arrested for misappropriating a crypto currency wallet. Citing Patil's comments, Patra claimed two other IPS officers were involved in the missing wallet. Mehta had then given evidence against Patil and shared the alleged voice records of Sule and Patole, he noted. Patra rejected the defence of Sule, claiming that every suspect says the same thing when caught.

NCP's Supriya, Congress's Patole deny charges

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Hours after the ruling BJP went to town about the alleged involvement of her as well as that of Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole in an alleged Bitcoin fraud, NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule on Wednesday vehemently denied the allegations and she was prepared to respond to all the accusations against her on any public forum. On a day when NCP (AP) chief Ajit Pawar confirmed the voice in the purported audio tapes on the alleged bitcoin fraud as that of his cousin sister and Baramati MP Supriya Sule, BJP MP and spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi alleged that Supriya — along with Patole — had conspired with a former police commissioner a dealer to conduct illicit bitcoin transactions to benefit the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in the State Assembly polls. Both Supriya and Patole denied the allegations about their involvement in the Bitcoin scam. Responding to

Trivedi's allegations, Supriya said: "It's false... jhoot hain... it is not my voice. All these voice notes and messages are fake.... It's appalling that such baseless allegations are made by Trivedi, yet not surprising as it's a clear case of spreading false information, the night before elections". Denying the allegations against him, Patole said: "The entire country knows my voice. Prime Minister Narendra Modi knows my voice very well. BJP has started this kind of politics as they are afraid to lose. I am a farmer... I don't even understand Bitcoin". A day after its national general secretary Vinod Tawde found himself in an alleged "cash for votes" controversy, the BJP hit back releasing the audio tapes where Supriya is allegedly heard asking a dealer for cash in exchange of Bitcoins and Patole asking the dealer as to why there was delay in the delivery of cash. The audio-tapes surfaced a day after former IPS officer Ravindranath Patil alleged that Supriya and Patole misappropriated bitcoins from a 2018



cryptocurrency fraud case to fund the State Assembly poll campaign. He named one Gaurav Mehta, who is an employee of an audit firm named Sarathi Associates and said that the latter had sent him some audio tapes on his WhatsApp that contained the voices of Supriya and Patole. At his news conference held in New Delhi, Trivedi posed five questions to Supriya: "We want to ask 5 questions to the Congress: one, are you involved in the bitcoin transaction? Second, are you in contact with this person named Gaurav Gupta or Mehta? Third, the chats are yours [of your leaders] or not?

Fourth, is the voice in the audio clips yours or not? Fifth, who are the 'big people'?" Earlier, NCP (AP) chief Ajit Pawar, whose party is taking on the Sharad Pawar-led NCP, sought to lend credence to the audio tapes by claiming the voice in the tape was of his cousin sister Supriya. When media persons button-holed for a comment on the purported tape involving Supriya and Patole, deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar said: "Whatever audio clip is being shown, I just know that I have worked with both of them. One of them is my sister and the other is someone with whom I have worked a lot. The audio clip has their voices, I can figure out from their tone. An inquiry will be done and everything will be clear". Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, who holds the State Home portfolio, said: "The allegations were serious. There should be a proper impartial probe so that the truth comes out. Responding to the allegations made against her by Trivedi, Supriya said: "Trivedi made

five allegations and asked me five questions and they are all false. I am happy to sit with him in any public forum -- place time and forum of his choice. It is all false and I have lodged a cybercrime complaint. I have nothing to do with any transfer of bitcoin... this shows the level of the BJP's desperation" Supriya said that she had sent a defamation notice against Trivedi, a Rajya Sabha member, and filed complaints with the Election Commission of India and Cyber Crime police. On his part, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar said: "The person who made allegations was in jail for several months... the allegations are not worthy to be taken note of... the allegations are baseless". Meanwhile, denying the allegations against him, Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole said: "A day after BJP national general secretary Vinod Tawde was caught distributing money and liquor was found in the storehouse of PA of Devendra Fadnis. They want to bring note-jihad and liquor-jihad."

India to have 350 million children by 2050, faces urgent challenges to secure their future: UNICEF report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India, projected to house 350 million children by 2050, must navigate critical challenges like extreme climate and environmental hazards to ensure their well-being and rights, according to a new UNICEF report. It underlined that although India will see a decline of 106 million children compared to today, it will still account for 15 per cent of the global child population, sharing this responsibility with China, Nigeria, and Pakistan. UNICEF's flagship State of the World's Children 2024 report, The Future of Children in a Changing World, was launched in New Delhi on Wednesday, spotlighting three global megatrends, demographic shifts, climate crises, and frontier technologies that are set to reshape the lives of children by 2050. The report was unveiled by Cynthia McCaffrey, UNICEF India Representative, alongside Suruchi Bhadwal of The Energy Research Institute (TERI), UNICEF Youth Advocate Kartik Verma. The report pointed out that by the 2050s, children will face dramatically increased exposure to extreme climate and



environmental hazards and nearly eight times more children are expected to be exposed to extreme heatwaves compared to the 2000s. This escalation of the climate and environmental crisis is compounded by the fact that more children will be living in today's interpretation of lower-income countries, particularly in Africa, where resources to tackle these challenges may be limited without significant, strategic investments. The report underscored that India, projected to house 350 million children by 2050, must navigate critical challenges to ensure their well-being and rights. Although India will see a decline of 106 million children compared to today, it will still account for 15% of the global child population, sharing this responsibility with China, Nigeria, and Pakistan.

Make optimal, responsible use of AI in Govt working: Jitendra Singh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an essential tool but must be used optimally with responsible handling," Union Minister Jitendra Singh said at the 7th Edition of the ASSOCHAM AI Leadership Meet 2024 here. The event, themed "AI for India: Advancing India's AI Development - Innovation, Ethics, and Governance," showcased India's strategic roadmap for harnessing the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI). In his address, the Minister emphasised the pivotal role of AI in reshaping various sectors, including governance, business, healthcare, education, and space exploration. He highlighted AI as the backbone of India's future development, capable of driving economic growth and addressing pressing challenges such as climate change, public service delivery, and national security. The Minister also shared details about India's first practical AI Data Bank aiming to accelerate technological growth and innovation by providing researchers, startups, and developers access to high-quality, diverse datasets essential for creating scalable and inclusive AI solutions.



The Minister underscored the strategic importance of the AI Data Bank in enhancing national security through real-time analytics of satellite, drone, and IoT data. This step aligns with India's goal to utilize AI for predictive analytics in disaster management and cybersecurity. India's National Strategy for AI is guided by a comprehensive approach focused on innovation, ethical governance, and global collaboration, he said. The government is fostering partnerships between academia, private enterprises, and startups to propel AI applications in critical sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, smart cities, and space exploration. The event served as a platform for thought leaders, policymakers, and industry experts to exchange insights and chart a responsible path for AI adoption in India.

Archana Vohra, MD, Commerce and Payments, Google and Co-Chair, ASSOCHAM AI Task Force said, the government's collaborative and forward-looking approach to AI democratization is commendable — exemplified by initiatives such as the India AI mission, Project Bhashini, and the Startup India Seed Fund. "These programs, with substantial funding and strategic partnerships, have empowered startups, fostered entrepreneurship, and broken-down language barriers. Google is proud to support these initiatives and believes that public-private partnerships are essential for accelerating research, creating shared resources, and supporting researchers across academia and civil society," she added.

Google launches new AI feature to provide hyperlocal air quality data

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to address India's growing air pollution crisis, Google, a technological giant has introduced Air View+, a new AI-powered solution aimed at providing hyperlocal air quality data to both the public and government agencies. This initiative, launched on Wednesday, leverages Google's advanced artificial intelligence technology in collaboration with local climate tech firms to offer real-time, detailed air quality information. The initiative, which has already been tested in a pilot phase with successful results in cities such as Navi Mumbai, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, and Greater Chennai provides real-time data on air quality, which can be accessed via Google Maps. "It uses a combination of various data sources, including government data, satellite imagery, weather patterns, traffic conditions, and more. The information is fine-tuned to offer accurate, granular Air Quality Index (AQI) readings. "The ecosystem can provide valuable air quality insights to government agencies responsible for environmental monitoring and urban planning," said Google in a blog post.



It will also provide "real-time hyperlocal air quality information in Google Maps for users across India," it added. "These dashboards provide air quality data for unmonitored areas and help urban planners identify hotspots and make necessary interventions," Google said. The data helps in monitoring areas that were previously not covered by traditional sensors, allowing for more comprehensive environmental planning. In addition to helping government and researchers, Air View+ also gives citizens easy access to AQI information in Google Maps. Users can view the air quality of specific locations by selecting the Air Quality layer and tapping on any location on the map, or by checking the weather widget for real-time updates. The goal is to support vulner-

able groups—such as children, elderly people, and those with respiratory conditions—by giving them crucial air quality information. This can guide them in taking precautions, like wearing masks or avoiding outdoor activities when air quality is poor. "The initiative has already been tested in a pilot phase with successful results in cities such as Navi Mumbai, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, and Greater Chennai. These initial partnerships with municipal corporations have shown the potential of the platform in helping local authorities tackle air pollution more effectively," said a statement here. By offering hyperlocal, AI-driven insights, Air View+ aims to enhance public awareness of air pollution levels and assist urban planners in creating healthier, more sustainable cities.

Army Chief Gen Dwivedi embarks on four day visit to Nepal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Army Chief Gen Uendra Dwivedi embarked on a four-day visit to Nepal on Wednesday to further ramp up the already close defence and strategic ties between the two countries against the backdrop of the evolving regional security situation. Gen Dwivedi will be conferred the honorary rank of "General of the Nepal Army" by Nepalese President Ramchandra Paudel on Thursday in continuation of an age-old tradition that first started in 1950, reflecting the strong ties between the two militaries. The Army Chief's visit to Nepal from November 20-24 aims to strengthen military cooperation between the militaries of India and Nepal, besides exploring new avenues of collaboration between the two nations, the Indian Army said. In Kathmandu, Gen Dwivedi is set to hold extensive talks with his Nepalese counterpart Gen Ashok Raj Sigdel and will call on President Paudel, Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli and Defence Minister Manbir Rai. Gen Dwivedi will also be briefed by the Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) of the Nepali Army on issues of common interest at the Nepali Army headquarters on Thursday, officials said. Nepal is important for India in



the context of its overall strategic interests in the region, and leaders of the two countries have often noted the age-old "Roti Beti" relationship. Landlocked Nepal relies heavily on India for the transportation of goods and services. Nepal's access to the sea is through India, and it imports a predominant proportion of its requirements from and through India. Gen Uendra Dwivedi is also likely to visit the Shri Muktinath temple in the Mustang region of Nepal. It is learnt that India's first Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat also wanted to visit the temple. In his memory, a Bell named 'Bipin Bell' was installed in the temple in February 2023. Nepal has continued its close ties with India, with regular exchanges of military training, visits, and defence modernisation. India and Nepal are critical partners in enhancing mutual

military capabilities, particularly through training programmes. Gen Dwivedi's visit is expected to focus on the ongoing defence modernisation in both militaries, through various initiatives, officials said. A key pillar of India-Nepal military cooperation is the annual 'Surya Kiran' joint military exercise, which enhances interoperability between the two armed forces. This exercise, which focuses on counterterrorism, disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, will see its 18th edition in December in Nepal. The scope and complexity of this exercise are set to be expanded, providing an opportunity to further improve the operational synergy between the two armies, sources said. India has been supporting Nepal in its military modernisation by supplying various forms of military hardware, including small arms, vehicles, and advanced training simulators.

Delhi HC stays ED's trial case in Aircel-Maxis scam against Chidambaram



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Citing the need of Sanction for Prosecution, the Delhi High Court on Wednesday stayed the trial court proceedings against senior Congress leader P Chidambaram in the Aircel-Maxis case lodged by the Enforcement Directorate. The High Court's order came after Chidambaram approached citing the recent Supreme Court ruling that ED must get Sanction for Prosecution for taking cognizance by the trial court. "Notice issued. Till the next date of hearing, the proceedings shall remain stayed. List on January 22," Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri said, adding that he will pass a detailed order later. Senior advocate N Hariharan, representing Chidambaram, contended that the special judge took cognizance of the chargesheet

for the alleged offence of money laundering in the absence of any sanction for prosecution of the former Union Minister who was a public servant when the offence was allegedly committed. The ED counsel raised a preliminary objection on the maintainability of the petition and submitted that the sanction for prosecution was not required in this case as the allegations pertain to Chidambaram's actions that have nothing to do with his official duties. As interim relief, Chidambaram has also sought a stay on the proceedings before the trial court. The trial court on November 27, 2021, took cognizance of the chargesheets filed by the CBI and the ED against Chidambaram and Karti in the Aircel-Maxis case and summoned them on a later date. Many accused persons are



approaching higher courts after the recent Supreme Court ruling which insist Sanction for Prosecution against the public servants. Chidambaram's counsel said obtaining sanction for prosecution under Section 197(1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) is mandatory and the ED has not obtained it till date to prosecute the Congress leader. The counsel said the proceedings before the trial court are currently fixed for consideration of charges. Chidambaram, son Karti and many officials were charge-sheeted by ED and CBI for the violations Aircel-Maxis deal in 2018. The agencies accused that Chidambaram as Finance Minister in 2006 violated norms in the takeover Aircel mobile phone company by Malaysian telecom giant Maxis and bribe money was routed through his son's companies.

President condoles passing away of former IIS officer SM Khan



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu has condoled the passing away of former Indian Information Service (IIS) officer S M Khan and said he upheld high standards of public communication with utmost dedication during his distinguished career. In a letter to Shahnaz Khan, the deceased officer's wife, the President said Khan will always be remembered for combining professionalism with amiability which won him countless friends," Murmu said. She also offered condolences to her and other family members. "I pray to the almighty to give you and your family the strength to bear this loss," said the letter dated November 18. Khan was a prominent figure in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), serving as the longest-serving information officer for the federal agency from 1989 to 2002. Throughout his tenure, he became the face of the CBI, regularly addressing the media on high-profile cases, including the Bofors scandal and other exchange scams among others. Following his extensive service with the CBI, Khan was appointed as the Press Secretary to the late President A P J Abdul Kalam, a role in which he further solidified his reputation in public communication.

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Akhilesh alleges voter suppression by BJP, questions EC's role

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav has accused the BJP-led administration of using government machinery to prevent SP supporters from voting in the ongoing bypolls for nine assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh.

Addressing a press conference at the SP headquarters in Lucknow, Yadav alleged that police and administrative officials were obstructing voters aligned with his party. He urged SP supporters to remain undeterred and return to polling booths if stopped. "If police or officials prevent you from voting, go back and try again. Such intimidation should not deter voters," Yadav said. He called for the removal of certain officials, accusing them of bias and malpractices during the polling process.

Yadav further instructed party workers to document any incidents of voter suppression. "Capture videos and take photographs of officials involved in such activities.



The BJP's double-engine government is falling apart, and now they are resorting to dishonesty to win elections," he alleged.

Without naming Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Yadav claimed internal strife within the BJP. "Delhi and both Deputy Chief Ministers are against him. The Chief Minister is fighting to save his position. Despite this, the SP is set to win all nine bypoll seats. Not a single MLA stands with the Chief

Minister," he asserted. Yadav also targeted the Election Commission for failing to address electoral malpractices. "It appears that the Election Commission is ignoring these irregularities. They neither see nor hear what is happening on the ground," he said.

Earlier, Yadav took to social media platform X to urge voters to return to polling stations if they were stopped by authorities. He acknowledged that reports of voter suppres-

sion had reached the Election Commission, prompting assurances of corrective action. "The Election Commission has assured that voters who were prevented from casting their ballots can return and vote. If anyone stops you again, report the matter to election officials or party representatives," he said in his post.

Yadav thanked the Election Commission for its intervention but warned against further malpractices. He stated that video evidence of irregularities would be used to take legal action against erring officials. "Go fearlessly and cast your vote," he appealed to the public.

EC Suspend police officials: The Election Commission (EC) on Wednesday ordered the suspension of police personnel accused of violating guidelines by obstructing voters during the Uttar Pradesh bypolls. The action follows complaints of voter suppression and allegations by Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav. Yadav had earlier urged the

EC to suspend police officers who were allegedly checking voter cards and Aadhaar IDs without authorization, submitting video evidence to support his claims. Responding to the complaints, district election officers and police superintendents, after verification, suspended the personnel involved in misconduct. Taking note of the allegations shared on social media, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar instructed the Chief Electoral Officer of Uttar Pradesh, district election officers, and returning officers to ensure a fair and smooth voting process.

"All complaints must be addressed promptly, and the complainant should be informed of the action taken, including updates on social media," Kumar directed. The EC emphasized that no eligible voter should be prevented from casting their ballot and warned that any bias or misconduct by officials would not be tolerated. "Strict action must be taken against anyone found guilty," officials quoted the EC as saying.

Bhupendra Chaudhary slams Akhilesh, accuses SP of electoral misconduct

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

BJP state president Bhupendra Chaudhary launched a scathing attack on Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav, accusing him of spreading misinformation and resorting to undemocratic practices during the ongoing by-elections in Uttar Pradesh. Responding to allegations made by Yadav about voter suppression, Chaudhary dismissed them as a sign of frustration. "Akhilesh Yadav's accusations reflect his desperation as it is evident that SP is heading towards defeat. The people of Uttar Pradesh have rejected SP's era of lawlessness and misrule," he said.

Chaudhary alleged that SP was attempting to disrupt the electoral process. "The SP has deployed its goons and mafia elements to intimidate voters and create an atmos-

phere of fear. Their aim is to tarnish the sanctity of these elections," he claimed. Chaudhary further accused SP of using illegal methods to influence the polls. "Women in burqas are being brought in for fake voting, and outsiders have been called in to disturb the peaceful environment. This is SP's trademark style of anarchy," he said. He claimed that SP's declining political relevance was causing frustration within the party. "The redness of SP's caps reflects their dark deeds. They are aware that the people no longer support criminals and anarchists," Chaudhary stated.

Chaudhary also referred to an alleged incident involving the murder of a Dalit woman, accusing SP leaders of being involved. "The SP's actions reveal their true character. Instead of addressing such allegations responsibly,

Akhilesh Yadav chooses to target the Election Commission and play the victim card," he said. The BJP leader rejected SP's claims of voter suppression as baseless. "If BJP voters are unable to step out and SP voters are being prevented from voting, then who is casting the votes? These allegations are nothing but an attempt to mislead the public," he said. Chaudhary defended the role of police in the elections, stating, "The police are only performing their duty by conducting checks. SP should focus on controlling its goons rather than blaming officials." He emphasized the BJP's commitment to free and fair elections. "We have appealed to everyone to come out and vote peacefully. SP's attempts to manipulate the narrative will not work because the public is aware of their misdeeds," Chaudhary concluded.

Bihar Government puts new transfer policy for teachers on hold

PNS ■ PATNA

Amongst the teachers over implementation of the new transfer policy, Bihar government has put it on hold as it was scheduled to be rolled out in December. Bihar Education Minister Sunil Kumar said, "The transfer and posting of teachers will be done together for all the teachers... This will be executed only after completion of five competency tests for old teachers appointed through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and urban local bodies in the state."

He also said the government might bring certain changes in the policy to prevent inequality. The policy that will be introduced in the future will be in the interest of teachers, the minister said.

"There are certain practical problems in the current policy, which will be removed soon," Kumar said without divulging the anomalies in the current policy, which created resentment among the teachers. Incidentally, the decision was



taken in a day when the Patna High Court heard a bunch of petitions challenging the transfer policy. The court asked the state government to file its reply by the next date of hearing on January 21. The minister claimed, "The decision to put the transfer policy on hold has nothing to do with the developments in the high court. Several teachers had expressed their reservations about the new transfer policy. After detailed deliberations, we consulted the CM and decided to put it on hold for the time being."

The decision also came a day

before the government plans to distribute fresh appointment letters to teachers who have cleared the competency tests. The education department had recently come out with a new transfer and posting policy for school teachers. As per the policy, all teachers were required to provide their choice in order of preference through the department's portal. It was mandatory for all the teachers - appointed through the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) or those recruited through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and urban local bodies and having cleared the competency test.

Sea Vigil exercise underway off Goa to assess security preparedness

PTI ■ PANAJI

The second phase of the multi-agency Sea Vigil exercise to check the preparedness of security forces began off the Goa coast on Wednesday, officials said. Conceived in 2018, the exercise was basically to derive the lessons and actions to be taken after the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, Commodore Dushyant Purohit, Chief Staff Officer, naval officer in-charge of the Goa naval area, told reporters at Vasco (in South Goa). The first phase of the exercise was held from November 12 to 19. The second phase, which began on Wednesday, will continue for 36 hours, the official said. "A lot of improvement in the coastal security happened subsequent to the attacks. Presently, the fourth edition of this exercise is in progress. The aim of this exercise is to find our vulnerability and where we need to improve in the process of coastal security and defence," he said. "Another aim is to generate lot of consciousness about coastal security in our population for



which, this time, we have deployed children from Scout and Guides as well as NCC cadets," the official said. The security awareness programme for fishing community which is going on throughout the year has also been intensified, he added. Commodore Purohit said the Sea Vigil exercise was being conducted in two phases.

"The first phase commenced from November 12 and was in progress till Tuesday, in which a joint team was made under the leadership of the Indian Navy with personnel from the Indian Coast Guard, coastal security police (Goa Police), Intelligence Bureau as well as the state fisheries department and other coastal security agencies," he said.

The joint team went to various positions across both North and South Goa, such as fish landing points, ramps, coastal security police stations, and carried out a "realistic evaluation of what is our capability and where we need to improve," he said. "This audit is going to be very helpful in finding out what we need to do in the future," he

said. "In this exercise, we have a realistic simulation of the coastal security threat and there will be people who will act as infiltrators and there would be attempts to catch them," the official said. This time, it will be the largest exercise including coastal states, island territories in which more than six ministries and 20 organisations are involved, he said. The defence forces have established a coastal radar network after 26/11, and lot of improvement has happened in the coastal surveillance, the official said. "The surveillance on coast and in the sea are the areas where constant improvement is required," he said adding that for this reason, the entire 'fishing community acts as eyes and ears'. The Indian Navy gets a list of vulnerable areas from the state government, the official said. "Such areas which are sensitive, vulnerable and important are already given lot of security. We are checking whether there is sufficient protection to these areas," he added.

Had we united 500 years ago, we would not have faced slavery: CM Yogi

PNS ■ AYODHYA

Highlighting the construction of the grand Shri Ram temple in Ayodhya and the importance of unity in Sanatan Dharma, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Wednesday, said that a task that had been stalled for 500 years, for which countless generations made sacrifices, was completed in just two years. "Had the country been united 500 years ago, it would not have faced slavery," Yogi said. The CM made the remarks after unveiling the grand Shri Rajagopuram Gate of Sugriva Fort in Ayodhya. Addressing the saints and sages from across the country, he said, "Memories of our past inspire us to guide society in the right direction. Unity is our greatest strength, and when we stand together, no force in the world can weaken us."

Reflecting on the construction of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple, he called it the result of a prolonged struggle for generations. He added that the 500-year-long wait has finally ended, and the dream of the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple has been realized under the leadership of the Prime Minister. The Chief Minister credited the unity of Sanatan Dharma followers as the foundation of this historic achievement.

CM Yogi called for a firm stand against forces that weaken religion and society. He urged people to distance themselves from anything harmful to the nation and to expose and isolate such elements. "Exposing such elements and isolating them from the society should be the work of religion," he said.

Highlighting the significance of Sugriva Fort, the Chief Minister



shared its historical connection to Devaraha Baba and Shri Ram's exile period. He explained that Bharat had prepared this site for Shri Ram's stay. The once narrow path to the fort has now been widened, making it more accessible. He called this development an integral part of Ayodhya's growth. "Ayodhya is now not only a religious and spiritual centre, but is also developing as the most beautiful city in the world," he added.

The Chief Minister highlighted the development plans for Ayodhya, mentioning that the International Airport has been completed, which will help connect Ayodhya to the global stage. He reaffirmed his commitment to making Ayodhya the most beautiful city in the world and emphasized that it is the responsibility of the people of Ayodhya to protect and preserve this heritage. The Chief Minister also spoke about revitalizing other religious sites along with Ayodhya's development. He added that under the guidance of saints, Ayodhya will be developed as a city reflecting the ideals of Shri Ram. He also mentioned the contribution of Saint Purushottamcharaya Ji Maharaj and expressed his respect towards him.

Use of Bitcoin in Maha polls: Premises of auditing company employee searched

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday conducted searches at the Chhattisgarh premises of an auditing company employee, allegedly linked to a political Bitcoin transactions case in Maharashtra, as part of a money laundering investigation. The house of Gaurav Mehta in Chhattisgarh's capital city Raipur is being covered under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The BJP on Tuesday played purported voice notes of NCP (SP) leader and Baramati MP Supriya Sule and Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole alleging attempts were being made to encash Bitcoins to

influence the elections. ED sources said the agency has widened its ongoing money laundering probe into a crypto- (Bitcoin) assets ponzi scam and is investigating the "links" of Mehta and some others with politicians, politically exposed persons and bureaucrats. The agency attached assets worth Rs 98 crore of actor Shilpa Shetty and her husband Raj Kundra in April as part of this crypto-ponzi probe. The couple challenged the ED action and got relief from the Bombay High Court. Sharing some audio clips, in which voices and signal chats purportedly of Sule and Patole allegedly indicate that Bitcoins were used for funding the poll campaign, BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said it is clear that the MVA has seen the writing on



the wall that it will be defeated in the polls. Sule has denied the charges and said she has filed a complaint with the Election Commission and the cyber-crime department of the state against the false allegations. She told reporters on Wednesday that she "did not

know Gaurav Mehta". Patole also dismissed the BJP's allegations and said, "The voice in the clip being circulated is not mine. Even (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi recognises my voice." The ED's money laundering probe in the crypto-ponzi case stems from FIRs of

Maharashtra Police and Delhi Police against a company named Variable Tech Pvt Ltd; individuals named (late) Amit Bhardwaj, Ajay Bhardwaj, Vivek Bhardwaj, Simpy Bhardwaj and Mahender Bhardwaj; and a number of multi-level marketing agents who are alleged to have collected huge amounts of funds in the form of Bitcoins (worth Rs 6,600 crore in 2017) from the public with the "false promise" of 10 per cent per month return in the form of Bitcoins. It was alleged by the ED that the Bitcoins were supposed to be utilised for mining and investors were supposed to get huge returns in crypto assets but the promoters "cheated" the investors and have been concealing the "ill-gotten" Bitcoins in obscure online

wallets. Kundra, the ED alleged, received 285 Bitcoins from the "mastermind" and promoter of Gain Bitcoin Ponzi "scam" Amit Bhardwaj for "setting up" a Bitcoin mining farm in Ukraine. These Bitcoins were sourced from the "proceeds of crime" collected by Amit Bhardwaj from gullible investors, it said. The agency arrested three people -- Simpy Bhardwaj, Nitin Gaur and Nikhil Mahajan -- in the case last year. The main accused Ajay Bhardwaj and Mahendra Bhardwaj are absconding, the ED said, adding that it attached properties worth Rs 69 crore in the case earlier. Two chargesheets have been filed in the case till now -- the first in June 2019 and the second in February this year.

Telangana Govt set to complete caste survey in next three weeks, says Rahul Gandhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

Congress on Wednesday claimed that its government in Telangana is set to complete the caste survey in the next three weeks what Prime Minister Narendra Modi has failed to do in last three years. In a social media post, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said that his party's government in Telangana has shown the way and his party would get a comprehensive caste census done at the national level. "In Telangana, our government has completed more than 70 per cent of the caste census. Soon the government will have detailed data of the entire state which we will use to formulate policies and strengthen social justice. "The caste census is the first of

many important steps that will help in planning the overall development over the next few decades. This is the reason why I am repeatedly demanding a comprehensive caste census in the country," he said in his post. "The Congress government of Telangana has shown the way, we will also get a comprehensive caste census done at the national level," he added. Congress general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh said around 80,000 enumerators have reached 1.17 crore households across 33 districts to survey the economic, social and caste backgrounds of people. "What the non-biological PM's Government has failed to do for three years now, is set to be completed in Telangana within about three weeks. 80,000 enumerators will have reached

1.17 crore households across 33 districts to survey them about their economic, educational, social, and caste background. Its results will inform the Government's policymaking for years to come," Ramesh said in a social media post. The Congress leader claimed the Telangana Caste Survey is an administrative accomplishment of historic proportions. It has required incredible planning, attention to detail and creativity from the Telangana government, led by the Planning Department, he said. The Congress is touting the caste survey in Telangana as one which the party is demanding across the country from the BJP government at the Centre. The opposition party has also made the nation-wide caste survey a major poll issue.

Five policemen suspended, many removed from duty in UP for flouting EC guidelines

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At least five police personnel were suspended and many others removed from poll duty in Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday for flouting Election Commission guidelines and stopping electors from casting votes in the ongoing assembly bypolls, officials said. The action by the poll authority came amid complaints by opposition parties, mainly Samajwadi Party that people from a particular community were being prevented from casting vote. SP president Akhilesh Yadav urged the EC to suspend all police officers who are checking voter cards and Aadhaar IDs on basis of video evidence. Acting on the Commission's directions, dis-

trict election officers and superintendents of police, after verifying the complaints, have suspended the police personnel for their conduct. EC officials said in Muzaffarnagar, two sub-inspectors have been suspended for "non-compliance" of EC guidelines for voter checking. In view of complaints received regarding checking of identity cards of voters by police personnel in Moradabad, a thorough investigation was conducted, the officials said. The cases pertained to Bhikanpur Kulwara and Milak Siri villages. In this regard one sub-inspector, two head constables, and two women constables have been removed from poll duty and sent to the police lines. In another complaint regarding police personnel entering a

polling booth, the investigation found that he had entered the booth to inquire about the smooth conduct of the polling process. However, as this is against EC guidelines, the erring police official has been suspended and department proceeding will be initiated, the poll panel said. Similar suspensions were ordered in Sisamau assembly constituency of Kanpur district. Taking cognisance of the complaints on social media by the Samajwadi Party that some communities were prevented from voting during the bypolls, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar gave strict instructions to chief electoral officer of Uttar Pradesh and all district election officers and returning officers to ensure fair and smooth voting process.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Douse the fire

A fresh wave of violence in Manipur serves as a grim reminder that normalcy remains elusive, with innocent lives continuing to be lost

Manipur is burning again and it seems no one knows how to control the violence which has taken a proportion of a civil war in the state. The latest unrest, which erupted on November 7, 2024, has resulted in the loss of lives, widespread property damage and heightened tensions in an already volatile state. The immediate cause was the discovery of six bodies—including two children—kidnapped by suspected Kuki militants in the Jiribam district. On the same day, a tragic attack unfolded in Zairawn village, where an armed Meitei group allegedly raped and killed a woman and set fire to several homes, including a school. These incidents triggered a series of retaliatory attacks. On November 11, security forces killed ten suspected Kuki militants during a clash in Borobekra. Meanwhile, militants abducted six members of a Meitei family, killing two elderly individuals. In the days that followed, homes, churches and public properties were targeted, escalating the cycle of violence. Manipur's population is a tapestry of diverse communities, with Meiteis forming a slight majority and primarily residing in the Imphal Valley. Tribals, including the Kukis and Nagas, predominantly inhabit the surrounding hill districts. While Meiteis are predominantly Hindus, the Kukis and Nagas have significant Christian populations. Meiteis dominate the state's political and economic spheres. Longstanding disputes over land, migration and political recognition have exacerbated tensions. The May 2023 violence, sparked by the Meiteis' demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status and eviction drives targeting Kuki settlements, forms a significant backdrop to the current crisis. In response to the escalating violence, Union Home Minister Amit Shah convened high-level meetings with security officials and dispatched nearly 7,000 additional paramilitary personnel to Manipur. The Ministry of Home Affairs has extended the jurisdiction of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) to six more police stations, granting the Army enhanced operational control. Despite these efforts, violence has persisted, including attacks on the homes of MLAs, such as Chief Minister Biren Singh and widespread property destruction. The government has implemented curfews and internet bans to curb misinformation and prevent further escalation. The situation in Manipur demands a comprehensive and multi-pronged approach. The Government must initiate confidence-building measures, including community dialogues and ceasefire agreements with armed groups. Besides, neutral platforms for dialogue between Meiteis and tribal communities must be made for meaningful dialogue and conflict resolution. The issues of political representation, land ownership, and socio-economic equity to rebuild trust must be taken up on priority to bring normalcy to the state else it could have far reaching impact on the polity of the entire region of North East. Inclusive governance, equitable development, and sincere reconciliation efforts are critical for breaking the cycle of violence in Manipur.



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PICTALK



Children at a stall during the India International Trade Fair (ITF) 2024, in New Delhi

Diabetes care: Bridging modern medicine and holistic traditions

There is an urgent need to unite modern and traditional treatments to address the complex challenges of diabetes and improve lives worldwide

Diabetes is among the most rapidly increasing chronic diseases globally. An illness marked by increased blood glucose levels, has severe repercussions if left untreated. Type 1 diabetes is predominantly handled with insulin, but lifestyle modifications and pharmacotherapy frequently manage Type 2 diabetes. With over 500 million people worldwide affected, diabetes is a silent, chronic condition that profoundly impacts individuals, families and health systems globally. Modern medicine has revolutionised diabetes management via advanced diagnostic instruments, pharmacological therapies and technological breakthroughs in treatment. Continuous Glucose Monitors (CGMs) provide real-time monitoring of blood sugar levels, hence enabling proactive control. Insulin pumps and automated insulin delivery systems assist patients in sustaining stable glucose levels, hence diminishing the likelihood of problems. Advanced pharmacological agents have enhanced glycaemic regulation, including



GLP-1 receptor agonists, SGLT2 inhibitors, and insulin analogues. Despite advances in diabetes research and treatment, numerous barriers prevent effective care. These barriers include limited access to medication, lack of awareness, financial constraints, social stigma, and an often under-resourced healthcare system. Although medical advancements in modern medicine (allopathy) have yielded numerous advantages in diabetes management, innumerable barriers prevent effective care. One is the affordability of modern medicine, and another is the adverse effects these medicines bring to the patient. Many have shifted their interest towards traditional and alternative medicine as an adjunct therapy. These practices often offer holistic

approaches focusing on the body, mind, and lifestyle, helping individuals manage their condition sustainably and integratively. Ayurveda, India's ancient system of holistic medicine, offers a unique and time-tested approach to managing diabetes, particularly Type 2 diabetes, which is known as Madhumehain Ayurvedic texts. In Ayurveda, diabetes is seen as a disorder caused by an imbalance in the body's doshas (Vata, Pitta and Kapha). Madhumeha is associated with an aggravated Kapha dosha, which represents qualities of heaviness and lethargy and often leads to excessive weight gain, slow metabolism and insulin resistance. These factors are recognised as contributing to the development of diabetes. Ayurveda aims to restore balance in the body and treatment protocols focus on correcting metabolic dysfunction, supporting digestion and detoxifying the body to regulate blood sugar levels using natural plant-based remedies. Herbs like bitter melon, fenugreek, and turmeric have shown promising results in lowering blood

glucose levels. Bitter melon, for example, contains compounds that mimic insulin's effects in reducing blood sugar. Fenugreek is another herb known to improve glucose tolerance and has been shown to lower blood sugar. Traditional and alternative medicine can enhance diabetes care in several ways. When used with conventional modern treatments, these practices can help improve quality of life, lower medication dependency, and reduce the side effects of standard drugs. Alternative therapies may also help prevent diabetes-related complications, such as neuropathy, by promoting overall wellness. Healthcare providers should be imparted training in traditional and modern treatments like genomics-based precision medicine to advise patients effectively. This also requires drastic reformation in the medical education curriculum, making doctors respect each other's strengths. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

Recently, Britain's King Charles visited India on a private trip with his wife, Queen Camilla. During their three-day stay, they stayed at a modern holistic health centre near Bengaluru, where they participated in yoga, meditation sessions, and yoga therapy. This illustrates that even global elites, from ordinary patients to royalty, are realising the benefits of seeking treatment from India's modern doctors and traditional healing methods to maintain good health and youthfulness. In recent years, India has become a preferred destination for patients seeking treatment for heart diseases, bone disorders, kidney and liver transplants, dental care, cancer and even conditions deemed incurable. Patients are coming not only from South Asian countries but also from Africa, Central Asia, Gulf nations, and even Western countries in the millions every year. Alongside affordable and successful modern medical treatments, traditional Indian healing methods such as Ayurveda, yoga, naturopathy, dietetics, and millet-based therapies are gaining popularity among foreign patients. For instance, the daughter of Kenya's former Prime Minister, Raila Odinga, regained her vision after receiving treatment at Sreedhareeyam Ayurvedic Eye Hospital in Ernakulam, Kerala. This success led to a significant rise in patients from East Africa seeking Ayurvedic treatments in India. During my frequent travels to Dehradun, I often encounter foreign tourists—men and women of all ages and professions—on flights and trains. Many of them are headed to ashrams or health centres in places like Haridwar, Rishikesh and Dehradun for stays ranging from two weeks to three months. Their length of stay and the cost—often equivalent to or exceeding luxury five-star hotel rates—depend on the severity of their condition and the treatment required. In addition



to traditional treatments, modern hospitals in cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chandigarh are drawing a large number of international patients seeking cosmetic procedures to enhance their appearance. Plastic surgeons report seeing dozens of foreign patients each month for treatments such as burn injury repair, hair transplants, and skin-tightening procedures. This trend represents a golden opportunity for India to attract more foreign patients. Medical tourism not only earns valuable foreign exchange but also supports local economies, as patients often arrive with caretakers who stay in hotels for weeks or months. Indian expatriates living abroad are also increasingly returning to India for affordable and high-quality medical care. India's edge lies in offering top-tier pre- and post-surgical care at a fraction of the cost of similar services in Europe or the US. Cosmetic surgeons in India treat patients seeking procedures like fat reduction and skin tightening, as ageing and environmental factors accelerate skin issues. With growing awareness of beauty treatments, both men and women are increasingly opt-



ALONGSIDE AFFORDABLE AND SUCCESSFUL MODERN MEDICAL TREATMENTS, TRADITIONAL INDIAN HEALING METHODS SUCH AS AYURVEDA, YOGA, NATUROPATHY, DIETETICS AND MILLET-BASED THERAPIES ARE GAINING POPULARITY AMONG FOREIGN PATIENTS

ing for cosmetic and surgical solutions. Globally, millions of cosmetic surgeries are performed annually, with the US being a leader in this sector. While initially popular among women, plastic surgery is now equally common among men. Broadly, plastic surgery can be divided into two categories: cosmetic surgery, which enhances appearance, and reconstructive surgery, which repairs damage from injuries, illnesses, or birth defects. India, with its highly qualified medical professionals, advanced equipment, and cost-effective treatments, is well-positioned to take a giant leap in medical tourism. Treatment costs in India are about one-fourth of those in the US, without compromising on quality. If India strategically strengthens this sector, patients will increasingly choose India over competitors like Thailand, Singapore, China, and Japan, which are also vying for medical tourists. Medical tourism is a multi-billion-dollar industry globally. To secure a larger share, India must develop internationally accredited hospitals and clinics, provide specialised care in fields like cardiology, oncology, orthopaedics, and transplantation, and embrace telemedicine and digital healthcare services. India's millet-based therapies also offer a unique edge. Padma Shri awardee Dr Khadar Vali claims that millet can cure even the most severe illnesses within six weeks to six months without any medication. Such unique approaches, along with robust policy support from the government, can further elevate India's medical tourism potential. Marketing campaigns, patient-centric packages, visa facilitation, language translation services and accommodation arrangements can make India a more attractive destination for international patients. The figures speak for themselves—14 lakh foreign patients came to India for treatment in 2022. To meet the ambitious target of attracting 1 crore international patients annually by 2030, India must ensure world-class healthcare services and develop specific areas of expertise. With proper planning and execution, India can establish itself as a global hub for medical tourism. (The writer is a former member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha and a columnist; views are personal)



R K SINHA

Medical tourism: India as global healing hub

With its unique offerings and competitive advantages, the country is poised to become a global leader in medical tourism, attracting patients from across the globe

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POWER SHIFTS LEFTWARD

Madam—This refers to the editorial 'Left turn ho!' A trend witnessed at the global level is that people are frantically looking for a change in the helm of affairs and denying power to the party or group sitting in power. The reason is growing livelihood plights and the fast-widening gap between the rich and the unprivileged. In the process of overthrowing those sitting in power in most of the places, even those who were once rejected are also being given power again with a hope of change in the attitude and policies and programmes. This we are able to observe in many countries like the UK, the US, France, Japan and Mauritius, and the same in Sri Lanka also. In Lanka the previous regime stood exposed for its total callous attitude towards the plights of the common people and unprecedented corruption. The people had a chance to look for a new person and party. It should not be mistaken as the people choosing Left because of their conviction in the Left ideology. But the new regime has a lot of tough tasks before it to solve. This new person under the Left banner has won the confidence of the people, as reflected in the comfortable majority gained in the Parliament election also. Enduring the pressure from the IMF on one hand and providing relief to the people under austerity mode is an act of balancing the Left is pitched to face. It is hoped that the Left can emerge successful. All those in power should remember that power is not permanent, and retaining it depends on the care given to the common people. A G Rajmohan | Anantpur

TAX FOR EQUALITY

Madam—The 19th G-20 summit was held in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro under the patronage of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, President of Brazil. Lula da Silva's ideology is leftist. Perhaps that is why it can be said that he has proposed to tax the world's 3 thousand billionaires at the rate of 2 percent. Imposing

KL Rahul makes a comeback



The good news for India is that the seasoned KL Rahul has been declared fit ahead of the first test against Australia in Perth starting on Sunday. It is going to be an exciting series and the stage is well set for crossing swords in the marquee Border-

Gavaskar Trophy. Since Skipper Rohit Sharma was unavailable for the first test and the injury to Shubman Gill caused great concern for the selection committee, the fitness of Rahul has been a big sigh of relief. Rahul is one of the rare players who can open the innings and bat at numbers 3 and 6 as well. Rahul has proved enough, though as a technically sound batter, he was always under threat by his soft attitude as a personality. It's a timely gesture that the head, Gautam Gambhir, has shown the trust in him to include him in the playing eleven; it will do the world of good for such a wonderful player. Perth, as we all have seen, is the paradise for fast bowlers and the fluent batter like KL Rahul can make merry once the going starts smoothly for him with some splendid stroke playing that will be the fans delight in the coming week. A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

a minimum tax of 2 per cent on the wealth of the world's billionaires will generate an annual revenue of 200 to 250 billion US dollars. This estimate is based on Brazil's proposal to tax the super-rich, which has been prepared by French economist Gabriel Zucman, professor of economics at the Paris School of Economics and the University of California. In a sign of growing international support for taxing billionaires, Brazil, Germany, South Africa and Spain say a 2 per cent tax would reduce inequality and raise much-needed public funds following the economic shocks of the pandemic, the climate crisis and military conflicts in Europe and the West Asia. Hearing the implications is soothing and heartening, but the million-dollar question is whether it will be easy and practical to do so. Will the rich countries of the world (because most of the billionaires live in these rich countries) be able to do this? Will all countries be ready to impose such a tax to remove economic and social inequality around the world? Because many of

these countries, in addition to income tax, levy property tax and cess, etc., on these rich classes to fill their own treasury. Therefore, I do not see any fault in the intention of the President of Brazil, but it seems difficult to implement it. Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

KAILASH GAHLOT JOINS BJP

Madam—Former Delhi transport minister and Aam Aadmi Party's prominent Jat face in Delhi, Kailash Gahlot, joined the BJP ahead of the Assembly elections. He resigned from his position and party membership. Gahlot cited political ambitions and unfulfilled promises as reasons for leaving. He held portfolios including Home, IT, and Women and Child Development. No wonder, nowadays it has become a common phenomenon that so-called Netas switch parties like their cars, having no accountability to the society. Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

GOD IS THE SOURCE

Praying is the easiest and best way to take shelter from God



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Sounds logical. It is. Lord Krishna illuminates in the Bhagavad-Geeta verse # 10.41. God is the Creator. He has to be logically the source of everything. The following examples will make it quite clear. Money must be the first one. In spiritual terms, it is 'karmaphalas' given to us for our 'karmas'. Is it not surprising that the son of a rich man gets lots of it just by being born to him? Has the son done anything to deserve it? He must have in his previous life/lives. Because God is the source. He decides who gets what. It is the same thing upon the death of a person.

All unused money is left behind because all monies belong to God only; we only get to use some of it during our lifetime. What we will get in the next life will be decided by God – the source of it all. Not only money but all opulence is awarded by God to the deserving. Let us take beauty. Isn't someone born with it? How else do you explain someone being born with good facial and other features and someone not being so fortunate? Yes, beauty is our karmaphalas. The Divine Authority under the superintendence of God determines who gets what. (9.10) Power comes naturally to the son of a king. Why? Because of his past life/lives' excellent karmas. The same is true about fame, which is another opulence. Don't we wonder sometimes why only some actor or singer gets most of the attention, whereas others are also deserving? Because the process of determining who gets what is quite intricate and, obviously, difficult to understand. (4.17) We must have faith that it is all scientific, oth-



erwise the Creation cannot last for millions of years. God is for dharma always, and there is never any injustice of any kind in either reward or punishment to anyone. Referring to the same verse, 'shakti' (strength) comes from God only. Starting from 'atmabala' (inner strength), God is the direct source of it. Only devotees of God are beneficiaries of it.

Other strengths like intellectual, mental and physical may appear to come from other sources, but, ultimately, God is the source. There is another strength, which is to be able to tolerate. We need to pray to God for it. Most of us lack it and lament when sufferings hit as they must as they are the results of our past bad karma. Now we come to peace. Its source is God – one and only one. Lord Krishna made it quite clear. (2.66) If money could buy peace, then, no rich person will have mental problems, because lack of peace is the main reason for them.

The same is true about happiness, as indicated in the quoted verse. Now we come to the main benefits of realising that God is the source and necessity of taking shelter from the Almighty. From what has been stated earlier, it should be clear that bad karmas bring punishment for sure; even death does not stop it; our due punishments are carried over to the next life. Can something be done about it? Yes, God is very merciful.

The solution is to get help from Him, who can only help. What God does is allow us to come through our punishments unscathed; our sufferings will become quite tolerable. Devotees of God are not sitting ducks. Therefore, let us take advantage of knowing that God is the source. Why short-circuit our lives by endlessly searching for solutions sans God? Why not go to the source, who has all the solutions? Human life gives us this chance.

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

Why Vijay's political debut is more than just a star's gamble



ASHRAF NEHAL

Tamil Nadu's political DNA, shaped by social movements and cinema, is at a crossroads, making Vijay's foray into politics a litmus test for the survival of its unique ethos



The moment Vijay announced Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam, every political pundit worth their salt rushed to make the laziest possible comparison – MGR. As if Tamil Nadu's political theatre hasn't evolved since the 1960s. As if you could just slip on a white veshti, throw some punch dialogues about social justice and waltz into Fort St George. The state that turned cinema halls into political amphitheatres has moved on from simple hero worship, even if our stars haven't gotten the memo. But here's why Vijay's entry matters more than the usual "another-actor-turned-politician" headlines suggest. Tamil Nadu stands as the last major fortress against the BJP's pan-India steamroller, and its unique cinema-politics DNA is facing its biggest stress test since the anti-Hindi agitations. Vijay isn't just launching a party; he's entering a battlefield where the very soul of Tamil political identity is up for grabs. From Anti-Hindi Activism to System Bashing: How Tamil Cinema Shaped the State's Polity To understand the significance of Vijay's political debut, we must revisit the historical context that made cinema an integral part of Tamil Nadu's political landscape. During the Dravidian movement of the 1930s, leaders like CN Annadurai and M Karunanidhi recognised the power of the silver screen as a vehicle for social messaging and cultural assertion. They infused their political ideologies into film narratives, using the medium to communicate anti-caste, anti-Hindi, and pro-Dravidian sentiments to the masses. This strategic use of cinema allowed the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) to effectively mobilise support, blurring the lines between entertainment and political propaganda. As the party rose to power, its leaders-turned-filmmakers continued to leverage the screen as a platform for their agenda, cementing the enduring bond between Tamil cinema and politics. The emergence of MG Ramachandran (MGR) as both a screen icon and a political force further solidi-



THIS STRATEGIC USE OF CINEMA ALLOWED THE DRAVIDA MUNNETRA KAZHAGAM (DMK) TO EFFECTIVELY MOBILISE SUPPORT, BLURRING THE LINES BETWEEN ENTERTAINMENT AND POLITICAL PROPAGANDA

fied this dynamic. MGR's on-screen persona as a champion of the poor seamlessly translated into his political persona, allowing him to harness his fan following to catapult himself into the Chief Minister's office. Jayalalitha, his protégée, followed a similar path, using her cinematic appeal and association with MGR to establish the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) as a formidable political force.

The Changing Landscape: From MGR's white dhoti to Vijay's anti-establishment punches the success of MGR and Jayalalitha, however, was rooted in the specific socio-political context of their times. They rode the wave of Dravidian politics when cinema was the most powerful medium for political messaging, and their on-screen personas resonated with the prevailing social and cultural narratives. But as Tamil Nadu's political landscape evolved, the old formula of leveraging fan clubs and punch dialogues into votes began to show its limitations. The attempts by actors like Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan to replicate the MGR-Jayalalitha model highlight this shift. Rajinikanth's "spiritual politics" and Kamal Haasan's intellectual brand failed to translate into sustainable electoral success, as they struggled to bridge the gap between reel and real politics. Their political journeys proved that even the charisma of established stars could not overcome the increasing sophistication of Tamil voters. Enter Vijay, the current contender for Tamil Nadu's political crown. His films, often laced with anti-establishment undertones and social justice messaging, have made him a favourite

among the youth. Movies like "Sarkar," which criticised government corruption, and "Master," which addressed issues of caste and marginalisation, have resonated with a new generation of politically aware voters. However, Vijay's political ambitions face a different set of challenges compared to his predecessors. Today's Tamil voters are performing a complex balancing act: celebrating their stars' on-screen heroics while subjecting their real-world actions to brutal scrutiny. The parasocial relationship between stars and fans has been disrupted by the harsh light of social media and political consciousness. The same youngsters who made "Sarkar" a blockbuster didn't hesitate to call out Vijay's convenient silence on crucial issues like NEET, farm laws, and other pressing concerns. This isn't the era where you can play a poor man's saviour on screen and translate that image into votes. The fourth wall hasn't just been broken – it's been shattered by smartphones and social awareness.

The New Battleground: When Cinema's Political Grip Faces the BJP's Hindutva Ambitions The stakes, however, extend far beyond Vijay's political fortunes. The BJP's aggressive push into Tamil Nadu has changed the game entirely, turning the state into the last major battlefield in India's culture wars. In neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, the party has found an unlikely ally in Pawan Kalyan, whose Jana Sena Party has aligned with the BJP's Hindutva agenda. This strategic move represents the BJP's attempt to leverage regional star power to penetrate a state that has traditionally been resistant to its brand of Hindu nation-

alism. But the challenge in Tamil Nadu is far more complex. The state's unique political DNA – that potent mix of language pride, social justice, and regional autonomy – was forged in decades of Dravidian movements and anti-Hindi agitations. It's a political consciousness that sees through the superficial application of North Indian templates, whether in the form of star power or Hindutva ideology. The BJP's desperation in the South is palpable. They're acting like a Bollywood producer trying to crack the Tamil market – throwing big names and bigger budgets at the problem while misunderstanding the audience. Their star recruitment drive isn't working because South Indian political consciousness wasn't built in cinema halls alone; it was forged in the crucible of social movements and linguistic pride. As Tamil Nadu faces pressure from an increasingly assertive centre, the old model of star politics looks increasingly inadequate for the challenges ahead. The real question isn't whether Vijay can succeed where Rajini and Kamal failed – it's whether Tamil Nadu's political future will still be written on cinema screens at all. The credits are rolling on Tamil cinema's old political playbook, but the sequel isn't about star power anymore. It's about whether Tamil Nadu's unique political identity can survive in an India that's increasingly hostile to regional distinctiveness. And that's a script no amount of mass hero entries can salvage.

(The writer is Postgraduate Scholar of South Asian Geopolitics, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; views are personal)

Donald Trump stuns nation with historic comeback, secures landslide victory

This decisive win marks a seismic shift in American politics, fueled by a broad coalition of working-class and multi-ethnic voters rallying behind the former president

Donald J Trump completed one of the greatest comebacks in American political history by securing a landslide victory over Democratic Presidential Nominee, Kamala Harris. He also became the only President to win two non-consecutive terms since Grover Cleveland in 1892. Almost all the polls had indicated a close fight between the former president and the incumbent vice-president but as results started trickling in on Tuesday night, it became clear relatively quickly that the Democratic Party would not only lose control of the white house but also the House and the Senate. Trump did not just win an electoral college landslide (312-220) but also became the first Republican



ZEESHAN ALI

Nominee to win the popular vote in 20 years. President-elect Trump's victory is being viewed as a major realignment in American politics with a multi-racial coalition of working-class Americans voting for a second term for the former Reality-TV star after he lost the 2020 election to Joe Biden. Despite his refusal to concede that election, the violent insurrection that followed at the US Capitol on January

6th, 2021, two impeachments, and 34 felony convictions in a trial that coincided with the start of his reelection campaign, Donald Trump defied all odds and received a historic mandate from the American people. The decisiveness of Donald Trump's victory was underlined by the fact that he swept all 7 swing states. The former President retained North Carolina, and flipped Nevada, Arizona and the three "Blue Wall" states in the midwest - Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania. Trump further managed to cut into the Democratic Party's traditionally huge leads in deep blue states like New York and New Jersey by 10-12 percentage points. He also performed better

with African-Americans, Hispanic Americans, Arab Americans and a host of other ethnic groups. When compared to the previous two elections, Donald Trump performed better with all demographic groups of the electorate except with white women with college degrees. Reports following election night suggested that the Democrats were caught off guard by the results. However, several indicators were there for all to see. The Democrats replaced their nominee with only 107 days left to go in the campaign. An 81-year-old Joe Biden was forced to drop out of the race following a disastrous presidential debate against Donald Trump when growing concerns regarding his diminish-



ing mental faculties reached a tipping point with party donors. The timing of Biden's decision and his attached endorsement of Kamala Harris meant there was no possibility of another primary and the incumbent vice president got the Nomination - something

the voters, according to exit poll data, perceived more as a coronation rather than an earned democratic nomination. The fact that she had failed to get past the first round of primaries when she first ran for president in 2020, only further played into this narrative. One of the biggest indicators, according to polls leading up to the election, was that 3 out of 4 Americans thought that the country was on the wrong track under the current administration. Various polls also suggested that the issues most concerning Americans were those of economy, immigration and inflation and the Republicans polled better than the Democrats on all three of those issues. The incumbent President's histor-

ically low approval ratings only added to the vice president's woes, and it was clear that the headwinds for a Harris victory were considerably strong. Moreover, the Democratic Party was hemorrhaging support among core constituencies right through the campaign. Turnout and enthusiasm were extremely low among black men and this was reflected in the final results with Trump doubling his support among African American men. And even though Harris, when all votes are accounted for, will win with around 80 per cent of the Black vote, this reflects a drop of 10 percentage points from Biden's 2020 victory in which he won 9 out of 10 black votes. Meanwhile, some analysts attribute

Republicans successfully flipping Michigan to the waning support for the Democratic Party among Arab Americans - who constitute a significant part of the state's electorate - as a result of the current administration's stance on the war in Gaza. The biggest blow to the Democratic Party, however, came from Hispanic Americans with around 45 per cent of Latinos choosing to vote for Donald Trump despite the Democrats making an allegedly racist joke about Puerto Rico, by a stand-up comedian at Trump's Madison Square Garden rally, the centrepiece of their campaign in the final two weeks. Furthermore, the Democrats also lost the suburban vote.

(The writer is a journalist; views are personal)

US Embassy in Kyiv shuts due to Russian air attack threat

Fallout of shift in Biden's policy on use of US arms

AP ■ KYIV

The US Embassy in Kyiv said it would stay closed on Wednesday after receiving a warning of a potentially significant Russian air attack on the Ukrainian capital. The precautionary step came after Russian officials promised a response to President Joe Biden's decision to let Ukraine strike targets on Russian soil with US-made missiles — a move that angered the Kremlin. The war, which reached its 1,000-day milestone on Tuesday, has taken on a growing international dimension with the arrival of North Korean troops to help Russia on the battlefield — a development which US officials said prompted Biden's policy shift. Russian President Vladimir Putin subsequently lowered

the threshold for using his nuclear arsenal, with the new doctrine announced on Tuesday permitting a potential nuclear response by Moscow even to a conventional attack on Russia by any nation that is supported by a nuclear power. That could potentially include Ukrainian attacks backed by the US. Western leaders dismissed the Russian move as an attempt to deter Ukraine's allies from providing further support to Kyiv, but the escalating tension weighed on stock markets after Ukraine used American-made ATACMS longer-range missiles for the first time to strike a target inside Russia. The US Embassy said its closure and attack warning were issued in the context of ongoing Russian missile and drone attacks on Kyiv and anticipated a quick return to regular

operations. Western and Ukrainian officials say Russia been stockpiling powerful long-range missiles, possibly in an upcoming effort to crush the Ukrainian power grid as winter settles in. Military analysts say the US decision on the range over which American-made missiles can be used isn't expected to be a game-changer in the war, but it could help weaken the Russian war effort, according to the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank. "Ukrainian long-range strikes against military objects within Russia's rear are crucial for degrading Russian military capabilities throughout the theatre," it said. Meanwhile, North Korea recently supplied additional artillery systems to Russia,

according to South Korea. It said that North Korean soldiers were assigned to Russia's marine and airborne forces units and some of them have already begun fighting alongside the Russians on the front lines. Ukraine struck a factory in Russia's Belgorod region that makes cargo drones for the armed forces in an overnight attack, according to Andrii Kovalenko, the head of the counterdisinformation branch of Ukraine's Security Council. He also claimed Ukraine hit an arsenal in Russia's Voronezh region, near the town of Kotovo, located about 680 kilometers (420 miles) behind the Ukrainian border. The arsenal stored artillery ammunition and various types of missiles, he said. It wasn't possible to independently verify the claims.

First issue in engaging with Pak is cessation of terrorism: India's Ambassador at UN

PTI ■ NEW YORK

The first issue in engaging with Pakistan is the cessation of terrorism, India's envoy at the UN said, underlining that India has been a long-standing victim of cross-border and global terrorism and has zero tolerance towards the scourge. "With Pakistan, the main issue we have is of terrorism," India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish said during a conversation here on Tuesday. Harish delivered the keynote address on 'Responding to Key Global Challenges: The India Way' at an event at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). Responding to a question on Pakistan during an interactive session after the keynote address, Harish said Prime Minister Narendra Modi made an effort to reach out and engage with Pakistan. "Terrorist activities in India have eroded the trust. The first issue in engaging with Pakistan is the cessation of terrorism. That is a key issue." The event was co-sponsored by the MPA programme in Global Leadership and the International Organisation and UN Studies programme (IO/UNS) and attended by students, fac-

ulty and policy experts. In his address, Harish emphasised that terrorism is a big issue on the global stage. "India has been a long-standing victim of cross-border and global terrorism," he said as he described terrorism as an "existential threat" to humanity that knows no borders, no nationality and for which there can be no justification. "Terrorism can only be combated through international collaboration," he said. On what is the 'India Way' in dealing with terrorism, Harish underlined that a "big focus" for the country has been on taking along its international partners to combat terrorism as he stressed that India has zero tolerance for the scourge. "A single attack is one too many. A single-life loss is one too many. How do we reinvigorate the international counter-terrorism agenda, including at the UN and especially at the UN? How do we address new challenges in dealing with terrorism, cyber terror, new technologies, terror financing, state culpability and online radicalisation? How do we ensure that justice is delivered to victims of terrorism," he said adding that accountability and justice delivery are very important. Emphasising that justice delayed is justice

denied, Harish said the end goal is "Never again. We don't want a 9/11, has happened here. We don't want a 26/11. Has happened in Mumbai," a reference to the September 11 terror attacks on the World Trade Centre twin towers in Manhattan carried out by Al Qaeda and the November 26, 2008 terror attacks across Mumbai perpetrated by Pakistan-based terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba. He further noted that unfortunately, there has been an enhanced salience of nuclear weapons now. "India has always stood for universal, verifiable, non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. We do not believe that you can create pools of nuclear weapons-free zones in a world where the means of delivery are global, so we stand for universal disarmament, of course, verifiable and non-discriminatory." India follows a policy of maintaining a credible minimum deterrence based on no first use and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states, he said. "In recent years, a big issue, of course, is new threats and increasingly, the international community is called upon to collaborate to come up with measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction," he said.

North Korea sent more conventional weapons to Russia: South Korea

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea recently supplied additional artillery systems to Russia to support its war efforts against Ukraine, while some of the thousands of North Korean troops deployed in Russia have begun engaging in combat, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers on Wednesday. The South Korean assessment came after Russia warned on Monday that US President Joe Biden's decision to let Ukraine strike targets inside Russia with US-supplied longer-range missiles adds "fuel to the fire" of the war. US officials said Biden's decision was triggered almost entirely by North Korea's entry into the war. In a closed-door briefing at parliament, the National Intelligence Service said that North Korea exported 170mm self-propelled guns and 240mm multiple rocket launch systems to Russia, according to lawmaker Lee Seong Kweun,

who attended the meeting. Lee told reporters that the NIS assessed those weapons are a type of artillery the Russian military doesn't operate so North Korea likely dispatched personnel to teach the Russians how to use them and handle their maintenance. Last week, Russian Telegram channels and other social media posts published photos apparently showing North Korea's "Koksan" 170mm self-propelled guns being moved by rail inside Russia. The Financial Times, citing Ukrainian intelligence assessments, reported on Sunday that North Korea in recent weeks sent some 50 domestically produced 170mm self-propelled howitzers and 20 240mm multiple launch rocket systems to Russia. The artillery systems are the latest conventional weapons that North Korea is believed to have provided to Russia as the two countries are sharply expanding their military cooperation in the face of separate

confrontations with the US and its allies. Last month, the NIS said that North Korea had sent more than 13,000 containers of artillery, missiles and other conventional arms to Russia since August 2023 to replenish its dwindling weapons stockpiles. During its Wednesday briefing, the NIS said that an estimated 11,000 North Korean soldiers in late October were moved to Russia's Kursk region, where Ukrainian troops seized parts of its territory this year, following their training in Russia's northeast, Lee said. He cited the NIS as saying the North Korean soldiers were assigned to Russia's marine and airborne forces units and some of them have already begun fighting alongside the Russians on the frontlines. The US, Ukraine and others have similar estimates on the size of North Korea's troop deployment. They say the North Korean soldiers arrived in Russia in October and that

some of them have since engaged in combat in the Kursk region. Observers say North Korea's participation in the almost 3-year war threatens to escalate the conflict. Park Sunwon, another lawmaker who was present at the NIS meeting, made similar comments on the briefing. He said the spy agency couldn't provide an assessment on possible North Korean casualties. Moscow said on Tuesday that Ukraine fired six US-made ATACMS missiles at Russia's Bryansk region, in what would be Kyiv's first use of the weapon inside Russia. Ukraine's General Staff did not confirm whether the weapon was used, but said the armed forces struck an ammunition warehouse in the Bryansk region, which neighbours Kursk and was likely supplying Russian forces fighting there. Since the first year of the war, Ukrainian leaders have lobbied Western allies to allow them to use advanced weapons to strike key targets inside Russia.

Iraq launches its first national census in nearly four decades

AP ■ BAGHDAD

Iraq began its first nationwide population census in decades on Wednesday, a step aimed at modernising data collection and planning in a country long impacted by conflict and political divisions. The act of counting the population is also contentious. The census is expected to have profound implications for Iraq's resource distribution, budget allocations and development planning. Minority groups fear that a documented decline in their numbers will bring decreased political influence and fewer economic benefits in the country's sectarian power-sharing system. The count in territories such as Kirkuk, Diyala and Mosul — where control is disputed between the central government in Baghdad and the semi-autonomous Kurdish regional government in the north — has drawn intense scrutiny. Ali Arian Saleh, the executive director of the census at the Ministry of Planning, said agreements on how to conduct the count in the disputed areas were reached in meetings involving Iraq's prime minister, president and senior officials from the Kurdish region. "Researchers from all major ethnic groups — Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, and Christians — will conduct the census in these areas to ensure fairness," he said. The last national census in Iraq was held in 1987. Another one held in 1997 excluded the Kurdish region. The new census "charts a developmental map for the future



Workers prepare to collect information from the public as Iraq began its first nationwide population census in decades, in Baghdad on Wednesday. AP/PTI

and sends a message of stability", Planning Minister Mohammed Tamim said in a televised address. The census will be the first to employ advanced technologies for gathering and analyzing data, providing a comprehensive picture of Iraq's demographic, social, and economic landscape, officials say. Some 120,000 census workers will survey households across the country, covering approximately 160 housing units each over two days. The Interior Ministry announced a nationwide curfew during the census period, restricting movement of citizens, vehicles and trains between cities, districts and

rural areas, with exceptions for humanitarian cases. The count will be carried out using the "de jure" method, in which people are counted in their usual area of residence, Saleh said. That means that people internally displaced by years of war will be counted in the areas where they have since settled, not in their original communities. The census will not include Iraqis residing abroad or those forcibly displaced to other countries. Saleh estimated Iraq's population at 44.5 million and said the Kurdish region's share of the national budget — currently 12 per cent — is based on an estimated population of 6 million. The census will also clarify the

number of public employees in the region. By order of Iraq's federal court, the census excluded questions about ethnicity and sectarian affiliation, focusing solely on broad religious categories such as Muslim and Christian. "This approach is intended to prevent tensions and ensure the census serves developmental rather than divisive goals," Saleh said. The census will be monitored by international observers who will travel across Iraq's provinces to assess the data quality, he said. Hogr Chato, director of the Irbil-based Public Aid Organisation, said the census will reshape the map of political thinking and future decision making.

'US support for Ukraine, Israel eating into weapons stockpiles'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The wars in Ukraine and the Middle East are eating away at critical US weapons stockpiles and could hamper the military's ability to respond to China should a conflict arise in the Indo-Pacific, the top US commander for that region said on Tuesday. Head of US Indo-Pacific Command Adm Samuel Paparo cautioned that the US providing or selling billions of dollars worth of air defences to both Ukraine and Israel is now impeding his ability to respond in the Indo-Pacific, such as if China invades Taiwan. "Up to this year, where most of the employment of weapons were really artillery pieces and short-range weapons, I had said, 'not at all'" when asked if the conflicts were hampering US ability to respond to threats in the Indo-Pacific, Paparo said. "It's now eating into stocks, and to say otherwise would be dishonest," he told an audience at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

China has ramped up its military pressure against Taiwan, including a massive military exercise that involved 125 warplanes in October, and has said annexing Taiwan is a historical inevitability. China's military has increased its encircling of Taiwan's skies and waters in the past few years, holding joint drills with its warships and fighter jets on a near-daily basis near the democratically run island. The US, like most countries, does not recognize Taiwan as a country but is the island's main partner and is bound by US laws to provide it with the means to defend itself. Ukraine just passed its 1,000th day since Russia invaded, and in that timeframe the US has provided more than USD 60.4 billion in military assistance, including three Patriot air defence systems and missiles, more than 40 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems and ammunition, and the coveted longer-range Army Tactical Missile System, or ATACMS, which Ukraine deployed in

Russia for the first time on Tuesday. In October, after Iran launched hundreds of ballistic missiles into Israel, the US deployed one of its few Terminal High Altitude Area Defense batteries to Israel and about 100 troops to help operate it. The US also has regularly shipped air defence munitions as Israel presses its offensives against Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon. The conflicts have killed tens of thousands of civilians. The outgoing Biden administration has committed to spending the remaining USD 7.1 billion in presidential draw-down authority — meaning weapons pulled from US stockpiles — to send weapons to Ukraine before President-elect Donald Trump takes office. It will announce another package this week, according to US officials. However, the ability to send the weapons will be limited by what is on the shelves, Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said on Tuesday.

India remains among top 10 in combating climate change

PTI ■ BAKU (AZERBAIJAN)

India remained in the top 10 on a list of 63 countries assessed for efforts to combat climate change, despite dropping two spots compared to a year ago, thanks to its low per-capita emissions and rapid deployment of renewables, a report said on Wednesday. The Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI 2025) — published by think tanks Germanwatch, New Climate Institute, and Climate Action Network International — tracks the progress of the world's largest emitters in terms of emissions, renewables, and climate policy. The 63 countries, along with the European Union, assessed in the CCPI are responsible for 90 per cent of global emissions. India ranks 10th in this year's CCPI, remaining among the highest performers. The CCPI report, however, noted that significant changes in India's climate policy are unlikely.

12 securitymen killed in Pak's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

Twelve security personnel and six terrorists were killed as a suicide bomber rammed an explosive laden vehicle into a joint check post in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the army said on Wednesday. The terrorists attempted to attack a joint check post in general area Malikhel in Bannu district late on Tuesday night but their attempt to enter the post was effectively thwarted by troops, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Army's

media wing, said. The suicide blast led to collapse of portion of perimeter wall and damaged the adjoining infrastructure, resulting in the death of "12 brave sons of soil" including 10 soldiers of the security forces and two soldiers of the Frontier Constabulary, the ISPR said. In the ensuing fire exchange, six of them were killed too, it added. The injured persons have been shifted to a local hospital. Sanitisation operation was being conducted and a curfew was imposed in the area. Security forces and law enforcement agencies said they are

determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism. The country as a whole, but particularly the Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, has seen a sharp uptick in terrorism-related incidents over the past year. According to a think tank Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), the third quarter of the ongoing year witnessed a 90 per cent surge in violence in Pakistan, local media had reported earlier. The attack comes a day after the country's civil and military leadership on Tuesday approved a "comprehensive

military operation" against terrorist organisations in Balochistan in a move aimed at stemming the tide of militancy in the province that had seen several deadly attacks in recent months. "The decision was taken by the Federal Apex Committee — a high-powered civil and military forum on counterterrorism. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired the meeting, which was attended by the federal ministers, chief ministers, Army Chief Gen Syed Asim Munir and senior government officials," newspaper The Express Tribune said.

Trump's casting call as he builds out his administration

AP ■ WASHINGTON

There's a common trait that President-elect Donald Trump is clearly prizing as he selects those to serve in his new administration: experience on television. Trump loves that "central casting" look, as he likes to call it. Some, like his choices for defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, and transportation secretary, Sean Duffy, are TV hosts on Trump's favorite network, Fox News. Mike Huckabee, his choice for US ambassador to Israel, hosted the Fox show "Huckabee" from 2008 to 2015 after his time as Arkansas governor.

Dr. Mehmet Oz, a former syndicated talk show host and heart surgeon, was tapped Tuesday to head the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the agency that oversees health insurance programs for millions of older, poor and disabled Americans. He would report to Trump's choice for health and human services secretary, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., himself a regular on the cable news circuit. Trump, a former reality television star himself, has made no secret of his intention to stack his administration with loyalists after his decisive 2024 election win — including some whose lack of relevant experi-

ence has raised concerns among lawmakers. But he's also working to set up a more forceful administration in this term, and in his eyes, many of those people happen to intersect with celebrity. The trend was not lost on Democratic Rep. Jim Himes of Connecticut, who posted on social media after the Oz nomination: "We are becoming the world's first nuclear-armed reality television show." For good measure, Himes added: "Just spitting here, but what if the Attorney General and the Secretary of HHS fight each other in an octagonal cage?" That was a reference to Trump's affinity for

the UFC fighters who do battle in the octagon. Choosing TV personalities isn't that unusual for the once-and-future president: A number of his first-term choices — John Bolton, Larry Kudlow, Heather Nauert and Mercedes Schlapp, were all on TV — mostly also on Fox. Omarosa Manigault Newman, a confrontational first-season member of Trump's NBC show "The Apprentice," was briefly at the White House before she was fired. Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, a Republican who ran Trump's 2016 transition team until he was fired, said that eight years ago, Trump held "Apprentice-like inter-

views at Bedminster," summing potential hires to his club in New Jersey. On a call on Tuesday organised by the Council on Foreign Relations, Christie said this year's Cabinet choices are different than 2016's but it's still "Donald Trump casting a TV show." "He's casting," Christie said. Trump has readily highlighted the media experience of his choices as he's announced them. He said Duffy, a former lawmaker and onetime cast member of MTV's "The Real World," was "a STAR on Fox News." Hegseth, a military veteran, "has been a host at FOX News

for eight years, where he used that platform to fight for our Military and Veterans," Trump said. He also noted that Hegseth's book "The War on Warriors" spent nine weeks on The New York Times "best-sellers list, including two weeks at NUMBER ONE." As for Oz, Trump said: "He won nine Daytime Emmy Awards hosting The Dr. Oz Show, where he taught millions of Americans how to make healthier lifestyle choices." It's also true that those seeking positions in Trump's orbit often take to the airwaves to audition for an audience of one. Tom Homan, Trump's choice for "border czar," is a frequent

Fox contributor. Ohio Sen. JD Vance was chosen as Trump's running mate in part because of how well he comes across on air. Trump's choice to lead the Federal Communications Commission, Brendan Carr, upped his profile when he took to Fox News to argue that a pre-election appearance on NBC's "Saturday Night Live" by Democratic nominee Kamala Harris was a violation of the "equal time" rule governing candidate appearances on television. The White House-to-cable news pundit pipeline tends to cut across administrations of both parties, to some extent.

President Joe Biden had three MSNBC contributors on his transition team and his former press secretary went to the network after she left the White House. Biden, though, looked to career diplomats, longtime government workers and military leaders for key posts like the Defence Department. Trump's affinity for Fox News is well-documented, though the romance cooled for a time after Fox made an early call of Arizona for Biden in 2020, a move that infuriated Trump and many of the network's viewers. Trump suggested viewers should migrate to other conservative news outlets.

Human smuggling trial witness says he shuttled over 500 Indian migrants into US

AP ■ FERGUS FALLS (US)

A man convicted of human smuggling testified that he shuttled more than 500 Indian migrants across the US-Canada border over four years as part of an international smuggling ring that prosecutors said led to the deaths of a family of four. Rajinder Singh, 51, said Tuesday he made over USD 4,00,000 as part of the sprawling scheme that included two men who are now on trial for human smuggling. Federal prosecutors said he preyed on Indian nationals' dreams of a better life in the US, just like the men on trial. Singh took the stand on the

second day of the trial of Indian national Harshkumar Ramanlal Patel, 29, and Steve Shand, 50, of Florida. Prosecutors say they put financial profit over human life when they attempted to smuggle Indian migrants across the border into Minnesota over a five-week period. They say Patel ran part of the smuggling scheme and recruited Shand as a driver. Both men have pleaded not guilty to four counts related to human smuggling. Singh said he never met Patel or Shand, but he heard about them through a high-ranking member of the smuggling operation. Singh provided an inside account of how the

international smuggling ring allegedly works and who it targets. Singh said most of the people he smuggled came from Gujarat state. He said the migrants would often pay smugglers about USD 1,00,000 to get them from India to the US, where they would work to pay off their debts at low-wage jobs in cities around the country. Singh said the smugglers would run their finances through "hawala," an informal money transfer system that relies on trust. Singh entered the US illegally three times after getting deported following convictions on multiple federal charges. He

said he is testifying because it is the right thing to do. "They are playing with people's lives," Singh said of the smugglers. "People died." Patel's attorneys suggested that Singh is testifying because he doesn't want to go back to India and face potential retribution from those running the smuggling ring. In exchange for his testimony, Singh's deportation will be deferred and he will be given a temporary work permit. After getting people into Canada with student visas, Singh said he usually smuggled people from British Columbia into Washington state, where he would order Uber drivers to pick up the migrants. But in late

2021, the operation's leaders changed their plans. They began sending people to cross the border into Minnesota instead of Washington state. Federal prosecutors say the family of four — 39-year-old Jagdish Patel; his wife, Vaishaliben, who was in her mid-30s; their 11-year-old daughter, Vihangi; and 3-year-old son, Dharmik — froze to death on January 19, 2022. Patel is a common Indian surname and the victims were not related to Harshkumar Patel. The other witnesses called by the prosecution on Tuesday said conditions were brutal when the victims trudged through vast, snow-filled fields

and high winds the night they tried to cross from Canada into the US. Daryl Ritchison, a climatologist and director of the North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network, told jurors that any-time weather conditions and windchills drop into the minus 30s Fahrenheit, frostbite can occur within 10 minutes. Troy Larson, a mechanic who works at a compressor station just south of the border, said he helped dig Shand's 15-passenger white van out of a ditch that frigid January morning. After the van drove away, he saw a border patrol vehicle pull up alongside it. Border patrol agent

Christopher Oliver testified that he was driving that vehicle. He said that in the weeks prior, he had seen footprints in the snow and suspected people had been trying to cross the border. He said he spotted the van, pulled it over, identified Shand as the driver and arrested him along with two passengers. One of those passengers, Yash Patel, is expected to testify this week. One of Shand's attorneys, Lisa Lopez, asked the jury to differentiate between the two defendants. She said Shand was an unwitting participant in the smuggling ring. "Mr Shand was used by Mr Patel. And being used does not

equate under the law to being guilty of conspiracy," Lopez said. Lopez said Shand and the migrants were duped by Patel and the smuggling network. Aaron Morrison, Shand's other attorney, said his client never attempted to conceal his identity while working with Patel, as those involved in human smuggling normally do. He also pointed out that human smuggling rings often outsource some of their work to unwitting participants. On Tuesday, Thomas Leinenweber, Patel's attorney, argued that Shand's defense is antagonistic and prejudicial against his client.

Israel insists on right to act against Hezbollah in any deal to end fighting

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel's defence minister says this country insists on the right to act militarily against Hezbollah in any agreement to end the fighting in Lebanon. Lebanon's government is likely to view any such demand as an infringement on its sovereignty, complicating efforts to end more than a year of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah that erupted into all-out war in September. Defense Minister Israel Katz said in a statement Wednesday that "the condition for any political settlement in Lebanon is the preservation of the intelligence capability and the preservation of the (Israeli military's) right to act and protect the citizens of Israel from Hezbollah." Lebanese officials mediating between Israel and Hezbollah have called for a return to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the 2006 war between the sides. It calls for Hezbollah militants and Israeli forces to withdraw from a buffer zone in southern Lebanon controlled by U.N.

peacekeepers and Lebanese troops. US envoy Amos Hochstein, who has spent months trying to broker a cease-fire, held a second round of talks on Wednesday with Lebanon's parliament speaker, Nabih Berri, an ally of Hezbollah who has been mediating on their behalf. Hochstein told reporters the talks had made "additional progress," and that he would be heading to Israel "to try to bring this to a close, if we can." He declined to say what the sticking points are. Israeli strikes and combat in Lebanon have killed more than 3,500 people and wounded 15,000, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry. The war has displaced nearly 1.2 million people, or a quarter of Lebanon's population. On the Israeli side, 87 soldiers and 50 civilians, including some foreign farmworkers, have been killed by attacks involving rockets, drones and missiles. Hezbollah began firing on Israel the day after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack triggered the war in Gaza. That attack killed some 1,200

people in Israel, mostly civilians, and another 250 were abducted. Around 100 hostages remain inside Gaza, at least a third of whom are believed to be dead. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed nearly 44,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities. Meanwhile, a Lebanese army soldier was killed Wednesday by an Israeli airstrike that hit his vehicle on the road linking Burj al-Muluk and Qalaa in southern Lebanon, the army said in a statement. The Israeli military said it was looking into reports. A day earlier, three soldiers were killed by an airstrike that targeted an army post in the town of Sarafand, near the coastal city of Saida. Wissam Khalifa, a resident of Sarafand who lives next to the army post and was injured in the strike, said he was shocked that it was targeted. "It's a safe residential neighborhood. There is nothing here at all" that would present a target, he said. "Regarding the martyred soldiers, I don't even know if there was a gun in the center. Why did this strike happen? We have no idea."

The Lebanese army has not been an active participant in the fighting between Israeli forces and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah over the past 13 months, but more than 40 soldiers have been killed in the conflict. Altogether, more than 3,500 people have been killed in Lebanon since Oct. 8, 2023, the vast majority of them in the past two months. Wounded Al Jazeera reporter to be evacuated to Jordan for treatment: Israel has allowed an Al Jazeera journalist wounded in an airstrike in Gaza last month to be evacuated to Jordan for medical treatment. Jordan's Foreign Ministry said Wednesday that Ali al-Attar had been transferred to the kingdom with his sister in coordination with the World Health Organization. There was no immediate comment from Israel. Al-Attar was wounded by shrapnel when Israeli forces struck makeshift points used by Hamas-run police outside a hospital in central Gaza early on Oct. 7. There were no police present at the time.

Pakistan to launch operations against militants in Balochistan

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan decided to launch a comprehensive operation against militants in the southwestern province of Balochistan after a series of deadly attacks. The participants of the Federal Apex Committee of the National Action Plan on Tuesday approved a comprehensive military operation, said a statement. The target of the blitz would be the leading terrorist organisations operating in Balochistan including the Majeed Brigade, Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), and Balochistan Raazi Anjoo-R-Sanger (BRAS) who targeted innocent civilians and foreign nationals to scuttle Pakistan's economic progress by creating insecurity at the behest of hostile external powers. It was decided during a meeting headed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and attended by senior civil and military officials, including Army Chief General Asim Munir. The participants of the meeting, which focused on "Reinvigorating Pakistan's Counter Terrorism (CT) Campaign", were briefed on the evolving security landscape and the measures taken to counter terrorism and other critical challenges, including general law and order situation, actions against efforts to stoke sub-nationalism, religious extremism, tackling the illegal spectrum and crime-terror nexus, subversion and disinformation campaigns, among

other issues. The committee highlighted the necessity of a unified political voice and a cohesive national narrative to effectively address these multifaceted challenges. It was emphasized that political support across party lines and complete national consensus were critical to reinvigorating the national counterterrorism campaign under the

framework of vision "Azm-e-Istehkam" and agreed upon revitalisation of the National Counterterrorism Agency (NACTA) and the establishment of National and Provincial Intelligence Fusion and Threat Assessment Centre. A whole-of-system approach was adopted, incorporating diplomatic, political, informational, intelligence, socio-economic, and military efforts to address these issues comprehensively. Specific emphasis was placed on strengthening collaboration between federal and provincial governments and between relevant institutions and ministries to ensure seamless execution of the counter-terrorism campaign.

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Japan to keep eye on China's military activity

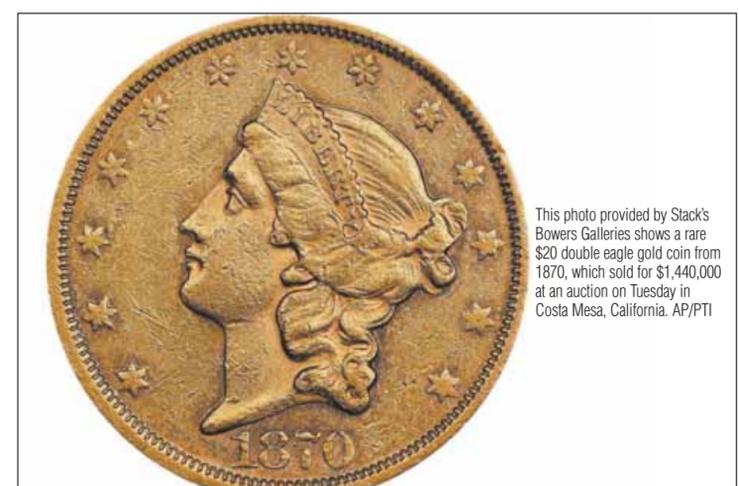
AP ■ TOKYO

Japanese officials said on Wednesday they are closely watching to see if China keeps its promise to prevent further violations of Japan's airspace after explaining that an incursion by a Chinese military aircraft nearly three months ago was unintentional and caused by turbulence. Tokyo protested and sought an explanation from Beijing after a Chinese Y-9 reconnaissance plane briefly entered Japanese airspace off the southern main island of Kyushu on August 26, prompting Japan's military to scramble fighter jets and warn the plane. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said China acknowledged the airspace vio-

lation and assured Japan that it would make efforts to prevent a recurrence. "We take note of China's explanation, and we will closely watch China's military activity from now on," Hayashi said. China said the airspace violation occurred when the plane's pilot took emergency measures in response to turbulence in the area and was not intentional, Japan's Foreign Ministry said. Japanese officials did not disclose further details, such as when China provided the explanation, citing the protocol of diplomatic exchanges. Even though aircraft can encounter turbulence, such a significant deviation from a flight route is unthinkable, Japanese officials said. NHK public television report-

ed that Japanese defense officials said they still find the airspace violation unacceptable because it was a serious breach of territorial sovereignty. Japanese officials are concerned about China's growing military activity around Japan's southwestern waters and airspace. It has led Tokyo to significantly reinforce its defences in the area, which includes remote islands that are considered key to Japan's defence strategy. Japan is also worried about joint military activities between China and Russia. A Chinese survey ship violated Japanese territorial waters off a southern island in August. In September, the Chinese aircraft carrier Liaoning and two destroyers sailed between Japan's western-

most island of Yonaguni — just east of Taiwan — and nearby Iriomote, entering Japan's "contiguous zone," an area just outside of a country's territorial waters in which it can still exercise some control over maritime traffic.



This photo provided by Stack's Bowers Galleries shows a rare \$20 double eagle gold coin from 1870, which sold for \$1,440,000 at an auction on Tuesday in Costa Mesa, California. AP/PTI

Imran gets bail in second Toshakhana case

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A high court in Pakistan on Wednesday granted bail to incarcerated former prime minister Imran Khan in the second Toshakhana case. The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb, after concluding the hearing, accepted Khan's bail plea subject to furnishing two bonds of PKR 1 million each. Khan, 72, has been in jail since his arrest on August 5, 2023 and it was not immediately

clear if he would be released now. Earlier on Thursday, a court in Pakistan had rejected Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi's acquittal requests in the Toshakhana II case. Also known as Toshakhana 2.0, the case was based on the allegations that Khan and his wife caused loss to the national exchequer by keeping state gifts at discounted prices in violation of rules. The judge also ordered the founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to appear

before the trial court after bail, warning that the bail could be revoked if he failed to cooperate with the court. Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, were arrested in the case on July 13, hours after their acquittal in the Iddat case the same day. Bibi was given bail by the IHC on October 24 and she was released from jail. Khan has been implicated in dozens of cases since his government was dismissed through a no-confidence motion in 2022.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is clarified (to Whom-so-ever it may concern) by Zakia Khatoun W/o Late Abul Khair D/o Late Mohammad Habib ur Rehman, aged 80 years approx resident of Flat No 224 Laxmi Apartments (Bhagalxami Group Housing Society) Sector-9, Rohini, New Delhi-110085 that **ZAKIA KHATOON w/o ABUL KHAIR, ZAKIA KHAIR w/o ABUL KHAIR, ZAKIA KHATOON, w/o A. KHAIR, ZAKIA KHATOON d/o MOHAMMAD HABIB UR REHMAN**, are one and the same person.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to all concern that Sh. Janak Singh S/o Late Sh. Jawahar Lal R/o Village Barola Sector-49 Noida (U.P.), who is the original owner of Industrial Plot No. 251, Block-A, Sector-69, Noida (U.P.). Sh. Janak Singh expired on Dt. 12.07.2023. WILL was executed in favour of Sh. Yashraj Basoya S/o Satyabr Singh R/o M-30 Sector-66 Noida (U.P.). Which is registered at Sub Registrar, Sadar-II, Gautam Budh Nagar, Bahi No.3, Jild No.842, Page No.133-146, Serial No.541 at Dt. 20.08.2018. So it is informed to all concern that the said Property is going to be transfer in favour of Sh. Yashraj Basoya S/o Satyabr Singh R/o M-30 Sector-66, Noida U.P., on the basis of registered WILL. If any one has/has any objection he/she may file his/her objection alongwith the sufficient proof in the Industrial Plot Department of the Noida Authority within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Re: House No. 2-J-39, area measuring 123 Sq. Yds "the said portion" of total area 219 Sq. Yds. Situated at New Township, Tehsil & District Fardabad (Haryana), hereinafter referred to as "said property". Notice is hereby given to the general public including Banks, Financial Institutions, etc. that, as informed by our clients, Mrs. Geeta Jhamb, she is the sole and absolute owner of the said portion of the said property vide Sale Deed executed by Mr. Rajesh Sharma in her favour. The said Deed is registered as Document No. 20923 Book No. 1, Volume No. 02, pages 2149-51 on 12.03.2007 (SRO Fardabad). Mr. Rajesh Sharma owned the said property by means of an Award dated 27/02/2007 passed by the Court of Shri B.P. Jindal, Presiding Judge, Permanent & Continuous Lok Adalat, Fardabad, in Suit for Declaration styled as Rajesh Sharma Vs. Pushpa Rani in Case No. 78/19.02.2007. The said Award is registered as Document No. 20922 on 12.03.2007 (SRO Fardabad). Now, our clients intend to mortgage the said portion of the said property with HDB Financial Services Pvt. Ltd., for availing loan facility. If any person, society, bank, financial institution or other institutions have any objection against the ownership of our clients on the said portion of the said property and subsequently, mortgage of the said portion of the said property with HDB Financial Services Pvt. Ltd. by our clients, may raise his/her objection, in the writing, by registered AD post, to the undersigned, within 07 days, on address mentioned below. Otherwise after expiry of 07 days from the date of publication of this notice, the said portion of the said property shall be mortgaged by our clients in favour of HDB Financial Services Pvt. Ltd. and no objection shall be acceptable against such mortgage.

SHIVKANT ARORA, ADVOCATE FOR MIS INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OFFICES, A-74, LOWER GROUND FLOOR, DEFENCE COLONY, NEW DELHI-110024

LOST & FOUND

L.R. No. 2314129/2024
Date: 18/11/2024
I, Shashikant Kumar, S/D/W/O Late Sri Surendra Prasad, Flat no-12087 GH-07, Tower 06 Block-D, Crossing Republic, Ghaziabad (U.P.) Pin-201016 shkant@gmail.com. I hereby declare that I have Missed/Lost my property documents - Allotment Letter and Possession Letter of Group of Housing Plot No. 07, Apartment No. 12087, No. 12, Block-D, Tower -06, crossing republic, ghaziabad, U.P. If anybody find it please contact at this number - 9817767880 or address above.

Public Notice

The Uttar Bharat G.E. CO-OP Group Housing Society Ltd. Plot No. 361, B-Block, Basement, Near Ambrahi Village, Sec-19, Dwarka, New Delhi 110075 in accordance with rule 19(2) of DCS rules 2007, it is to inform publicly that the following members of Uttar Bharat G.E. CGHS Ltd (Regd. No. 973) have resigned from the society. 1) Sh. Sachin Gupta (M.No.275) 2) Late Sh. Ram Kanwar Bansal (M.No.314), 3) Late Smt. Bimla Devi Gupta (M.No.289), 4) Sh. Sandeep Aggarwal (M.No.287), 5) Sh. Pankaj Jain (M.No.353) 6) Sh. Sumit Maheshwary (M.No.349) and 7) Sh. Vijay Kumar Vashista (M.No.320). If anyone who is having objections, may lodge objections at the society office, which is located at Plot No. B-361, B-Block, Basement, Near Ambrahi Village, Sec-19, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075 or at the RCS Office, Parliament Street, New Delhi within 15 days from the date of publication of the public notice.

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, Bandgar Lalibai, Mother of- JC-733092K Sub Bandgar Bharat Tanaji, R/o- Vill-Birnal, PO- Revnal, Teh- Jath, Dist- Sangli, Maharashtra-416404, have changed my name from Bandgar Lalibai to Lalibai Tanaji Bandgar, vide affidavit dated 20/11/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(945)C I, Purn Devi, Mother of - No.15774499F BHM(DMT) Krashn Kumar, R/o- Vill-Shahapur Haveli, Post-Baldeo, Teh- Mahavan, Dist- Mathura, U.P.- 281301, have changed my name from Purn Devi to Pooran Devi, vide affidavit dated 20/11/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(946)C I, Vidhya Devi, Mother of- JC-303211M SUB (OFC) Yogesh Kumar Sharma, R/o- Vill-Defence Colony, Kartik Vatika, PO- Pratap Pura, Teh- Sadar Bazar, Dist- Agra, U.P.- 282001, have changed my name from Vidhya Devi to Vidya Devi, vide affidavit dated 20/11/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(947)C I, Kishan Kumar Sharma S/o Lakhmi Chand Sharma R/o F-300 Sector-2 Greater Noida West Gautam Buddh Nagar have changed my name from Kishan Kumar Sharma to Kishan Sharma for all future purposes.

PD(948)C I, Gurjit Kaur Sobti W/o Amar Pal Singh Sobti R/o 14/11-12-Ashok Nagar, Tilak Nagar, New Delhi-110018 have changed my name to Gurjeet Kaur Sobti for all purposes.

PD(949)C I, Bharti Kataria W/o Deepak R/o B-1675, Jahangirpuri, Delhi-110033 that I have changed my name from Bharti Kataria to Bharti for all purposes.

PD(950)C

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client Sh. Pratik Kumar Jha S/o Late Sh. Ramanand Jha R/o H. No. 14-A, Gali No. 1, Saraswati Colony, Tasmalpur Extension, Faridabad, Haryana-121003 has disowned/debarred his son namely 1. Prakash Kumar Jha and his wife Smt. Nilu Kumari and 2. Vikas Jha and his wife Pooja Jha from his all movable and immovable properties and other assets and has severed all family relations with them by all means and if they committed any act or misact in future, any dealings with them by anyone themselves shall be responsible for the same.
R.K. JHA (ADVOCATES) CH. NO. C-83, C.I. JOSEPH BLOCK, TIS HAZARI COURTS, DELHI-110054

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Shan Mohammad who is the owner of the Two Storey Shop No. 2 with roof rights area measuring 16.89 Sq. Yds. i.e. 14.13 Sq. Mtrs., Situated at Kasba Jahangirpur (Andher Nagar Panchayat), Pargana & Tehsil Jwar, District Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. vide Gift Deed dated 03.10.2022 (Vide Doc. No.11210) executed by Mr. Jagan Aalam and same to be finance & mortgage by SMFG India Credit Co. Ltd. (Formerly Fullerton India Credit Co. Ltd.), Greater Noida. That (1) Death Certificate of Late Mr. Shan Mohammad (M.No.11210) is not available in the records. So, to comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim (right)/interest/creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 14 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc. **Lucern Legal LLP B-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank Sector 2, Noida, UP-201301 Contact No: 9220-4289379**

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is informed that we own a property situated at village Budhanpur Road measuring 0.41280 hectare out of Gatta no.46 through sale deed registry no 15719 bahi no. 1 zild no 7762 page 345 to 376 dated 03.09.2015 with registrar Amroha and whose original agreement for sale with shri Saurabh Agarwal etc registered with the registrar Amroha at bahi no.1 zild no 7762 page 289 to 328 s.no 15717 dated 03.09.2015 has been lost. Such agreement not found even after searching. Please inform us whoever finds it. Use of this agreement by any other person will be illegal. The agreement has not been mortgaged with any bank. We wish to create charge via mortgage or otherwise on the property for loan/credit facility from State Bank of India, SME Prakash Nagar, Moradabad branch, branch code 17580. Information of loss has been registered with Police Station Dedoli Distt Amroha on 12/08/2024. GD no 032.
Prakash Woolen Mills Ltd Vill Amhera tehsil Distt Amroha Manager Kapil Gupta S/o Sh Daya Kishan Gupta.

STORES E-PROCUREMENT
E-procurement Tender Notice No. S/50/Sr.DMM/KIR/PUB/E-Tender/2024-25/03 Dated: 14-11-2024. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works.
Closing/Opening date: 06-12-2024 (14.30 Hrs.)
Tender No. KT2454544
Brief Description: Supply of 1 phase 2W prepaid/Payment with keypad, Accuracy class 1.0, 240V, 5-60A, 50 Hz with in-home display Unit (Model-Liberty 150 of Secure Make or equivalent) (BIS/SI Mark) as per technical specification enclosed in tender document at Annexure-A. **Consignee:- DEE/Katihar, NFR (Bihar) Qty: 825 Nos.**
Note: For full details of tender notice and tender documents, tenderer may log on to the website (www.ireps.gov.in). Prospective bidder who intend to participate in above tender are required to log on themselves with the above website and submit their offer electronically, if they are already registered with IREPS. In Case they are not registered with IREPS, they are advised to obtain class-III Digital Signature Certificate from the certifying agencies under Govt. of India IT Act 2000 and participate in the above tenders.
Divisional Materials Manager, Katihar

MANIBHAVNAM HOME FINANCE INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED
Head Office: N-2, Second Floor, South Extension-1, New Delhi - 110049
NOTICE OF SALE THROUGH PRIVATE TREATY
SALE OF MOVABLE & IMMOVABLE ASSETS CHARGED TO MANIBHAVNAM HOME FINANCE INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED UNDER THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTERESTS ACT, 2002 (SARFESI ACT)
The Authorized Officer of MANIBHAVNAM HOME FINANCE INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED has taken over possession of the schedule property(ies) as per the terms agreeable to the MANIBHAVNAM HOME FINANCE INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED for realisation of the secured property(ies) as mentioned in the Schedule available for sale through Private Treaty, as per the terms agreeable to the MANIBHAVNAM HOME FINANCE INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED for realisation of the secured property(ies) as "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS".

SR NO	Name of the owner of the property (Title Deed holder/s) / Demand Notice amount	Encumbrances known, if any	Reserve Price (Rs.)	Earnest Money Deposit (Rs.)
1	JITENDRA YADAV S/O/D/O/HARPAL SINGH YADAV, D. SUNITA YADAV S/O/D/O/HARPAL SINGH YADAV, BOTH AT - PLOT NO. 55, SF-54 SECTOR 14, MASUNDHARA GHAZIABAD-201012, ALSO AT:- DAIRY FARM, SWADESHI POLYTECH KAVI NAGAR NR SANI TEMPLE GHAZIABAD-201002, ALSO AT:- FLAT NO. SF 4, 2ND FLOOR (REAR RH5/ SOUTH WESTERN PORTION), PANDAV NAGAR, PLOT NO 140 KHASRA NO 306, NR NEW ERA, GHAZIABAD, UTTAR PRADESH, PIN CODE-201001. ALSO AT:- FLAT NO.SF-2, PLOT NO-140, MEHRAULI, PARGANA -DASNA, GHAZIABAD, UTTAR PRADESH-201001 Loan No. - LP0000000003060.	On as is where is basis	Rs. 1,50,000/-	Rs. 1,50,000/-

Description of the Property - "ALL THAT THE PIECE OF PARCEL RESIDENTIAL UNIT NO. SF-4, ON 2ND FLOOR, ADMEASURING 62.71 SQ. METRS ON PLOT BEARING NO. 140, KHASRA NO 306, SITUATED AT MEHRAULI PARGANA DASNA TEHSIL AND DISTRICT GHAZIABAD, UTTAR PRADESH-201001, AREA ADMEASURING 62.71 SQ. METRS, AS BOUNDED:- NORTH: PLOT NO. 154, SOUTH: 7.35 METER WIDE, EAST: PLOT NO. 141, WEST: PLOT 139."

Standard terms & conditions for sale of property through private treaty are as under: (1). Sale through Private Treaty will be in "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS". (2). The purchaser is required to deposit 25% of the sale consideration on the next working day of receipt of Manibhavnam's acceptance of offer for purchase of property and the remaining amount within 15 days thereafter. EMD amount shall be remitted through NEFT / RTGS / Funds Transfer in favor of "Manibhavnam Home Finance India Private Limited" Bank Account No. 192121042214794, AU Small Finance Bank, IFSC code AUBI0002104, Branch - East of Kailash, New Delhi. (3). The purchaser has to deposit 10% of the offered amount along with application which will be adjusted against 25% of the deposit to be made as per clause (2) above. (4). Failure to remit the amount as required under clause (2) above will cause forfeiture of amount already paid including 10% of the amount paid along with application. (5). In case of non-acceptance of offer of purchase by the MANIBHAVNAM, the amount of 10% paid along with the application will not be refundable without any interest. (6). The property is being sold with all the existing and future encumbrances whether known or unknown to the MANIBHAVNAM. The Authorized Officer / Secured Creditor shall not be responsible in any way for any third-party claims / rights / dues. (7). The purchaser should conduct due diligence on all aspects related to the property (under sale through private treaty) to his satisfaction. The purchaser shall not be entitled to make any claim against the Authorized Officer / Secured Creditor in this regard at a later date. (8). The MANIBHAVNAM reserves the right to reject any offer of purchase without assigning any reason. (9). In case of more than one offer, the MANIBHAVNAM will accept the highest offer. If higher bidder fails to deposit the remaining amount in terms of clause (2) above, then MANIBHAVNAM may request & accept the second highest offer. (10). The interested parties may contact the Authorized Officer for further details / clarifications and for submitting their application. (11). The purchaser has to bear all stamp duty, registration fee, and other expenses, taxes, duties in respect of purchase of the property. (12). Sale shall be in accordance with the provisions of SARFESI Act / Rules.

Date: 21.11.2024, Place : Ghaziabad
Authorized Officer, MANIBHAVNAM HOME FINANCE INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED

228 infra projects worth ₹ 15.89 lakh Crore recommended for approval under PM GatiShakti initiative

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 228 big-ticket infrastructure projects of different ministries, including roads and railways, worth Rs 15.89 lakh crore have been recommended for approval under the PM GatiShakti initiative so far, a top government official said on Wednesday. These projects have been recommended by the Network Planning Group (NPG) constituted under the PM GatiShakti initiative launched on October 13, 2021. "So far, 228 projects have been assessed under the initiative worth Rs 1,588,919 lakh crore," Additional Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Rajeev Singh Thakur told reporters here. There are several benefits of using the PM GatiShakti system, including significant



cuts in time and cost for planning these infrastructure projects. The maximum number of projects recommended by the group are related to roads (108), railways (85),

urban development (12), and four from the oil and gas ministry. The inter-ministerial NPG meets every fortnight and appraises infra projects to ensure multi-modality,

synchronisation of efforts, and comprehensive development in and around the project location. The initiative was launched to develop an integrated infrastructure to reduce logistics costs. All logistics and connectivity infrastructure projects, entailing investments of over Rs 500 crore are routed through the NPG. The NPG's approval is required before the clearance of the project by the Public Investment Board (PIB) or Department of Expenditure under the finance ministry. The NMP (National Master Plan) has over 1,600 layers of geospatial data, showing all physical and social infrastructure of an area and land records in one place. It has been designed for faster planning and better design so that the impact of an investment is maximised.

The NPG has representations from various connectivity infrastructure ministries/ departments, involving their heads of network planning division for unified planning and integration of the proposals. All these departments approach the NPG first for approval before making a DPR (Detailed Project Report) at the planning stage. After the NPG's clearance, the project follows the normal procedure of approval by the finance ministry and the Cabinet. Over 1,600 layers of data, including those related to land, ports, forests, and highways, are available on the portal. Usage of the portal by different ministries, including social sector departments and states, is increasing, and it is helping in the proper planning of projects.

PM Modi meets Australian counterpart, India and Australia launch Renewable Energy Partnership

PTI ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

India and Australia on Tuesday officially launched the Renewable Energy Partnership that aims to boost two-way investment in the renewable energy sectors as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese. The two leaders held the second India-Australia Annual Summit on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro during which they reiterated their commitment to further advance the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in myriad areas such as defence and security, trade and investment, education, skills, sports, space, mobility and people-to-people ties. Both leaders welcomed the launch of the Renewable Energy Partnership, as agreed during the first India-Australia Annual Summit. "India and Australia have shared ambition to move faster, work together and deploy our complementary capabilities to drive climate action," according to a joint statement. "The prime ministers welcomed the launch of the India-Australia Renewable Energy Partnership (REP), which would provide the framework for practical cooperation in priority areas such as solar PV, green hydrogen, energy storage, and upgraded skills training for the renewables workforce of the future," the joint statement said. Albanese said, "Our renewable energy partnership is officially launched," and added that this new partnership would boost two-way investment in renewable energy sectors in things such as solar, green hydrogen and the renewables workforce. "We are doing so much work together on driving the renewable energy transition to meet our net zero targets," he said. "Bilateral ties reaching new heights! Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Anthony



Albanese of Australia held the second India-Australia Annual Summit today, on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a post on X. "Both leaders reiterated their commitment to further advance India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in myriad areas like defence and security, trade and investment, education, skills, sports, space, mobility and people-to-people ties," it said. "The leaders welcomed the launch of the Renewable Energy Partnership (REP), as agreed during the 1st India-Australia Annual Summit," the MEA added. Both the leaders also "welcomed sustained progress under the defence and security pillar of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. They expressed intent to renew and strengthen the Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation in 2025, to reflect ambition in both countries' elevated defence and security partnership and strategic convergence", according to the joint statement. They "looked forward to a long-term vision of defence and security collaboration between the two countries to enhance collective strength, contribute to both countries' security and make an important contribution to regional peace and security", it said. Modi and Albanese also welcomed arrangements for "enhancing maritime domain awareness and increased and reciprocal defence information-sharing to deepen operational defence cooperation, address

shared concerns and challenges, and work towards an open, inclusive, peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific", the statement said. "They agreed to develop a joint maritime security collaboration road map. The prime ministers agreed to continue aircraft deployments from each other's territories to build operational familiarity," it added. Regarding regional and multilateral cooperation, both leaders "reiterated their commitment to supporting an open, inclusive, stable, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific where sovereignty and territorial integrity are respected". "The prime ministers underlined the importance of being able to exercise rights and freedoms in all seas and oceans consistent with international law, particularly the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), including freedom of navigation and overflight," the joint statement said. Modi said, "We have been working together to promote peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific, and we will continue to do so." "We have stressed dialogue and diplomacy to solve global conflicts and tensions. We also agree on the need to reform international institutions next year," he added. Regarding the Indian community in Australia, Modi said, "Prime Minister Albanese has assured me of his commitment to the interests of the Indian community, especially Indian students in Australia."

Digitisation transforms PDS system, 5.8 Crore fake ration cards eliminated: Govt



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government's massive digitisation push has transformed India's Public Distribution System (PDS), setting new benchmarks for food security programs globally, the Union Food Ministry said on Wednesday. The overhaul of the system, which serves 80.6 crore beneficiaries, has led to the removal of 5.8 crore fake ration cards through Aadhaar-based authentication and electronic Know Your Customer (eKYC) verification, it said in a statement. "These efforts have resulted in substantial reductions in leakages and enhanced targeting," the ministry added. According to the ministry, nearly all 20.4 crore ration cards have been digitised, with 99.8 per cent linked to Aadhaar and 98.7 per cent beneficiaries' credentials verified through biometric authentication. The ministry has deployed 5.33 lakh e-PoS devices across fair price shops nationwide, enabling Aadhaar-based authentication during distribution and ensuring the rightful targeting of beneficiaries. "Today Aadhaar authentication is used for distributing approximately 98 per cent of total foodgrains,

reducing leakages to ineligible beneficiaries and mitigating any risk of pilferage," the statement said. The government's eKYC initiative has already validated 64 per cent of all PDS beneficiaries, with the process ongoing for remaining beneficiaries at fair-price shops across the country. On the supply side, the Food Corporation of India (FCI) has implemented end-to-end supply chain management systems, including a vehicle location tracking system integrated with railways for real-time monitoring of food shipments. The 'One Nation One Ration Card' scheme has enabled nationwide portability, allowing beneficiaries to collect rations anywhere in India using their existing cards. "Through digitisation, rightful targeting, and supply chain innovations, the Government of India has set a global benchmark for state-sponsored food security initiatives," the ministry asserted. The digital transformation encompasses the entire PDS chain from procurement to distribution, ensuring targeted delivery to genuine beneficiaries while eliminating ghost cards and fake entries from the system.

Atishi launches Delhi solar portal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi on Wednesday launched the 'Delhi Solar Portal' as a single window solution for installing rooftop solar panels by the people in the city. Delhiites can now become 'prosumers' (power consumers who generate extra solar power) by installing rooftop solar panels with the help of the portal. Atishi launched the portal at Delhi secretariat and said it will help achieve the target of 750 MW rooftop solar power generation, as per the solar policy of the AAP government launched on March 14 this year. Rooftop solar panel installation will help consumers having over 400 units of monthly power consumption to also enjoy subsidy benefits, she said at a press conference. The portal will provide all information required for installation of rooftop panels. It will have a solar calculator to



estimate solar power generation capacity at a specific rooftop, savings to be made, list of vendors and rate of solar plants, she said. Application for net metering and subsidy could be submitted through the portal and consumers will not be required to visit any office for this purpose, Atishi said. Domestic power consumers who will generate extra solar power beyond their need will be paid generation-based incentive by the government at the rate of Rs 3/unit, the chief minister said. Power consumers generating extra solar power (technically called

prosumers) will be paid at the rate of Rs 3 per unit for solar plants up to 3 KW and Rs 2 per unit for up to 10 KW plants, said a senior government officer. Group housing societies and resident welfare associations will also avail the generation-based incentive at the rate of Rs 2 per unit on the installation of rooftop panels, the officer said. Commercial and industrial consumers will avail of the incentive of Re 1 per unit, the officer said, adding that 1-KW plant generates about 100 units and the installation cost of plants ranges from Rs 40,000-60,000 per KW.

Vedanta Aluminium signs pact with GAIL for supply of natural gas

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Vedanta Aluminium on Wednesday said it has entered into a pact with state-owned gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd for supply of natural gas to its smelter at Jharsuguda in Odisha. The country's leading aluminium producer has entered into gas sales agreement with GAIL Gas Ltd, a subsidiary of GAIL (India) Ltd. This transition to natural gas, likely to be operational by the end of next year, will lower the carbon footprint, reduce emissions by an



estimated 47,292 tonnes of CO2 equivalent annually, Vedanta Aluminium said in a statement.

Vedanta is committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050, by implementing a dual strategy that includes increasing renewable energy usage while also creating carbon sinks through afforestation efforts, it said.

"Our partnership with GAIL Gas Ltd is a testament to our commitment to reducing carbon emissions and embracing cleaner energy solutions," Priya Agarwal Hebbur, Non-executive Director at Vedanta and Chairperson of Hindustan Zinc Ltd, said. GAIL Gas Ltd will set up a 7.5-km pipeline to supply approximately 32,000 standard cubic metres of natural gas per day, with a five-year contract term starting upon pipeline commissioning. This cleaner energy alternative is expected to help Vedanta Aluminium's commitment to a clean energy transition across its operations. "This agreement is in line with our efforts to reduce carbon emissions and enhance our production capabilities, contributing to India's growing demand for aluminium in critical sectors," Sunil Gupta, Chief Operating Officer, Vedanta Aluminium said. Vedanta Aluminium produced 2.37 million tonnes of aluminium in FY24.

Apple posted net profit of ₹ 2,229.6 Crore

The company posted a 36 per cent increase in total income to Rs 67,121.6 crore in FY24 from Rs 49,321.8 crore in FY23. "Apple India Private Limited, provides and markets Apple brand products and software, including mobile devices and laptops, reported its revenues for the financial year 2023-24 as Rs 67,122 crore, a 36 per cent jump since the last financial year. "The company's total expenses for the fiscal were reported as Rs 63,397 crore," Tofler said.

India's GDP growth likely to slip at 6.5 per cent

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Domestic rating agency Icria on Wednesday said India's real GDP growth for the September quarter is likely to decline to 6.5 per cent due to heavy rains and weaker corporate performance. The agency, however, maintained its FY25 growth estimate at 7 per cent on expectations of a pick up in economic activity in the second half of the fiscal. The estimates and commentary on the outlook come at a time when there are concerns around the growth slowdown on a slew of factors like slowing down urban demand. The RBI is sticking to its estimate of 7.2 per cent growth for the fiscal, but a majority of watchers expect it to be under the 7 per cent figure and many have been revising down in the last few weeks.

Paper and paperboard imports rise by 3.5 per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Paper and paperboard imports rose by 3.5 per cent to 992,000 tonnes in the April-September period of 2024-25, driven by a sharp rise in shipments from China, according to Indian Paper Manufacturers Association (IPMA). Imports of paper and paperboard from China rose by 44 per cent during the first half of the ongoing fiscal year despite adequate production capacities in the country, the IPMA said in a statement. Imports of these products had surged by 34 per cent to 19.3 lakh tonnes in 2023-24 due to higher shipments from ASEAN countries, the association said citing the commerce ministry data. "After some moderation during the two Covid years, paper imports in India have continued to surge, hurting the growth of the domestic manufacturing industry, which is reeling under low capacity utilisation and depressed bottom lines", said

IPMA President Pawan Agarwal. The situation is extremely critical for domestic manufacturers of virgin fibre paperboard in view of burgeoning imports from China, Chile and lately, Indonesia, which have more than tripled since 2020-21, he said. While the domestic paper industry has already made significant capital investments to ramp up capacities, the gestation period is long, and the economic viability of the investments has been impacted significantly by the rise in predatory imports, Agarwal added. IPMA said that in pre-budget meetings with finance and commerce ministries earlier this week, the association has recommended increasing the basic customs duty on import of paper and paperboard from 10 per cent to 25 per cent (WTO Bound rate is 40 per cent) to provide domestic manufacturers a level playing field.

C2C Advanced Systems IPO to open on Nov 22

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Defence solutions provider C2C Advanced Systems has fixed the price band at Rs 214-226 per equity share for its initial public offering (IPO), which will hit the capital market on Friday to mop up a little over Rs 99 crore. The company's initial share sale will close for public subscription on November 26, and the shares of the company will be listed on the NSE's SME platform Emerge, the company said in a statement. The IPO is entirely a fresh issue of up to 43.83 lakh equity shares with a face value of Rs 10 each. Investors can bid for a minimum of 600 shares and in multiples thereof, it added. Proceeds from the public issue will be utilised for funding capital expenditure for upgrading the existing experience centre and setting up a training centre in Bengaluru, along with a new experience centre in Dubai,



fit-outs at the new premises at both Bengaluru and Dubai. The funds will also be used towards payment of security deposit for the new premises at Bengaluru, working capital requirements, and general corporate purpose. "The funds will strengthen our working capital, providing financial flexibility to execute our strategic goals and enhance our client engagement and support our expanding customer base,"

Lakshmi Chandra, Chairperson and MD of C2C Advanced Systems Ltd, said. C2C Advanced Systems specialises in the development of complex systems for defence, homeland security and aerospace sectors. It delivers bespoke, cutting-edge solutions to all the arms of the defence forces involving integration of complex weapons and sensors. The Bengaluru-based company clientele includes Indian Armed Forces, National Technical Research Organisation, DRDO, ABB, Thales, Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd, and Dassault Systems. The firm reported a revenue of Rs 43.22 crore and a profit after tax of Rs 9.73 crore at the end of September quarter. Mark Corporate Advisors Pvt Ltd, Beeline Capital Advisors are the book-running lead managers, while Link Intime India is the registrar to the issue.

Stung by inflation beer makers' body wants price increase by 35-40 per cent in Telangana

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ HYDERABAD

The Brewers Association of India (BAI), a federation representing some of India's largest beer makers such as United Breweries, AB InBev, and Carlsberg, on Wednesday, urged the Telangana government to immediately allow price increases for alcoholic beverages to compensate for inflation. In a letter to Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, BAI Director General Vinod Giri stated that the current basic prices allowed to beer supplier companies in the state are based on 2019 cost submissions, and since then, the cost of production has increased by 35-40 per cent. The government has not approved a price revision to reflect this rise in production costs. As a result, operations in Telangana have become commercially unsustainable, and future investments are now unviable, Giri said. "While, as an association, we cannot speak for individual companies or their specific

cost of production and pricing, we believe that an average increase of 35-40 per cent may be necessary just to compensate for the increase in production costs," Giri added in the letter. Currently, the declared price for beer in Telangana is 30-50 per cent lower than in neighbouring states, making it unsustainable. Companies are incurring losses in supplying beer to the state, he further said. Recognising the urgent need to raise supplier prices, the government set up a Price Fixation Committee (PFC) in July 2024 and directed all beer companies in the state to submit proposals for revised declared prices-the price at which companies supply beer to the state government. The government also asked the BAI to present an industry perspective on the cost of production and other factors that could affect beer pricing in the state. According to the BAI, the submission process, presentations and industry consultations were concluded by the first week of August 2024.

Rafael Nadal retires from tennis

AP ■ MALAGA (SPAIN)

Rafael Nadal bit his lower lip and his reddened eyes welled with tears as he stood alongside his Davis Cup teammates for Spain's national anthem before what he — and everyone — knew might be the last match of his career. Hours after Nadal's 6-4, 6-4 loss to Botić van de Zandschulp of the Netherlands was over, the evening did turn out to represent the 22-time Grand Slam champion's farewell to professional tennis, because the Dutch eliminated the Spaniards in the quarterfinals just after midnight. And it was during an on-court, post-match ceremony to honor Nadal that he cried and cried, at the singsong chorus of "Raaa-faaa" from the spectators, at the video showing highlights from his more than two decades on tour and the collection of recorded tributes from current or former players such as his Big Three rivals Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic, Serena Williams, Conchita Martínez and Andy Murray, and stars from other sports such as golf's Sergio García or soccer's David Beckham.

"The titles, the numbers, are there, so people probably know that, but the way I would like to be remembered is as a good person from a small village in Mallorca," the 38-year-old Nadal told the flag-waving, sign-toting crowd at the sold-out Palacio de Deportes José María Martín Carpena. "Just a kid that followed their dreams, worked as hard as possible. ... I have been very lucky."

He had said beforehand that his feelings would need to be put on hold, that this week was about attempting to claim one last trophy for his country, not about pondering his impending retirement, which he announced last month would come



after this event.

But he acknowledged after playing that "the emotions were difficult to manage," and that he felt nerves out there amid the roars of an adoring audience that mostly showed up for one player and one player only. After Nadal, a 14-time French Open champion, was beaten on the indoor hard court in southern Spain, he became a cheerleader for his heir apparent, Carlos Alcaraz, who evened the matchup against the Netherlands at 1-all by getting past Tallon Griekspoor 7-6 (0), 6-3 in the other singles match. But then van de Zandschulp and Wesley Koolhof clinched the victory for the Dutch by defeating Alcaraz and Marcel Granollers 7-6 (4), 7-6 (3) in the deciding doubles match.

Even if Spain had managed to get past the Netherlands, Nadal said that if he were his team's captain, he wouldn't pick himself to play again in the semifinals after that performance against the 80th-ranked van de Zandschulp. At least he was in a joking mood after the result put a stop to his 29-match winning streak in Davis Cup singles. The only other blemish on his record, which stood at 29-1 entering Tuesday, came in his 2004 debut. "I lost my first match in the Davis Cup, and I lost my last one," Nadal said with a wide grin. "So we close the circle."

When a forehand found the net to close his last match, Nadal walked to the net for a quick hug with his

opponent. "That was a tough, tough match to play," said van de Zandschulp, noting that he idolized Nadal while growing up. In certain ways, this was, unmistakably, the Nadal that van de Zandschulp — and so many others — can remember. The white headband, marked with the red bull logo Nadal made famous. The white tape wrapped around all four of his left, racket-holding fingers. The water bottles by his sideline bench, placed just so. There was the occasional ace right on a line. The occasional serve-and-volley foray. The occasional over-the-shoulder putaway. And, yes, the occasional upercut and scream of "Vamos!" There also were — neither

to Nadal's or most of the 9,200 spectators' liking — several points where he looked like a once-dominant figure diminished by age and injuries. Nadal was just not able to bring his best, no matter how many chants of "Ra-fa!" or "España!" or "Si, se puede!" ("Yes, you can!") broke out, no matter how many scarves reading "Gracias, Rafa!" or red-and-yellow Spanish flags of all sizes filled the arena. This version of Nadal had hip issues, including surgery in June 2023, and abdominal problems that combined to limit him to only 24 matches over the past two years. He went 12-8 in singles in 2024. The match against van de Zandschulp — who upset Alcaraz at the U.S. Open — was Nadal's first outing that counted since early August at the Paris Olympics. He lost there in the second round of singles to Djokovic and bowed out in the doubles quarterfinals alongside Alcaraz. Nadal and Alcaraz practiced with each other hours before the start of play. The day, much like the entire Davis Cup buildup, was largely about memories of, and praise for, Nadal. "You know very well what you have meant to the tennis world," said Spain's captain, David Ferrer, who lost to Nadal in the 2013 French Open final. "We will miss you a lot." Nadal's appeal was found in how he played tennis, relentless and striking each shot as if it might be his last, and the humility he displayed away from competition. No one cared for him as much as his fellow Spaniards. He is a national hero, transcending sports, and that was clear from the love expressed over and over via shouts and standing ovations — when Nadal entered the court, when he won a point, when his match ended, and so on.



Pep Guardiola reportedly agrees to contract extension at Manchester City

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Pep Guardiola has agreed to a contract extension to stay at Manchester City for at least another season, according to British media reports. The City manager, whose contract was due to expire at the end of this season, has overseen a period of unprecedented dominance since joining the club in 2016. City has won six Premier League titles in seven years and won the Champions League. City has not commented on several reports that the 53-year-old Guardiola would extend his stay into a 10th season with the deal including an option for an additional year. Under the Catalan coach, City became the first team to win four straight English

league titles. He also led City to the treble in 2023, winning the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup in one season — matching Manchester United's achievement in 1999. Guardiola's apparent decision to stay also comes as City faces a slew of alleged financial breaches. Punishment could be as extreme as expulsion from the league. City faces more than 100 charges ranging over a nine-year period when it was trying to establish itself as the biggest force in English soccer. The club denies the charges and Guardiola had said in September — when a closed-door hearing was scheduled — that he welcomed the chance to clear the club's name.

Japan on brink of reaching World Cup while Indonesia stuns Saudi Arabia

AP ■ XIAMEN (CHINA)

Japan is within touching distance of an eighth straight World Cup appearance after a 3-1 win over China put the team nine points clear of second-place Australia, which drew 2-2 with Bahrain, in their Asian qualifying group. Despite beating China 7-0 at home in September, it took Japan 39 minutes to break the deadlock in Xiamen with a Koki Ogawa header. Ko Itakura added a second before halftime. Home fans grew hopeful when Lin Liangming scored early in the second half but Ogawa headed home his second soon after. The Samurai Blue have 16 points from six games, with four to go in Group C. Australia is next with seven points after Kusini Yengi scored in the 96th minute to earn a dramatic draw for the Socceroos in Bahrain. The Portsmouth forward opened the scoring in the first minute but two second-half goals from Mahdi Abduljabbar put the hosts in sight of



a famous victory before Yengi's late intervention. Bahrain is one of four teams on six points along with Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and China. Indonesia stunned Saudi Arabia 2-0 in Jakarta. A goal in each half from Marselino Ferdinan, who plays for Oxford United in England's second tier, nailed down a famous victory for the Southeast Asian nation which last appeared at the World Cup in 1938 as Dutch East Indies.

"Indonesia deserved to win this game," Saudi Arabia coach Herve Renard said. "We have four games left and it will be tough but it will be tough for everybody." It was a first ever win for Indonesia in the third round of qualification. "I am so proud of my team and the country," goalkeeper Maarten Paes said. "Marselino scored two great goals and we defended so well. We knew that this was an important

game and, to get a win, that gives us so much confidence. It is so close in our group." In Group B, South Korea stays top despite being held to a 1-1 draw by the Palestinian team in Amman, Jordan. Zaid Al Qanbar opened the scoring after 12 minutes though Son Heung-min soon found the target to keep South Korea on course for an 11th straight World Cup with 14 points. Iraq is three points behind in second after a 1-0 win in Oman and Jordan's 1-1 draw with Kuwait takes the team onto nine. In Group A, Iran won 3-2 in Kyrgyzstan to move onto 16 points, three clear of Uzbekistan who took a big step toward a first World Cup by edging North Korea 1-0. United Arab Emirates routed Qatar 5-0 — Fabio Lima scored four goals — to move onto 10 points. The top two from each of the three groups of six progress automatically to the World Cup while the six teams who finish third and fourth will advance to the next stage of qualification.



Billie Jean King Cup: Slovakia beats Britain 2-1 to set up final against Italy

AP ■ MALAGA (SPAIN)

Slovakia rallied to beat Britain 2-1 and reach its first Billie Jean King Cup final in more than two decades. Viktoria Hrunčáková and Tereza Mihalíková defeated Olivia Nicholls and Heather Watson 6-2, 6-2 in the decisive doubles match, putting Slovakia back in the final for the first time since 2002 to face last year's runner-up Italy on Wednesday. "Absolutely special moment for our country, for our players, for tennis in Slovakia," captain Matej Lipták said. "It's so many years when we won it once only. But today it's really real, and we are just one step from the maybe biggest victory of our team or team members. We will try to enjoy it." Britain was trying to reach the final of the women's team event for the first time in more than four decades. "We're all absolutely gutted,"

Britain team captain Anne Keothavong said. "We came into this event really believing that we had a good shot at it and unfortunately we fell short. We came up against a better team. It's still pretty raw right now. It's quite difficult to find the right words." Slovakia forced the deciding match after Rebecca Sramkova rallied to defeat Katie Boulter 2-6, 6-4, 6-4 in the second singles match of the tie. Britain had taken the lead when Emma Raducanu defeated Hrunčáková 6-4, 6-4 in the first singles, a result that ended Hrunčáková's six-match winning streak in the competition counting both singles and doubles matches. "I had some good performances on the court this week. I played three matches, which is great for me. I haven't played in a while, so I think being able to score a point and get on the board was helpful," Raducanu said. "We definitely

have a winning team. We can improve certain things, but overall, I think we did a really good job and there is a lot of positives to take." Britain last reached the semifinals in 2022, when it lost to Australia. Slovakia was playing in the semifinals for the first time since 2013. Before that it had made it to the last-four in 2002 when it won the title in a final against Spain. Slovakia upset 18-time champion United States in the first round and defeated Australia in the quarterfinals. Britain picked up 2-0 wins against Germany and defending champions Canada in the last-eight. This is the first time that the women's team tournament is taking place at the same venue as the Davis Cup and with overlapping dates. And for the second year in a row, it offers equivalent prize money to the men's competition.

Sindhu registers 20th win against Busanan

PTI ■ SHENZHEN (CHINA)

Double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu continued her dominant run against Busanan Ongbamrungphan, defeating the Thai shuttler in straight games to advance to the second round of the China Masters tournament on Wednesday. World number 19 Sindhu dispatched the higher ranked Busanan 21-17 21-19 in 50



minutes in the first round of the Super 750 event. This was Sindhu's 20th win against the world number 11 in 21 meetings. Both shuttlers started off the match on an even keel with Busanan taking a 14-10 lead thanks to two unforced errors by the Indian. However, Sindhu went on a roll, winning the next nine points to take a 19-14 lead before closing the first game

in her favour. But the loss in the first game didn't deter Busanan as she started the second game strongly. Although Sindhu trailed for most part of the second game, she continued to chip away at the points deficit with her aggressive play to take the lead for the first time in the game at 18-17. The star Indian shuttler promptly sealed the match.

Argentina 1-0 win over Peru in South American qualifying match, Brazil and Uruguay draw

AP ■ BUENOS AIRES

Lautaro Martínez's goal gave Argentina a 1-0 win over Peru in a South American qualifying match in Buenos Aires and left the hosts close to a spot in the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada. Its main continental rivals Brazil drew 1-1 against Uruguay in Salvador, Brazil with two impressive goals in an otherwise lackluster match. Federico Valverde gave Uruguay the lead with a curled shot from the edge of the box, and Gerson netted his first for Brazil in similar fashion at the Arena Fonte Nova. Argentina leads South American qualifying with 25 points from 12 matches, five points clear of its closest competitor, Uruguay. Ecuador and Colombia are next with 19 points each. Brazil lags in fifth position with 18 points after several uninspiring

performances, still hoping that striker Neymar will return from injury and fit in again. Paraguay, with 17 points, is in sixth place. South American qualifying will give six direct berths in the next World Cup. Seventh-place Bolivia, with 13 points, is in the international playoff position. Venezuela (12), Chile (9), and Peru (7) are out of qualifying spots. The next round of South American World Cup qualifying will be played in March. UNINSPIRING ARGENTINA Martínez's goal was his 32nd for the national team, which puts him level with the legendary Diego Maradona. Until Martínez scored, Argentina's best chance was in the 21st minute, when striker Julián Álvarez hit the Peruvian goalkeeper's right post. Messi once again had a modest performance, as he did in his



team's 2-1 defeat at Paraguay on Thursday. Messi crossed the ball in the penalty area in the 55th minute to give Martínez one of the few clear opportunities of the match. The

striker moved his body with more grace than power to put the ball in the back of the net. Despite the disappointing performance at home, Lionel Messi's team will finish the year with few question marks beyond its performances in November. "We won Copa America, we lead South American World Cup qualifying," said goalkeeper Emiliano Martínez. "We must be proud of ourselves." JEERS FOR BRAZIL Brazil fans at home in Salvador jeered their team after the final whistle. In a match with few opportunities for either side, Uruguay seemed closer to winning for most of the second half. Valverde opened the scoring in the 55th minute after Brazilian defenders failed three times to clear the ball from their penalty area. The Real Madrid midfielder hit the ball to the left corner to score. Gerson equalized in the

61st minute. Striker Raphinha said he understood the frustration from his team's fans, but disagreed with them. "We played great. We did everything we could to leave here with a victory. We must have our heads high up, it will be very tough to beat us," he said. Also on Tuesday, Ecuador won 1-0 at Colombia with a goal by Enner Valencia in the seventh minute, in which he dribbled through three players before scoring. Ecuador lost defender Piero Hincapié to a red card in the 34th minute but held on for the win. Bolivia and Paraguay drew 2-2 in a match between teams that could end up fighting for the seventh position in the region's qualifying. Chile, one of the worst performing teams in the region this year, showed some fighting spirit and beat Venezuela 4-2.

Hardik becomes number one T20I all-rounder

PTI ■ DUBAI
Star India player Hardik Pandya on Wednesday re-claimed the top spot in the T20I all-rounders' list while rising star and teammate Tilak Varma made a massive jump of 69 rungs to occupy the third place among batters in the latest ICC men's player rankings. Pandya overtook England dasher Liam Livingstone and Nepal dynamo Dipendra Singh Airee at the top of the T20I all-rounder charts on the back of some strong form during India's recent series in South Africa, with the 31-year-old producing some eye-catching efforts with both bat and ball. His innings of 39 not out in the second game of the four-match series helped balance India's innings, while his spell of 1/8 from three overs during the decisive fourth contest ensured his side claim an impressive 3-1 series triumph. It is the second time Pandya



has held the No.1 ranking for T20I all-rounders, with the consistent India top at the end of this year's ICC men's T20 World Cup. Pandya wasn't the only India player to make giant strides

in the latest rankings update, with Player of the Series and rising player Varma shooting up the batting charts a whopping 69 places following his two centuries and 280 runs for the series against the Proteas. The rise sees Varma improve to third place overall behind No.1-ranked T20I batter Travis Head and England's Phil Salt and means he is now the highest-rated batter from India, with skipper Suryakumar Yadav dropping one spot to fourth behind him. Teammate Sanju Samson -- who also managed two centuries during the series with South Africa -- climbs 17 spots to 22nd on the same list for T20I batters. Australian duo Adam Zampa and Nathan Ellis are among the biggest movers on the updated rankings for T20I bowlers, with India seamer Arshdeep Singh gaining three places to move to ninth and a new career-high rating following his efforts against South Africa.



Happy that Pujara isn't here: Josh Hazlewood

PTI ■ PERTH
Australia pacer Josh Hazlewood is pretty happy that he will not have to bowl to India Test veteran Cheteshwar Pujara in the latest chapter of Border-Gavaskar Trophy, beginning here on Friday. The Indian team has moved on from the likes of Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane, both of whom played a major hand in ensuring the visitors' back-to-back win Down Under four years ago. Pujara was the rock of Indian batting on the previous two tours Down Under. He faced the maximum numbers of balls to wear down Australia's formidable pace attack. The out-of-favour batter was the leading run-getter in the 2018-19 series with 521 runs off 1258 balls and was once again the backbone of Indian batting three years later when he accumulated 271 runs off 928 balls. "I am pretty happy that Puj (Pujara) isn't here. He's obviously one that bats time, makes you really earn his wicket every time, has done really well on Australia on all these tours," Hazlewood told reporters ahead of the first Test here. Despite Pujara's absence, he feels there is enough talent in the Indian squad. "So there's always young, fresh guys coming into the Indian team. They are so much under pressure to perform in the Indian team with so many nipping at their heels all the time. Whoever they pick in that XI, they are unbelievable players," he said. Besides Pujara, Rishabh Pant was another player who stood out in the previous series. His unbeaten 89 in the fourth and final Test in Brisbane will go down as one of the greatest knocks by an Indian. Hazlewood feels it is important to have a flexible approach against explosive batters like Pant. "Against such batters, you need Plan B and C if things go south. It is important to have different plans. We also have players like Travis Head and Mitch Marsh who can take the game away," said the pacer. Shubman Gill has been ruled out of the game due to a thumb injury, forcing India to field a new number three. "Obviously that unsettles the top 6, a little bit of an issue but as I said, the depth in Indian cricket is unmatched, perhaps the team with the best depth in the world. Whoever comes in has earned their stripes and will do well no doubt," he said. Hazlewood reckons the Indian team will also miss Mohammed Shami, who recently returned to competitive cricket after a long injury lay-off. Shami, however, could be available for the second half of the five-match series. "They will miss him (Shami). He has played around 60 Tests. He is a senior bowler. Of course, he is someone all the youngsters look up to but Jasprit Bumrah has taken that role over the years," Hazlewood said. "Bumrah is also the captain in the first Test, maybe and he is someone who players look up to and is the leader of the attack," he said. The series has an additional Test compared to the four games on the previous tour. Going forward, five-Test series between India and Australia will be a permanent feature. "It is a five-Test series, an added factor. It is going to be more gruelling. If you win a series against India in any part of the world, you know you have earned it. So yeah, it is right up there," Hazlewood added.

Captain Durga Rao Tompaki 'Disheartened' after withdrawal from Blind T20 WC 2024

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Captain Durga Rao Tompaki on Wednesday said it is disheartening to miss out on the chance to compete in the T20 Blind Cricket World Cup in Pakistan following India's withdrawal from the tournament while the national federation described the development as a "setback". The Indian team withdrew from the tournament after the government denied the permission to travel to Pakistan due to security concerns. The Indian team was supposed to cross the Wagah border on Wednesday for the event, scheduled to begin on Saturday. "We play with passion, and we represent our country with immense pride. We have always looked forward to competing at the biggest stage, and it is disheartening to miss out on this opportunity," Tompaki said in a media release.



"However, we know that the next World Cup is just around the corner, and we remain committed to our training and preparation." The Cricket Association for the Blind in India (CABI) had conducted a 25-day training camp in New Delhi before selecting the World Cup squad. "We have had a successful coaching camp and have seen emerging talent that we believe can lead our team to

greater heights. It's time to nurture these talents and ensure that our team is ready when the next tournament comes," Tompaki added. The team had initially got a No Objection Certificate (NOC), at no-cost to the government, from the Sports Ministry to participate in the tournament. However, it couldn't get clearance from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). "While this is a significant setback for the team, CABI fully respects the government's concerns and the decision for the same," CABI said in a statement. "The team had been training rigorously and was eager to compete. However, we prioritise the government's guidance and remain steadfast in our commitment to the continued development of Blind Cricket in India." "Though the timing of the next World Cup remains uncertain, the commitment to the sport and the country remains unwavering," the statement read. The government has also not given clearance to the Indian national cricket team to travel to Pakistan for next year's ICC Champions Trophy. The BCCI had informed the International Cricket Council (ICC) about India's inability to travel to Pakistan and the global governing body, in turn, passed the information to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

Competition between Indian players for fielding drills first-up always helps: T Dilip

PTI ■ PERTH
India's fielding coach T Dilip on Wednesday revealed that he prefers organizing fielding competitions between groups of players at the start of training sessions as it helps set the right tone. Set to take on Australia in a five-Test series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy here from Friday, the visiting Indian camp has tried to maximise their training sessions and match simulations ahead of the opening Test. Dilip, who has been retained as India's fielding coach under new head coach Gautam Gambhir, said his experience has helped him identify the right process to enhance the team's preparation. "By now, I get a sense of the team and how they work around," he said in a video shared by BCCI on their website. "That is why I always prefer (to go with) a little competition first to start with so after the warm-up they kick off (the training session) having the fun, laughter (and) getting together." Explaining intricacies of one of the recent training sessions during which the Indian players were split into two groups, Dilip said they worked on throwing the ball back from the boundary ropes. "We want everyone to get together in a team drill but also get closer to the match (readiness) what we wanted," he said. "That is why today's team drill was more related to retrieving, where a boundary fielder throws to the in-fielder, so instead of (having) one loopy long throw, we want to have two good flat throws. "(It is important) to put that into practise so that players are aware, whether to stand towards their left or their right so that they are in a proper position, they are not wasting time in return."

Yash Dayal replaces injured Khaleel Ahmed in reserves

PTI ■ PERTH
Left-arm seam bowler Yash Dayal has been added to India's reserve pacers' list after Khaleel Ahmed had to be sent back home due to an unspecified niggle. Dayal, who was added in the Test squad during the Bangladesh series, was in South Africa for the T20I series but didn't play a single match. He flew directly to Perth from Johannesburg after Khaleel developed a niggle and was unable to bowl in the nets. The medical team advised the Rajasthan left-arter rest and



hence it was decided that Dayal would fly in while Khaleel fly back home. "It was a like for like replacement because the Indian team needs to do simulation for Mitchell Starc. Dayal was originally supposed to play the A Test but was sent

to South Africa. If Khaleel can't bowl then there was no point of keeping him back," a BCCI source privy to the development told PTI on Wednesday. It is not clear whether Khaleel can play Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 tournament matches before auction as he has been released by Delhi Capitals and would like to enjoy a bidding war among franchises during the upcoming mega auctions. Dayal has been retained by Royal Challengers Bengaluru. On Tuesday, Yashasvi Jaiswal felt a jerk on his shoulder while batting which needed medical attention.

Laubuschagne wants to play the 'long game' and pull off a Pujara

PTI ■ PERTH
Australian batter Marnus Laubuschagne wants to play the "long game" to wear down India's pace attack, similar to how veteran Cheteshwar Pujara did in the past two Border-Gavaskar Trophy series. In the 2018-19 series, Pujara faced 1,258 balls across seven innings, scoring three centuries as he wore down an unchanged Australian bowling attack throughout the four-Test series, helping India secure a famous victory Down Under. The Indian batter, known for his solid defence, used a similar approach in the 2020-21 series, facing 928 balls — the most by any batter in the



series — as he once again contributed to another memorable win for the tourists. Laubuschagne plans to use a similar strategy. The right-hander feels that keeping India's relatively inexperienced pace attack, aside from Jasprit Bumrah, on the field for as long as possible could be the key for the hosts in the five-Test series beginning here on Friday. "It's going to be important for all of us. I think the way we play, we're at our best when we're playing the long game,"

Laubuschagne was quoted as saying by "ESPNcricinfo". "We understand that getting them back for their second and third spells, putting them under pressure and letting them come to us and us putting pressure back on them through overs in the field and time in the game, especially over a five-Test series, that's really important. "Because as you get into the third, fourth, fifth Test, if they're trying to play the same team, and those bowlers are rolling into 100, 150, 200 overs by the third Test, it's going to make a big difference in the series," he added. Bumrah will be supported by the likes of Mohammed Siraj and the trio of Harshit Rana, Prasidh Krishna and Nitish Kumar Reddy, all playing their debut series in Australia. Laubuschagne, who bowls medium pace as well as legspin, bowled a barrage of bouncers to skipper Pat Cummins and pacer Mitchell Starc at the nets on Monday. "I bowled one bouncer and I think Mitchell Starc said, 'We've got short memories.' And I said, 'Well, I'm going to get them anyway, so I might as well dish them out.' "There's nothing more enjoyable than bowling bouncers. I love it. "There was a bit worry. When I bowled I think about 28 overs of pace in a Shield game, and my workloads were zero before then, so some would say that's a big spike. But my body's pretty durable."

Call on Gill will be taken on morning of Perth Test: Morne Morkel

PTI ■ PERTH
A final call on Shubman Gill's availability for the opening Test against Australia will be taken on the morning of the match, India's bowling coach Morne Morkel said on Wednesday, adding that uncapped batting all-rounder Nitish Reddy will be the one to keep an eye on. Gill remains doubtful for the series-opener, starting here Friday, at the Optus Stadium after copping a blow to his left thumb during India's intra-squad training match here a few days ago. Morkel said Gill is on the mend as the visitors look to fight fire given that they will be without regular skipper Rohit Sharma for the first game. "Shubman is improving every day. He picked up a nasty blow in that squad game. With him it's going to

be a day-to-day sort of process," Morkel told reporters ahead of a training session. "Fingers crossed for that improvement. They'll wait to make a call with him up until the morning of the Test match," he added. Morkel said Reddy will be one to watch out for in the series given his all-round skills. "He's one of the young guys that we've mentioned here that has got that batting all-round ability. He'll be a guy that can hold the one end up first. (With the ball) he hits the bat a little bit harder than you think," he said. "On these sort of conditions, where there might be a little bit of seam movement up front, especially the first couple of days, he'll be a handy bowler, a very accurate wicket-to-wicket style of bowler."



It's a lovely opportunity for him to fill that all-rounder spot. Any team in the world always want the all-rounder that can take that load off your fast bowlers just to give them an extra bit of breathing time." Morkel said Jasprit Bumrah will have to carry out the role of the leader among bowlers as India would not want to rush

Mohammed Shami back into the mix. "Jassi is a guy that immediately put his hand up and he wanted that leadership role. He's been very successful here in the past. He's a guy that I know, with the ball in hand, will lead from the front and the rest of the younger guys will follow. "We're definitely keeping a close eye on Shami. But we need to understand that he's been out of the game for almost a year. We also need to respect him and respect his body as well," Morkel said. "For us, it's a massive win that he's back playing. It was a great win for him picking up wickets in that first game." Morkel continued, "So how can we give him the best support? How can we give him the best opportunity to find his way back into the team? It's going to be by

being patient and giving his body time to find its feet again." Morkel admitted India are under pressure coming into this series but at the same time pointed at the opportunities that are on offer. "A lot of people would see how we go about our business here. But our key message is that it is important for us to put that aside. For any cricketer, when you come to Australia, you want to do well. This is where you make a name for yourself — on one of the biggest stages in the world to play cricket. "To come up here and play good, solid cricket, score 500-600 runs in a series (or) take wickets (and) that puts yourself on a stage. It's a fantastic carrot to dangle in front of Indian players," he added. Morkel said Indian batters will have to find their way of scoring runs over the five Tests here but in current times a lot of information and statistics make it harder for players. "Partnerships are going to be crucial, protecting the partnership, getting through the new ball. Once the ball is softer, not to give it away, soft wicket. When we talk about those sort of blueprints, that is what we identify as areas that we can post a score on the board. "As a batting unit, there's been a lot of conversation on how they're going to go about finding a blueprint to put runs on the board." Morkel said fighting it out during tough passages of play will also be crucial. "When I was playing back in the day, I found that if you can fight through tough periods and not give it away softly, at the end of the day, that is sort of the way you want to play your brand of cricket," he said.