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THE CANNONBALLS OF  
POLITICAL WARFARE

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**MONEY 10**  
AIR INDIA UPDATES CABIN  
CREW POLICIES, ALLOWANCES

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## ₹5000 crore cocaine racket busted in the Capital

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has made one of the biggest drug busts ever seen in the city, seize over 562 kilograms of cocaine and 40 kg of Hydroponic Marijuana, estimated to be worth around Rs 5640 crore, transported to the national capital by an international module. According to the Delhi Police, four people have been arrested from South Delhi's Mahipalpur Extension area by the Special Cell on Tuesday and the consignment was confiscated. "The busted drugs are worth Rs 5640 crore in the international market," a police officer said, adding this seizure is one of the largest drug busts in the national capital. The price of recovered

Cocaine in international market is 10 crore per kg and Hydroponic Marijuana is 50 lakh per kg. Authorities suspect an international drug syndicate reportedly run by Afghan nationals stands behind the trafficking. Special Cell team had been working for over two months based on a tip-off which led to the bust as the drug was supposed to be distributed in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) as their demand is high during the festive season. Delhi Police Special Cell is probing the Narco-terror angle. Additional Commissioner (Special Cell) Pramod Singh Kushwaha said that Tushar Goyal (40) of Vasant Enclave and his associates Himanshu (40), of Suleiman

Nagar, Kirari, Aurangzeb Siddiqui (23) of Vasant Gaon (He is originally from village Choti Rar, Deoria UP) and their receiver Bharat Kumar Jain (48) (from Kurla West, Mumbai) were apprehended from Mahipalpur Extension in South West Delhi by the Special Cell of Delhi Police after working on a tip off. According to police, main kingpin and handler of Tushar of this drug cartel identified so far is operating from a Middle East country. He was the main distributor in Delhi. The true extent and reach of the nexus is still being probed. Police said Tushar is the Indian handler who used to receive and store the consignment, and Aurangzeb and Himanshu distributed the drugs. Aurangzeb,



who hails from Uttar Pradesh, was Tushar's long-time driver who joined the syndicate. The fourth person, Bharat Jain, came from Kurla, Mumbai, to receive a consignment of 15 kg cocaine and distribute it in Mumbai, said the Delhi Police.

The remaining drugs were seized inside the godown in the publication factory owned by the main accused Tushar Goyal. The raid was conducted at his publishing factory by the Special Cell of Delhi police on Tuesday night, with all four accused present

at the location. Kushwaha revealed that 15 kg of the seized cocaine was found in the personal possession of Goyal, Himanshu and Aurangzeb. He said the seizure is one of the biggest by the force in the national capital. Though he did not give a cumulative figure for the drugs seized, he claimed the cost of cocaine is Rs 10 crore per kg and Thai marijuana around Rs 40-50 lakh per kg. If one goes by this calculation, the seized cocaine is worth Rs 5,620 crore. He said there was no angle of narco-terror at this moment but they were investigating all angles. According to police, the drugs came from South America, via the Middle East, and the marijuana came from Thailand to India. They

were then transported from various states to Delhi. The incident follows the recent arrest of two Afghan men, Hashimi Mohammad Waris and Abdul Nayib, who were apprehended in Tilak Nagar with 400 grams of heroin and 160 grams of cocaine. Waris has been living in India on refugee status since January 2020. He was previously employed at a chemist shop in Vikaspuri. Waris allegedly got involved in drug trafficking after a friend approached him to assist with deliveries for various consignments in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR). As per reports, the compensation was approximately \$100 per delivery for Waris.

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## West Asia regional conflict escalates



People take cover on the side of the road as a siren sounds a warning of incoming missiles fired from Iran on a freeway in Shoreshe, between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in Israel

AGENCIES/PTI ■ JERUSALEM/ DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP)

The Israeli military has announced its first combat death since launching ground operations in Lebanon this week. The military said on Wednesday that a 22-year-old in a commando brigade was killed in combat in Lebanon. Israeli ground troops have carried out incursions into Lebanon against Hezbollah, and Tehran fired a barrage of ballistic missiles on Israel late Tuesday. Israeli police said on Wednesday that a total of seven people were killed in a shooting attack in Tel Aviv on Tuesday evening minutes before the Iranian missile barrage. Two Palestinian men from the Israeli-occupied West Bank town of Hebron opened fire in the Jaffa neighborhood

of Tel Aviv, including shooting directly into a light rail carriage crowded with passengers that was stopped at a station. Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei slammed the presence of American and European nations in the Middle East in his first remarks since Tehran fired a barrage of ballistic missiles at Israel. Khamenei said on Wednesday that their presence is a source of "conflicts, wars, concerns and enmities" but made no mention of the missile attack the night before. "Regional nations can manage themselves and ... They will live together in peace," Khamenei was quoted as saying by the official IRNA news agency. He said Iran is hopeful of getting "rid of the enemies' evil" and also urged Western

nations to "cut their badness." Iran has long seen the US troop presence on its doorstep as a threat and demanded their evacuation from neighboring Iraq and elsewhere in the region. The escalation on multiple fronts has raised fears of a wider war in the Middle East that could draw in Iran - which backs Hezbollah and Hamas - as well as the United States, which has rushed military assets to the region in support of Israel. Hezbollah, widely seen as the most powerful armed group in the region, said its fighters clashed with Israeli troops in two places inside Lebanon near the border. The Israeli military said ground forces backed by airstrikes had killed militants in "close-range engagements" without saying where.

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### India calls for restraint, says MEA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India, in its first reaction to fresh escalation of tensions in West Asia, on Wednesday expressed concern and called for restraint by all sides cautioning the conflict must not take a wider regional dimension. These comments came a day after Iran fired around 200 missiles into Israel in response to Israel's killing of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah and other commanders of the militant outfit. New Delhi said it is deeply concerned over the escalating security situation in West Asia and called for addressing all issues through "dialogue and diplomacy." "We are deeply concerned at the escalation of the security situation in West Asia and reiterate our call for restraint by all concerned and protection of civilians," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. "It is important that the conflict does not take a wider regional dimension and we urge that all issues be addressed through dialogue and diplomacy," it said in a statement. Meanwhile, in the wake of the escalating tensions in West Asia, India on Wednesday advised its citizens to avoid all non-essential travel to Iran.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Jharkhand BJP President Babular Marandi and others during the party's Parivartan Mahasabha, in Hazaribagh, Jharkhand, Wednesday



Pune: Wreckage of a helicopter after it crashed at Bavdhan area in Pune district, Wednesday, Oct. 2, 2024. Two persons are feared killed

## PM raises concern over Adivasi, Hindu decimation in Jharkhand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ HAZARIBAG

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday cautioned that the population of Hindus and Adivasis in Jharkhand is declining and accused the JMM-led coalition Government of engaging in dangerous "vote bank politics" by supporting infiltrators at the expense of the state's identity, culture, and heritage. He asserted that it was time to "throw such forces out" to protect "mat, beti, roti" (land, daughter, bread). "The time is ripe for 'Parivartan' (change) in Jharkhand to safeguard 'beti, mat, roti' and combat corruption. The JMM-led coalition is playing a dangerous game, jeopardising the identity, culture, and traditions of the people while patronising infiltrators," Modi said. He was addressing the concluding programme of the BJP's Parivartan Yatra, which covered approximately 5,400 km across all 81 Assembly

segments of Jharkhand where the Assembly elections are due later this year. Modi alleged that the JMM-led coalition is being run by people who want to wipe out Jharkhand's identity, culture and heritage. "JMM and their masters in Congress want to turn the tribal community in Jharkhand into a minority. They have always betrayed tribal society and can never see them progressing," the PM said. He charged the ruling coalition with creating a new vote bank in the State in order to continue being in power. Modi said, "They want to sacrifice Jharkhand to gain power. Santhal Pargana is testimony to this dangerous gameplan where tribal population is on the decline while that of Bangladeshi infiltrators is on the rise. Do you accept this change in Jharkhand's demography and decline in population of Hindus and tribals?" He alleged that infiltrators are grabbing the land of the tribal people and targeting their

daughters. "The situation has come to such a pass that while the High Court is expressing concerns over this, the government is filing an affidavit to deny infiltration," the Prime Minister said. He also criticised the coalition for allegedly being insensitive, citing the deaths of several aspirants during recruitment drives for excise constables. Modi also attacked the Congress and the RJD, allies of the JMM. "Tribal icons in the country were ignored. Congress wiped out the identity of tribals to protect the identity of one family. Congress never gave any importance to tribal communities which contributed significantly to the fight for Independence," he said. Training his guns at Congress, Modi said it named all schemes, roads and buildings after members of a single family. Such dynastic thinking has caused much harm to the nation, he said.

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### Fire in chopper mishap kills three

PNS ■ PUNE/PATNA

In two separate incidents, two pilots and an engineer were killed after a helicopter belonging to a private aviation company crashed and caught fire in Maharashtra's Pune district on Wednesday morning, an Indian Air Force helicopter made an emergency landing in Muzaffarpur district of Bihar on Wednesday after it developed a snag. In the first incident which reported casualty, the helicopter belonging to the Delhi-based Heritage Aviation took off from the Oxford County Golf Course helipad here and was heading to Juhu in Mumbai when it crashed at 7.40 am, police said. The incident took place near a hilly terrain in Bavdhan area, which is close to the golf course, according to police. "Three persons have died in the helicopter crash. Our teams along with fire department vehicles have reached the spot," Pimpri Chinchwad Commissioner of Police Vinaykumar Choubey said.

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Combo photo shows 26 iPhone 16 Pro Max mobile phones seized by customs officials at IGI airport from a lady passenger travelling from Hongkong to Delhi, in New Delhi

### iPhone-16 smuggled to India seized at IGI

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 26 recently-launched iPhone 16 Pro Max have been seized by the customs officials from a woman passenger at the international airport. The woman, in late thirties, who was travelling from Hong Kong, had concealed the recently launched phones inside her vanity bag, officials confirmed. The woman had concealed the recently-launched hi-tech phones inside her vanity bag, wrapped in tissue papers. The passenger, in late thirties, was intercepted after her arrival from Hong Kong on Tuesday, according to a statement issued by the Customs department on Wednesday.

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## Security audit for med institutions in WB

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Under immense pressure post RG Kar Medical College rape and murder case and subsequent attacks on doctors in a number of medical colleges the Mamata Banerjee Government has formed a high powered committee to conduct "security audit" in the State-run medical colleges and hospitals. The seven-member team is led by former State Director General of Police Surajit Karpurakayastha. Purakayastha will lead a team comprising senior officials like Col Nevendera Paul Singh, Joint Commissioner of Kolkata Police; Joy Biswas, DIG of West Bengal Police; Pushpa, Kolkata



Members of Bengal Junior Doctors' Front and others take part in a mega rally on 'Mahalaya' to demand justice for the alleged sexual assault and murder of a trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, in Kolkata, Wednesday

Police Deputy Commissioner; Tapas Maity, Superintending Engineer of the Health Circle in the Public Works Department; Soumya Bhattacharya, Additional Secretary to the Home and Hill

Affairs Department; and Khalid Qaisar, Joint Secretary of the Health and Family Welfare Department. The high-powered team is commissioned against the backdrop of an unprecedented

groundswell of public outrage against an alleged "all pervading threat culture" — in most Government departments including Health — throughout the State the Bengal. The Committee is tasked with evaluation of security measures in the medical colleges and hospitals so as to find out ways to improve the security set up so that the doctors can work in a safe environment and public is benefited by the health facilities provided by the Government, members of the team said adding the report will have to be submitted within two months.

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## Now politics for poll strategist PK

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA/ NEW DELHI

Political strategist-turned-activist Prashant Kishor on Wednesday in Patna announced the launch of his political outfit Jan Suraj Party, a much-anticipated move by which he hopes to take the political landscape in Bihar by storm. Kishor also named Manoj Bharti, a Madhubani-born former Indian Foreign Service Officer, as working president of the party, saying the latter will hold the post till March when organisational polls will be held. The party was launched at the Veterinary



Jan Suraj founder Prashant Kishor during the formal launch of his new political party as Jan Suraj Party at Veterinary College grounds, in Patna

College Ground in the State capital in presence of many renowned figures, including former Union minister Devendra Prasad Yadav, diplomat-turned-politician Pavan Varma and ex-MP Monazir Hassan. The party was floated exactly two years after Kishor had embarked on a more than 3,000-km-long 'padayatra' of the State, from Champaran where Mahatma Gandhi had launched the first Satyagraha in the country, in a bid to mobilise the people for a "new political alternative" that could cure Bihar of its chronic backwardness.

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## BHARAT PAYS TRIBUTE TO BAPU



President Droupadi Murmu pays homage to Mahatma Gandhi on his birth anniversary, at Rajghat in New Delhi, Wednesday

Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer



# LG Sinha: J and K busy creating new history by forgetting its past

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday said the conduct of peaceful elections and recent development in Jammu and Kashmir is proof of the fact that the Union territory is now busy "creating a new history by forgetting its past." Addressing a function at Raj Bhavan here on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, Sinha said, Bapu always wanted to see peace and progress in Jammu and Kashmir. He urged the new generation to take inspiration from the ideals of Bapu.

"The young generation has also understood this very well and therefore they do not have tools of destruction like guns and stones in their hands, but dreams of peace and aspirations are visible in their eyes,"

"The great festival of democracy concluded in Jammu and Kashmir yesterday. First, the Lok Sabha elections were held in May and the assembly elections were conducted peacefully and in a free and fair manner. This has become the centre of discussion not only in India but in the whole world," Sinha said.

Referring to the huge partici-



pation of people in the assembly polls, the LG said 1.40 crore citizens of the Union territory have reiterated their faith in the constitutional values and have pledged to contribute to the development of the beautiful Jammu and Kashmir and the country through their voting.

"This in itself is proof of the fact that in the last four to five years, great success has been achieved in establishing a fear-free Jammu and Kashmir. Today, I would like to urge the young generation that we have to maintain the pace of peace and progress. We have to dedicate ourselves to selfless service," he said.

The work done in the last five years under the leadership of

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whether it is the empowerment of democracy at the grassroots level or the conduct of peaceful elections, or development work, is a proof of the fact that "J-K is now busy creating a new history by forgetting its past".

Lakhs of youth have started businesses in the last few years, thousands of youth are running their own start-ups and one-third of these start-ups are led by our daughters. Schools are functional throughout the year, he said.

Sinha said attempts are being made to mislead some youth, but "I want to tell them that society always disintegrates due to violence".

# Detained man bitten by snake loses life: NHRC takes cognisance of report



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken suo motu cognisance of a media report that a man bitten by a snake has lost his life as he was detained and not allowed to rush to the hospital for treatment by some policemen despite his repeated request in Kaimur district, Bihar.

It has issued a notice to the Director General of Police, Government of Bihar calling for a detailed report within two weeks. It is expected to include the status of the police investigation as well as action taken against the errant police personnel.

As per the media reports, the cops demanded Rs. 2000 in bribe from the man bitten by the snake forcing him to

call his brother in distress who could arrange only Rs. 700 to manage his release but by that time he had already lost considerable time in getting critical treatment.

"The Commission has observed that the contents of the news report, if true, raise a serious issue of violation of the human rights of the victim due to the abuse of power by police personnel who were supposed to take the man to the hospital immediately to save his life," said the apex rights body. The Commission has also asked the District Magistrate, Kaimur to inform whether any compensation has been paid to the next of kin of the deceased person.

According to the media report, the victim was bitten by a snake while he was irrigating the crops in the night on 26th September, 2024.

After this, he started running from the fields in a restless state, towards his village. Meanwhile, a patrolling police team stopped and started interrogating him. The man told them that he has been bitten by a snake and he is running home. The police personnel did not believe him and asked him to pay a sum of Rs. 2000 otherwise he will not be allowed to move.

As per news report, the police personnel accompanied him to his house but there was no money available at home. The man then called his elder brother but he also had no money with him.

Somehow, Rs. 700- were arranged and given to the police personnel, but by that time, reportedly, considerable time was lost to get the snake bite victim treatment to save his life.

# CNG tank of truck explodes in Najafgarh, one person injured



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A CNG tank of a truck exploded in Delhi's Najafgarh area on Wednesday morning leaving one person injured, officials of the Delhi Fire Services said.

The victim was identified as Sanjay, they said.

"We received a call regarding a blast in a vehicle CNG tank at 6.55 am. We rushed three fire tenders immediately," said the DFS official.

The incident occurred in the Mitrao village while the tank was being refilled, they said. Sanjay suffered minor injuries and was sent home after treatment, they added.

The DFS official earlier said

that the CNG tank was installed in a car. However, the police confirmed that it was in a truck.

Delhi Police in a statement said that they received information regarding an explosion in the CNG tank of a truck at 7.32 pm.

A CNG cylinder installed on the left side of a truck exploded while refilling it with gas and broke into two pieces. The other three cylinders installed adjacent to it were also broken in the explosion, police said.

The vehicle, CNG pump machine and nearby area of the station were damaged in the incident, police added. Further investigation is underway.

# PM Modi's actions reflect hard work, discipline and nation-first values: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Wednesday, praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi, emphasising the discipline in his life and his simplicity.

Addressing the Seva Pakhwada seminar at the Lok Bhavan auditorium, Chief Minister Yogi, traced PM Modi's remarkable journey from that of an ordinary citizen to becoming the prime minister of the country.

CM Yogi highlighted key insights from the book 'Power Within: The Leadership Legacy

of Narendra Modi' authored by R Balasubramaniam, and encouraged everyone to read it. He emphasised that the book beautifully captures the essence of Modi's leadership.

The programme, organised in several districts across the state, including Lucknow, celebrated the vision and leadership of PM Modi.

CM Yogi said, "Through unwavering hard work, the values instilled by his family, and his commitment to serving the nation, PM Modi has led a life dedicated to the country. Today, as the constitutional head of the world's largest

democracy, he continues to lead us successfully." During the event, CM Yogi also paid tribute to the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, and former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, highlighting their contributions and personalities on their respective birthday anniversaries.

Praising Balasubramaniam's book further, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said: "The book reflects the vision of a new India, driven by Modiji's capable and visionary leadership. It showcases the results of efforts aimed at elevating the resolve for service and advanc-



ing the concept of Viksit Bharat."

CM Yogi further explained that no nation becomes developed overnight and every country that has prospered

the five-fold path of Panch Prana to achieve this vision. Offering both a goal and a clear path is a hallmark of visionary leadership," he remarked.

"Over the past decade, PM Modi has successfully implemented initiatives like Make in India, Digital India, Atmanirbhar Bharat, and Vocal for Local, significantly strengthening India's infrastructure. India's Chandrayaan mission has also achieved milestones that no one could have imagined," he added.

CM Yogi also emphasised that the people of India have experienced PM Modi's inclusive

development and welfare schemes firsthand. The ancient Indian tradition of 'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah, Sarve Santu Niramaya' has been given a modern expression through PM Modi's mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' since 2014. In times of crisis, a true leader prepares to face challenges and ensures the welfare of the people. During the COVID-19 pandemic, PM Modi ensured free access to testing, treatment, and vaccines. He also recognised the severe impact of the pandemic on the livelihoods of workers, artisans and handicrafts men, and responded by

providing free rations to 80 crore people. Along with this, various welfare schemes were implemented, exemplifying the inclusive spirit of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas,' irrespective of caste, creed, language, or region. These initiatives reflected India's image as a country committed to ensuring ease of living for all, he asserted.

Simultaneously, when Pakistan challenged India, PM Modi responded decisively with surgical and air strikes in Balakot, he remarked further. He added that nation-building is not just a duty, but a divine responsibility.

# iPhone-16 smuggled to India seized...

**From Page 1**

"On a detailed personal and baggage search of the passenger, 26 iPhone 16 Pro Max concealed in her vanity bag wrapped in tissue papers were recovered," it said. While the woman has not been arrested, an investigation is underway to determine whether this incident is isolated or part of a larger smuggling syndicate dealing in high-end electronic goods.

"The recovered iPhones have been seized under section 110 of the Customs Act, 1962. Further investigation is under progress," the statement said.

The Pro Max is the top model in the iPhone 16 series. Based

on intelligence inputs, a lady passenger travelling from Hongkong to Delhi carrying 26 iPhone 16 Pro Max concealed inside her vanity bag (wrapped in tissue paper) was intercepted at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport, the officials said, adding that further investigation was underway. The phones, attempted to have been smuggled into the country, are estimated to worth over Rs 37 lakh. The iPhone 16 series, launched earlier this month, includes Apple's most premium flagship phone, the Pro Max model. In India, prices for the iPhone 16 Pro Max start at Rs 1,44,900 for the 256GB variant.

# India calls for restraint, says...

**From Page 1**

In an advisory, MEA also urged the Indian nationals presently residing in Iran to remain vigilant and stay in contact with the Indian Embassy in Tehran.

"We are closely monitoring the recent escalation in security situation in the region," MEA said. "Indian nationals are advised to avoid all non-essential travel to Iran. Those currently residing in Iran are requested to remain vigilant and stay in contact with the Indian Embassy in Tehran," it said.

The Indian Embassy in Tel Aviv on Tuesday issued an advisory for Indian nationals living in Israel. "In view of the

prevailing situation in the region, all Indian nationals in Israel are advised to stay vigilant and adhere to the safety protocols as advised by the local authorities," it said.

"Please exercise caution, avoid unnecessary travel within the country and stay close to safety shelters," it said.

The embassy said it is closely monitoring the situation and remains in regular touch with the Israeli authorities to ensure the safety of all Indian nationals.

Delhi Police has strengthened security around the Israel Embassy in Tughlak Road area after the tension increased in West Asia.

# Fire in chopper mishap kills...

**From Page 1**

"The deceased have been identified as Girish Kumar, Pritam Singh Bhardwaj and Paramjeet Singh," Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation's fire officer Anil Dimple said. Primary information suggested fog in the area led to the accident.

In the Bihar incident, Senior Superintendent of Police Rakesh Kumar said the helicopter was coming from adjoining Darbhanga after air-dropping relief material for the flood

affected victim.

"The helicopter made an emergency landing in a water-logged area in Aurai block. All the occupants were IAF personnel and they were pulled out by locals by the time officials reached the spot," said the SSP.

District Magistrate Subrat Kumar Sen said, "All four occupants appear safe and unharmed. However, as a precaution, they are being taken to a local hospital for check-up and treatment, if required."

# Now politics for poll...

**From Page 1**

Speaking on the occasion, the I-PAC founder who gave up political consultancy a few years ago, said, "Jan Suraj has been a campaign aimed at making the people of Bihar understand that they have not been able to get quality education and job opportunities because they have never voted on these issues. We may be mocked by cynics who will say how will we fulfil promises like putting an end to migration. But we have a blueprint."

"We will need more than Rs 4 lakh crore to improve education in the State. We will raise the money by

scrapping the prohibition law which is annually causing losses to the tune of Rs 20,000 crore. I reiterate that once Jan Suraj comes to power, the ban on liquor will be scrapped within one hour," said the 47-year-old leader, who is known to be a strident critic of the move by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, his former mentor.

"We do not need empty slogans of special status. But we will compel banks to make capital available to the State in proportion to savings deposited by its people. At present, it seems money saved by Biharis is being put to use elsewhere," Kishor added.

# Security audit for...

**From Page 1**

"We have taken up an difficult task ... we will hold discussions with all the stakeholders including the doctors, members of public, and the administration so as to get to the bottom of it ... and then a report will be submitted to the Government," Purakayastha a former security advisor to the Chief Minister said. District level audit committees will also be framed to take stock of the security system in respective areas, sources said.

"The shameful incident in RG Kar Hospital was the outcome of this threat culture which pervades in all Departments and is the major propeller of the Tolabaji (extortion) industry which is the main source of the political leadership's ill-gotten money to fund its elections and all kind of illegal activities," said BN Chakrabarty a renowned political analyst.

"Mamata Banerjee's Government has introduced this culture in Bengal wherein a parallel government runs with the help of the political power, muscle power and police power ... under the practices like senior medical professors are beaten up ... students close to the ruling party indulge in mass cheating in examinations ... those who protest are either transferred, beaten up or framed in false cases," said Dr Subarna Goswami.

The grapevine has it that the victim of RGKMCH was not an isolated prey and that her brutal rape and murder was a part of a well-thought out plan not only to eliminate her but to warn others who chose the path of protest.

"She had come to know about so many things in course of duty ... she had even raised the issue of spurious and below quality drugs being provided to the patients ... and issue that she raised with the then Principal Sandip Ghosh who warned her of grave consequences ... when she threatened to make things public she was silenced forever," that is how a junior doctor of the hospital said adding "this ill-gotten money goes to the top most echelon of the system ... the CBI has been told everything ... now our movement is also against the CBI which is fumbling after having come to know about something ... which is afraid of exposing people who are very high and mighty."

Meanwhile, the protests continued with thousands of people including those from the civil society on Wednesday joining a grand rally called by the doctors in Kolkata.

The rally was called to herald the homecoming of the "Mother Durga who will definitely demolish the demons that are threatening the common man," doctors said.

# West Asia regional conflict...

**From Page 1**

Israel said it intercepted many of the missiles, and officials in Washington said US destroyers assisted in Israel's defence. Iran said most of its missiles hit their targets. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed late Tuesday to retaliate against Iran, which he said "made a big mistake tonight and it will pay for it."

An Iranian commander threatened wider strikes on infrastructure if Israel retaliates against Iran's territory.

The United Nations Security Council called an emergency meeting for Wednesday to address the spiraling conflict. Israel and Hezbollah have traded fire across the Lebanon border almost daily since October 8, the day after

Hamas' cross-border attack on October 7, 2023, which killed 1,200 Israelis and took 250 others hostage.

Israel declared war on the militant group in the Gaza Strip in response. More than 41,000 Palestinians have been killed in the territory, and just over half of the dead were women and children, according to local health officials. The Lebanese army said Israeli forces breached approximately 400 metres into Lebanese territory on Wednesday and then withdrew "after a short period."

The statement was the first official acknowledgement from Beirut that Israeli forces have carried out a ground incursion into Lebanon. Earlier in the day, Hezbollah's chief spokesman, Mohammed Afif, told reporters touring sites of Israeli airstrikes in Beirut's

southern suburbs that Hezbollah had "fought a heroic battle this morning" in the southern villages of Odaiseh and Maroun al-Ras against Israeli soldiers who launched a ground incursion into Lebanon.

Israel foreign Minister says he is barring the United Nations secretary general from entering Israel, accusing him of being biased against the country. Foreign Minister Israel Katz said on Wednesday that he was declaring Antonio Guterres "persona non grata" and that he would be prevented from entering Israel. The move deepens an already wide rift between Israel and the United Nations.

Greece's foreign ministry said a Greek national was among the people killed in Tuesday evening's shooting attack in the Jaffa neighborhood of Tel Aviv.

# ₹5000 crore cocaine...

**From Page 1**

Nayib, also an Afghan national, arrived in India in January 2020 along with his father and is a registered refugee. His family, except for his father, remains in Afghanistan. Nayib met Waris in the Vikasपुरi chemist shop, where Waris enticed him into the drug business by promising a lavish lifestyle. This recent bust is part of a broader crackdown on drug trafficking in the capital. Earlier this year, the special cell of Delhi Police apprehended four men transporting drugs from violence-hit regions in Manipur and other states to sell in clubs across South Delhi. These individuals used luxury vehicles like Kia Seltos and Mahindra Thar, posing as senior officials from construction companies involved in road projects in Imphal to facilitate their operations. The latest bust has raised concerns about the

potential for a narco-terrorism connection, which the police are currently investigating. The demand for narcotics typically increases during the festive season, prompting authorities to take preemptive action against drug distribution networks.

In a related incident that happened on the same day, Delhi Customs seized 1,660 grams of cocaine valued at over Rs 24 crore from a passenger at Indira Gandhi International Airport. The accused, a citizen of Liberia, arrived from Dubai and was subsequently arrested under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act of 1985.

Earlier in August, the Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) conducted a raid at a methedrone manufacturing unit in Maharashtra's Thane district and seized liquid drug worth Rs 800 crore. The Gujarat police also carried out a

similar operation at a pharmaceutical factory in Bharuch district, where it recovered liquid Tramadol worth Rs 31 crore, he said.

On July 29, at Mundra port in Gujarat's Kutch district, the Customs department seized 68 lakh Tramadol tablets worth Rs 110 crore. The seizure was made from two export containers destined for the West African countries of Sierra Leone and Niger.

On July 18, the ATS had busted a methedrone manufacturing unit in Palsana area of Surat city and seized drugs and raw material worth Rs 51.4 crore, he said, adding that three persons were also arrested from the spot. Earlier in August, Guwahati Zonal unit of Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) cracked down on an inter-state drug trafficking racket and seized 934.510 kg of Ganja and apprehended a person.

# PM raises concern over...

**From Page 1**

The PM said that the BJP has restored the dignity of the tribal heroes and declared tribal icon Birsra Munda's birth anniversary as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas'

besides taking a plethora of steps for their welfare. Describing the Congress as anti-Dalit, anti-tribal and anti-deprived, Modi alleged that it framed policies to prevent SC/ST and OBC communities from making progress.

"Congress wants to snatch SC, ST, OBC reservations to handover it to its vote bank but I assure you no one can snatch your rights. BJP will protect it," he said. Hitting

out at RJD, he claimed that its anti-Jharkhand stance was clear from the very beginning as it was opposed to creation of a separate State.

"RJD had converted Jharkhand into a loot haven as it plundered its Jal, Jungle and Jameen (water, forest and land). It converted Jharkhand into the safe house of criminals and gangsters. Congress was its partner in the crime.

"Today's JMM is no longer the old JMM. The ecosystem of the Congress has captured it. JMM now wants to change Jharkhand's identity," Modi said. The JMM-led coalition not only derailed development in Jharkhand but played with national security, he alleged, adding that it is the biggest obstacle to the state's growth.

He accused that land 'dalals' ruled Jharkhand where even land belonging to the Army

was not spared and mines and minerals were being looted. Transfers and postings here have become an industry while all newly launched schemes like 'Abua Awas Yojna' and 'Mukhyamantri Maiyan Samman Yojna' have become tools of corruption, the PM alleged.

He also said JMM-Congress was busy in 'scams marathon' while 'paper leaks' have spoiled the future

of students. The JMM-led coalition Government is devouring the poor's ration and water besides misusing central funds, Modi alleged.

"I guarantee that a BJP Government will not only protect its 'Mati, beti and roti' but will take the State on the path of development," he said. "Jhooth ki dukan (shop of lies) cannot always work. JMM is serving 'jhooth ki jalebi'," the PM said.





Delhi Lt Governor VK Saxena pays homage to Mahatma Gandhi on his birth anniversary at Rajghat



Delhi Chief Minister Atishi pays homage to Mahatma Gandhi on his birth anniversary at Rajghat

## Four people arrested in cocaine haul

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The profile of four accused arrested in connection with the cocaine haul include a graduate, bouncer and driver respectively while the fourth studied in Mumbai. Tushar Goyal, 40, of Vasant Enclave, graduated from IP University, Delhi in 2003. His father runs two publications namely Tushar Publication and Tulip Publication in Delhi. After his graduation, Tushar also looked after his father business of Publication. After marriage in 2008, he started work of liasoning and started living a lavish life. Meanwhile he came in contact with the mastermind of cartel at Dubai and involved in the drug car-

tel, the police said. Himanshu Kumar (40), of Suleiman Nagar, Kirari, has studied up to class 12th from Delhi. After leaving study he joined gym and start working as bouncer and security man for different persons on daily basis. Later, he came in contact with Tushar Goyal and joined his drug cartel. Aurangzeb Siddiqui, (23) is a permanent resident of Deoria, Uttar Pradesh and has studied up to class 11th from Deoria. He came to Delhi in search of job and started working as a driver of Tushar household. Later, he joined the drug cartel of Tushar. Bharat Kumar Jain 48, pursued his studies in Mumbai. Later, he came in contact with a drug dealer of

Mumbai and joined drug cartel. Appropriate legal action has been initiated against the apprehended persons and investigation for forward and backward linkages is continued. The Delhi Police has made one of the biggest drug busts ever seen in the city, seizing over 562 kilograms of cocaine and 40 kg of Hydroponic Marijuana, estimated to be worth around Rs 5640 crore, transported to the national capital by an international module. Special Cell team had been working for over two months based on a tip-off which led to the bust as the drug was supposed to be distributed in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR)

as their demand is high during the festive season. Delhi Police Special Cell is probing the Narco-terror angle. According to police, they were apprehended from Mahipalpur Extension in South West Delhi by the Special Cell of Delhi Police after working on a tip off. The remaining narcotics were discovered inside the godown in the publication factory owned by the main accused Tushar Goyal. The raid was conducted at his publishing factory by the Special Cell of Delhi police on Tuesday night, with all four accused present at the location. Kushwaha revealed that 15 kg of the seized cocaine was found in the personal possession of Goyal, Himanshu and Aurangzeb.

## Security beefed up around Israel Embassy

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has beefed up security around the Israel Embassy in Tughlak Road area after the tension increased in the middle east following Iran's missile attacks on Israel on Tuesday. A senior Delhi Police officer said the checking has been intensified with the deployment of more security personnel around the Israel Embassy located at Tughlak Road area. This comes after two blasts reported near the Israel embassy near Denmark on Wednesday. The officer said a multi-layered security has already been put in place with several CCTV cameras installed



around both structures as the embassy has witnessed blasts twice earlier, though no one was injured in any of the incidents. The situation is not only tensed in the middle east but also in India. Out of many reason one important reason is the Indian citizens

who are currently in Israel. According to top intelligence sources, proper scrutiny of the security of diplomats was being carried out. Sources said Indian authorities were watching immigrations closely. "We don't want India to become a battleground in the

fight between the two countries and we want to remain neutral," sources said. Security at the Israel embassy was upped last year after Israel went into war with Hamas in Gaza after the Palestinian group's surprise attack on Israel on October 7 last year. In August, the Delhi Police had reviewed the security at the Israel embassy and Chabad House after receiving alerts from intelligence agencies following the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh at his residence in Tehran. Suspected IED blasts have occurred twice near the embassy in 2021 and 2023. No injuries were reported in both the explosions.

## House finalised for Kejriwal, to move out of official CM's residence soon

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A house has been finalised for AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal in the New Delhi area, where he will move with his family within the next one to two days, vacating the official chief minister's residence at Flagstaff Road in Civil Lines. Sources within the party indicated that Kejriwal is likely to relocate to one of the two official bungalows allocated to AAP Rajya Sabha MPs on Feroz Shah Road near Mandi House. These bungalows are just a short distance from the AAP headquarters on Ravi Shankar Shukla Lane. "Kejriwal will leave the official CM residence in next 1-2

days, as a house has been finalised for him and his family," the party said in a statement without disclosing location of the new accommodation. Sources said Kejriwal, who is the New Delhi constituency MLA, wanted to live in the area ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections to be held in a few months. "The house that he will move into is close to the party headquarters. It has been given to him and his family by a supporter," the source added. Earlier, the Aam Aadmi Party wrote to the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), asking that Kejriwal be allotted a house as he is the head of a national party.

## DDA conducts cleanliness drive

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In its commitment towards Clean Delhi, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Wednesday conducted cleanliness drive in Siraspur Housing Pocket on the occasion of Swachh Bharat Diwas, celebrating birthday of Mahatma Gandhi. Siraspur is one of the prominent locations where DDA has offered flats under the recently launched housing scheme. Under the Sasta Ghar Scheme, DDA is offering LIG flats in Siraspur starting from Rs 15 lakh after giving 15 percent discount. The flats are equipped with many facilities and ample surface parking. The area is close to G T Karnal Road and Sameypr Badli metro station. It is conveniently located with many



schools, hospitals and amusement park close to its vicinity. The cleanliness drive was led by Ashok Kumar Gupta, Engineer Member, DDA, and Chittaranjan Dash, Principal Commissioner, DDA along with DDA officers and staff and general public. The DDA is developing greens around the housing pockets to

improve quality of life for the buyers. Besides, additional final touches are being given to housing blocks to add value. Furthermore, DDA is also in touch with local bodies to ensure cleanliness of the area. The DDA launched its three housing schemes in August 2024-Sasta Ghar and Madhyam Vargiya Housing Schemes and

Dwarka Housing Scheme for various locations like Dwarka, Jasola, Narela, Rohini, Loknayakpuram, Ramgarh and Siraspur for various categories of flats. While buyers can book flats for the first two schemes on First Come First Serve (FCFS) basis, flats were sold through e-auction in Dwarka Housing Scheme. The Dwarka Housing scheme has been closed while First Come First Serve is still in operation and buyers can book flats by login to DDA's website. All the flats are freehold property and ready to move in. For the convenience of buyers, sample flats are also available so that buyers can take informed decision. The schemes have received impressive response with buyers showing interest on all categories of flats at various locations.

## Government announces special scheme to offer discounts on Motor Vehicle Tax

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a landmark policy decision, the Delhi Government on Wednesday announced a special scheme to offer discounts on Motor Vehicle Tax. Under the scheme, residents will become eligible to claim up to 20% discount on the purchase of new vehicles by scrapping their old vehicles. The scheme is not only touted to offer much needed relief to consumers amidst inflation but also reduce the load of old polluting vehicles on the road by promoting use of less-polluting vehicles that follow modern standards. The scheme has been approved by Chief Minister Atishi and will be notified soon.

Under the scheme, one would have to obtain a Certificate of Deposit while scrapping their old vehicle at a registered scrapping facility. The same certificate can be submitted during the registration of new commercial and non-commercial vehicles within three years from the date of issue to avail discounts on Motor Vehicle Tax. The Delhi Government will offer a 20% tax discount on the registration of new non-transport petrol, CNG and LPG vehicles and a 15% discount for diesel vehicles. Similarly, a 15% tax discount will be provided on purchase of commercial petrol, CNG and LPG vehicles and a 10% discount for diesel vehicles.

## Baansera on banks of Yamuna to soon yield globally acclaimed Lakadong turmeric: Raj Niwas

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The lush-green "Baansera" on the banks of the Yamuna in Delhi will soon be yielding the first crop of the globally acclaimed "Lakadong turmeric" from Meghalaya, Raj Niwas said here on Wednesday. Giving details, officials said Delhi Development Authority (DDA), on the initiative of Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, has planted Lakadong turmeric under the thick bamboo groves over two acres of land at Baansera, that have shown excellent growth in

the last four months. This much sought after variety of turmeric may soon be available to the people of Delhi through sale by DDA. In a post on X, Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena said, "Happy to share that the famed Lakadong Turmeric from Meghalaya's Jaintia Hills has made its way to Yamuna floodplain in Delhi at Baansera. The innovative step to introduce this finest quality turmeric in Delhi's climate has shown promising results with 80% survival rate". In continuation of these efforts, Saxena had directed

DDA to procure Lakadong turmeric seeds from Meghalaya and cultivate the same at Baansera under the bamboo groves that are considered conducive for the survival and growth of this turmeric. Saxena said 30,000 bamboo will create a conducive environment for their growth. Planted in June this year, the first turmeric harvest is expected by Jan 2025". "Cultivation of Lakadong Turmeric in Delhi comes after successful experiments of planting Chandan, Chinara, Cherry Blossom, Green Apple,



Water Apple & Grapes that have, besides adding diversity to Delhi's flora, broken the

myth that such plants and trees can not be grown in Delhi," Saxena added.

Trial cultivation of Lakadong turmeric is in line with the LG's persistent innovative and inter-cultural approach aimed at adding diversity to Delhi's flora and comes after successful plantation of Chandan, Chinara, Cherry Blossom, water apple, green apple and grapes in different parts of the National Capital. Lakadong turmeric is a rare and prized variety of turmeric that is native to the Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya. It is known for its high curcumin content, which gives it a bright yellow color and a distinct aroma and earthy flavor.

Lakadong turmeric is considered to be one of the best varieties of turmeric worldwide. Accordingly, the DDA procured five quintals of high-quality Lakadong turmeric seed -rhizomes (the underground stem of the turmeric plant) - from Meghalaya and planted them at Baansera in the month of June. Since then, the crop has shown promising growth with the survival rate of over 80%. Horticulture experts are closely monitoring the growth of the turmeric plants. Baansera, which has over 30,000 bamboo plants, has created a sym-

biotic environment in which both turmeric and bamboo are thriving. Based on the successful crop yield, DDA will also consider cultivation of Lakadong turmeric on a larger scale at different locations in Delhi. Lakadong turmeric, renowned for its exceptional curcumin content of around 7.4%, is highly valued and most sought-after in the medicinal and wellness sectors. Additionally, its volatile oil content, ranging from 3.6% to 4.8%, increases its appeal across various industries.

## BSES discoms to provide uninterrupted power supply this festive season

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As the festival season kicks in, BSES discoms are geared-up to provide uninterrupted power supply and ensure safety of their consumers in their licensed areas, officials said here on Wednesday. The discom has carried-out dedicated preventive and predictive maintenance to ensure safety as well as reliability of power supply. This measure includes partial discharge measurement and hot spot thermal scanning to ensure safety and reliability of the power supply. Apart from this, BSES Power Restoration Teams are on high alert, operating round-the-clock, and will continue to do so throughout the festive period. BSES field staff is also available around the clock to ensure prompt service, even during the festival days. Also, BSES discoms have



meticulously inspected the distribution installations to ensure their proper functioning and public safety. This includes extensive checking of fencing and metering panels in most public parks to rule-out the possibility of any current leakages. The electricity poles, Feeder Pillars, Distribution boxes, and substations have been inspected and discrepancies corrected promptly.

Over the years, BSES has been a front-runner in adopting cutting-edge technologies like SCADA, DMS, and GIS. These systems will facilitate real-time monitoring of power supply in Delhi and enable swift restoration in case of any disruptions during the festive season. Emphasizing the importance of safety, all fieldwork force has been re-sensitized and trained to follow safety pre-

cautions during any emergencies, especially during the festive season. BSES discoms have also engaged Safety Munadi's to generate awareness on safety. In certain strategic areas, Nukad Natak's are also being undertaken, followed by a safety quiz. In a novel initiative, BSES has launched 'Tatkal,' offering same-day temporary electricity connections for events like Durga Puja, Diwali Melas, Ramlilas, and weddings. Consumers can now obtain a temporary connection within 24 hours after completing the required formalities. This initiative not only enhances the festive spirit but also contributes to efforts to reduce air pollution. Moreover, ahead of festive season, BSES discoms have appealed to their customers for a safer celebration. BSES is also urging consumers to avoid any activity that will generate sparks near electricity installations such as

Grids, Sub Stations, and Transformers. Even a stray spark has the potential to ignite a fire in these installations, causing massive disruptions. Notably, a fire in a grid could affect the power supply for around one lakh consumers, while damage to a 33/66 KV line or an 11 KV line can impact 10,000 and 2,500 consumers, respectively. It is also crucial to remember that causing damage to the electricity infrastructure is against the law. BSES has integrated all its consumer-facing platforms with the Intelligent Outage Management System (iOMS). This efficient system helps resolve the complaint via mobile apps. The discom has set up war rooms and deployed Quick Reaction Teams to assist in any exigencies, ensuring that consumers continue to enjoy the festival of lights without any interruptions.

## Star studded Ramlila in Delhi to showcase iconic Ramayana characters

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Familiar faces from Delhi's political circles such as Manoj Tiwari and Vijender Gupta as well as TV actors like Himanshu Soni and Samiksha Bhatnagar are going to appear on Delhi's Ramlila stage this year portraying iconic characters from the Ramayana. According to Lav Kush Ramlila Committee president Arjun Kumar, this year's Ramlila will feature a three-storey stage and artistes will be performing on all three levels. One lakh LED lights will be used this time, he said. The committee has also approved social media influencers to promote the event, Kumar added. BJP MP Tiwari will play the role of Parashuram, Gupta, the leader of opposition in the Delhi assembly, will be King Janak and former MLA Vijay Jolly will take on the role of



Rishi Vashishth, Kumar said. Former mayor Jathedar Avatar Singh will play Kumbhkaran and AAP leader Brijesh Goyal will be Meghnad, he added. Kumar said actors Himanshu Soni will play Ram, Samiksha Bhatnagar Sita and Ketan Karande Hanuman. On the budget, the Lav Kush Ramlila Committee president said, "Everyone contributes voluntarily here. Some take care of the tents, others manage the chairs and tables. However, an approximate bud-

get will be Rs 4 crore to Rs 5 crore." He added that the celebrations have already begun, and schoolchildren from the Delhi-NCR will perform Ramlila on Wednesday. Kumar also said that the committee approved social media influencers to encourage youngsters to participate and connect with the cultural event. "With the help of influencers, this year's event aims to attract young people to Ramlila," he said.



# Modi celebrates a decade of Swachh Bharat Mission



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday hailed the Swachh Bharat Mission as the largest and most successful people's movement of the 21st century, emphasising its impact on public health and wellbeing. Addressing an event to mark 10 years of the mission, Modi said that mass participation has transformed the campaign into a new path to prosperity for India. "You all made the Swachh Bharat Mission a success," the prime minister said while noting that over 28 crore people took part in more than 27 lakh events organised in just 15 days during the 'Sewa Pakhwada'. He said chief ministers, ministers, and other representatives played key roles in this national effort and underlined that



"continuous efforts can only lead to a clean India." During the event, the prime minister inaugurated projects worth around Rs 10,000 crore under the Swachh Bharat and AMRUT 2.0 missions which include water and sewage treatment plants across several states. "When people talk about 21st-century India even after 1,000 years, they will definitely remember the Swachh Bharat Mission," Modi said, emphasising the lasting legacy of the cleanliness campaign. The prime minister also criticised previous governments for neglecting basic sanitation. "They never considered dirt and lack of toilets as national issues. It was like they made dirt a part of their lives," he said. He said those who used Mahatma Gandhi for political benefits and vote bank have now forgotten his

subject of interest. He said that filth and lack of toilets were never considered as a national issue. As a result, said the prime minister, there were no discussions about it in society and lack of cleanliness became a part of life. He also recalled facing criticism after raising this issue from the ramparts of the Red Fort. "The first job of a prime minister is to make the lives of the common man easy. I talked about toilets and sanitary pads, and today, we see the results," he said. The prime minister highlighted that more than 60 per cent of the population was forced to defecate in the open a decade ago, which he called as an insult to Dalits, backward classes and tribal communities, and a major source of inconvenience for women. Modi noted the "sufferings of mothers, sisters and

daughters due to the lack of toilets" and also pointed out the threats to their health and safety. He said that the filth caused by open defecation had endangered the lives of children and was a major cause of child mortality. He also cited studies and reports that underline the positive outcomes of the mission. An international study has shown that the Swachh Bharat Mission is saving the lives of 60,000 to 70,000 children annually, while a UNICEF report indicates that over 90 per cent of women feel safer due to the construction of household toilets, he said. Additionally, the World Health Organization has credited the mission with saving 300,000 lives between 2014 and 2019 by reducing deaths from diarrhoea, Modi added. The prime minister also noted a shift in attitudes toward sanitation workers, stating that the Swachh Bharat Mission has brought them respect and pride. "Cleanliness is not just a one-day task but a lifelong value," he said, urging citizens to pass on the value of cleanliness from generation to generation and treat their surroundings with the same care as places of worship. Modi said steps have been taken to eliminate the problems arising from manual cleaning of septic tanks and informed that the government is working together with private and public sectors in this regard. To mark the landmark day, Modi also went to a school to take part in a cleanliness drive along with girl students.

# Leaders pay tribute to Gandhi, Shastri on their birth anniversaries

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress leaders including its president Malliarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi and India's second prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri on their birth anniversary. "On behalf of all citizens, I pay my humble tribute to the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi on his 155th birth anniversary," President Murmu said in a social media post. In another post, she said Shastri presented highest ideals of simplicity, honesty and patriotism throughout his life. "On the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, I pay my humble tribute to him," she said. "Shastri ji presented the highest ideals of simplicity, honesty and patriotism throughout his life. Under his strong leadership, India achieved economic, strategic and other successes. Let us take inspiration from his life and pledge to build a strong India," President Murmu said in the post in Hindi. In his tributes, Prime Minister Modi said in a social media post the revered Babu's truth and ideals based on truth, harmony and equality would always be an inspiration for the country's people. Gandhi, hailed as the father of the nation, steadfastly followed the principles of truth and non-violence, inspiring generations of politicians and activists around the world. Modi also paid homage to India's second prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. He dedicated his life to the



country's soldiers, farmers and pride, Modi said of Shastri, who raised the slogan of "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan" and whose simplicity and honesty earned him wide respect. The prime minister joined President Droupadi Murmu and several other dignitaries in visiting the memorials of Gandhi and Shastri in the national capital this morning to pay homage to them. Later, Modi attended a cleanliness drive along with some school students to mark the 10th anniversary of Swachhata Bharat campaign, which was launched in 2014 on the birth anniversary of Gandhi, who put a great emphasis on cleanliness all his life. The prime minister urged everyone to be part of such a drive in their surroundings, saying such an initiative will strengthen the resolve for a clean India. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chief Rahul Gandhi paid rich tributes to Mahatma Gandhi. While Rahul Gandhi said the Mahatma was not just an individual but a way of living and thinking, Kharge said they are following his ideas as

they are being challenged today. "Bapu has taught me that if we want to live, we should live without fear - we should walk on the path of truth, love, compassion and harmony while uniting everyone," Rahul Gandhi said. "Gandhi ji was not just an individual, he was a way of living and thinking," the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha said in a post in Hindi. He also paid floral tributes at Mahatma Gandhi's memorial at Rajghat in the morning. Former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and Kharge also attended a function in the central hall of Parliament where they paid floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi. Speaker Om Birla and other BJP leaders, including union minister and BJP President J P Nadda, were present at the function. Kharge said the thoughts and ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, who showed the path of peace to the entire world with the highest values of truth, non-violence and satyagraha, the architect of the Indian freedom struggle, are always inspiring for us. "Today, we are facing the

challenge to his ideas by following the principles of Bapu. Best wishes to all the countrymen on Gandhi Jayanti," Kharge said in a social media post. The Congress also remembered former prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri on his birth anniversary and former Congress leader K Kamaraj on his death anniversary. Rahul Gandhi said Shastri will be remembered for his simplicity and Kamaraj for his humility, dedication, and visionary policies for the upliftment of the marginalised and the empowerment of the underprivileged. Congress leader K C Venugopal and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi. "Bapu's life and his teachings serve as our lodestar today more than ever. At a time when the forces of hatred, lies and violence are trying their best to destroy India, the message of Satya and Ahimsa are our guiding principle. This Gandhi Jayanti, we renew our pledge to walk in his footsteps," Venugopal said in a social media post.



# Global leaders, celebrities worldwide applaud India's sanitation revolution

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Several noted Indian and global personalities, including Ratan Tata and Bill Gates, on Wednesday lauded India's success in improving sanitation with the Swachh Bharat Mission under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. Actors Saif Ali Khan, Kareena Kapoor Khan and Alia Bhatt also urged citizens to actively participate in the Swachh Bharat campaign as they marked the 10th anniversary of the cleanliness initiative. They noted that the programme, which completed its 10th year on Wednesday, has significantly transformed India through improved sanitation and cleanliness. WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus praised Modi and commended the efforts of his government, highlighting the significant strides made by the country in achieving sustainable development goals through this 'transformative' initiative, which mobilizes communities to promote a cleaner and healthier nation. Microsoft co-founder and philanthropist Bill Gates said India made huge strides in improving sanitation and hygiene under Modi's leadership. Its approach has served as a model in community-driven programmes, he said, highlighting its "amazing" impact especially on the poor and women by mobilising people. The prime minister shared on social media posts by these personalities. World Bank

president Ajay Banga said the programme has significantly transformed India through improved sanitation, achieving a remarkable milestone under Modi's "visionary" leadership. Asian Development Bank president Masatsugu Asakawa commended Modi for spearheading the Mission, lauding it as a transformational campaign. The Asian Development Bank is proud to have partnered with India on this visionary initiative from the very start, he said. Tata Trusts chairman Ratan Tata said the cleanliness campaign has benefitted millions, especially in the rural India, and congratulated Modi on its success. Spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar said the programme has brought people's focus on cleanliness. "Today, I'm talking to you not as an actor but as a mother, who wants the best for her children. And Swachh Bharat mission is a mission where every family should participate," said Kareena, adding that every Indian should honour Gandhi's dream of a clean India. Saif said, "For us, it is not just about keeping our surroundings clean, it is about showing our kids that a healthy environment is a foundation for a happy life." National Award-winning actor-director R Madhavan said the impact and results of Swachh Bharat have been outstanding. Actors Manushi Chhillar, Tisca Chopra and music composer Shankar Mahadevan also shared messages on the occasion.

# Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata to receive urban radar networks for enhanced weather forecasting

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Three metropolitan cities -- Delhi, Chennai and Kolkata -- will soon get urban radar networks for better weather forecast on the lines of a similar network unveiled for Mumbai last month, officials said on Wednesday. The Ministry of Earth Sciences launched four X-band weather radars in Mumbai last month, taking the total number of such monitoring systems in the financial capital to six

covering an area of nearly 50,000 sq km together. "We plan to extend similar coverage in the other three metros -- Delhi, Chennai and Kolkata within the next one year," M Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, said. Under Mission Mausam, the government plans to install 50 doppler weather radars across the country to strengthen weather forecasting services. The urban radar network will provide real-time data every five minutes by

detecting clouds which bring extreme rainfall as well as thunderstorms. The data from the radars will be integrated, and eventually offer a real-time view of weather systems developing in and around Mumbai. The launch of the urban radar network has made Mumbai the country's most monitored city for understanding evolving weather systems. At present, Mumbai has two doppler weather radars. Last month, the government approved Mission Mausam with a budget outlay

of Rs 2,000 crore to make the country 'weather-ready and climate-smart' by developing cutting edge weather surveillance technologies and systems. The mission aims to establish 50 doppler weather radars, 60 radiosonde/radio wind stations, 100 disdrometers, 10 wind profilers, 25 radiometers, one urban testbed, one process testbed, one ocean research station and 10 marine automatic weather stations with upper air observation.

# Government allows non forest departments to tackle disaster prevention in forests

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Environment Ministry has issued new guidelines allowing other government departments to carry out forestry activities during emergencies such as forest fires, particularly when state forest departments lack the necessary expertise. However, the Union Environment Ministry in the guidelines made it clear that the forest's legal status will remain unchanged, and any structures created will continue to belong to the forest department. The guidelines detail steps that can be taken to prevent or manage natural disasters in



forest areas and are aligned with the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980. It permits actions such as establishing fire lines and constructing soil and water conservation structures like check dams and pipelines during natural disasters. The aim is to protect wildlife, human lives, and

property. This decision follows a request from Uttarakhand's chief secretary, highlighting the need for effective measures against frequent forest fires. As per the guidelines, under such circumstances, the state forest department may authorize other government departments to undertake

these activities, provided they align with approved plans and receive prior permission. The Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) must oversee and approve the design of any interventions, ensuring no harm comes to the ecosystem, with tree cutting generally prohibited except for necessary pruning. The letter also called for mock drills to prepare forest staff before the fire season and requested permission for government departments to conduct soil and water conservation work in forest areas. The issue was discussed in a meeting of the ministry's Forest Advisory Committee on August 27.

The activities include establishing and maintaining fire lines and building structures for soil and water conservation, such as check dams, water tanks, trenches, and pipelines. However, the ministry said: "Under exceptional circumstances and non-availability of technical expertise, the state forest department, with a view to avert the natural disaster by ensuring efficient and effective preparatory works, may allow the other government departments to undertake the implementation of forestry activities for soil and water conservation activities in the forest area."

# Congress calls for urgent peace dialogue amid West Asia tensions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With tensions escalating in West Asia, the Congress on Wednesday said there is "fierce urgency" for peace and dialogue in the region engulfed by a deepening cycle of violence. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the world's conscience needs to be reawakened by the forces of reconciliation amid escalating hostilities in West Asia. "Thanks to an initiative taken by the Congress-led UPA Government, since 2007 the United Nations observes October 2nd as the International Day of Non-Violence," he said in a social



media post. "The Indian National Congress recalls this in the midst of an alarming escalation of remorseless hostilities in West Asia. This is imposing an unacceptable

humanitarian price on thousands upon thousands of innocent men, women and children. There is a fierce urgency for peace and dialogue in the region that is now engulfed by a deepening cycle of violence and counter-violence," he said. "The world's conscience seems to have been dulled by the forces of revenge. It needs to be reawakened by the forces of reconciliation," Ramesh said. Tensions have escalated in West Asia after Iran fired around 200 missiles into Israel in response to Israel's killing of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah and other commanders of the militant outfit.

# Rahul Gandhi: Empower athletes, not politicians

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said India cannot achieve its true potential of sports till a system is put in place that directly supports players and makes sportspersons in-charge of various sports bodies instead of politicians. "No money, no game" - this is the reality for most athletes in India today. Met a group of players from Haryana and across the country and listened to their problems," the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha said in a social media post in Hindi. He also shared a seven-minute video of his conversation with



players in poll-bound Haryana. "Unless we bring in a system that directly supports sportspersons, and puts sportspersons in charge instead of politicians in sports associations, India cannot achieve its true potential,"

Gandhi said. "India has immense talent - only transparency, fairness and access to all necessary facilities will ensure that every promising player benefits equally," he said in his post. "Completely disappointed with the system, struggling with lack of basic facilities like diet, rest and training, these youth are also losing hope and confidence - this is a bigger loss for India than missing out on Olympic Glory," he said. In the video he shared, Rahul Gandhi is seen listening to problems of sportspersons from Haryana. He also took a dig at politicians holding positions in sports bodies, including that of cricket and judo.



# PM greets on Mahalaya ahead of Durga Puja

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday greeted people on the occasion of Mahalaya, which is observed before the start of Durga Puja. He said in a social media post, "Shubho Mahalaya! As Durga Puja approaches, we pray that hope, goodness and positivity shall always prevail. May Maa Durga always bless us with happiness, strength and good health." The devout believe that Goddess Durga begins her descent from her abode in Mount Kailash to the Earth on this day.



# Congress urges Haryana voters to oust BJP in upcoming elections

PNS ■  
NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

The Congress on Wednesday asked the voters of Haryana to oust the BJP in the October 5 polls, saying this is a fight against injustice and untruth” and also attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi alleging he is the leader of those who break trust and an expert in telling lies. Urging the people of Haryana not to fall for BJP’s poll promises, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge claimed the party has failed to fulfil commitments made to voters in the past. At an election rally at Badhra in Haryana’s Charkhi Dadri, Kharge targeted the BJP over several issues, including demands for debt waiver and legal guarantee on MSP from farmers, and claimed people have made up their mind to bring the Congress to power in the state. “It is Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri’s birth anniversary today. Mahatma Gandhi taught us truth and non-violence. I don’t want to say this - how much truth and how much lies those in power speak,” he said. “Modi ji toh bharosa todne walo ka bhi sardar hai (Modi is the leader of those who break trust.) His numerous lies, promises, you know about them,” he said in the presence of former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and former Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik. Addressing a public meeting in Julana to campaign for Congress candidate from the constituency and Olympic



wrestler Vinesh Phogat, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra attacked the BJP-led government in the state over employment, the Agniveer military recruitment scheme and farmers’ welfare among other issues and also alleged that the ruling party “betrayed” people at every stage. Referring to the wrestlers’ protest last year, she said injustice was done to Vinesh and her companions. In Kurukshetra, Lord Krishna gave the message of Bhagavad Gita and said whenever injustice takes place in the world, the voice of truth and justice will rise, she said. Priyanka Gandhi told the gathering that an “opportunity has come again, similar to the battle of Kurukshetra and the fight against the British rule. There is no difference,” she said. “Today, this is your fight against injustice, untruth and the wicked (“dushton”). You will have to stand up, you will have to look within yourself and see what is happening,” she added. Meanwhile, her brother and

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi shared a seven-minute video of his conversation with sportspersons from Haryana and said India cannot achieve its true potential in sports till a system is put in place that directly supports players and makes them in-charge of various sports bodies instead of politicians. In the video, he is seen listening to problems of sportspersons from Haryana. The Congress is contesting in 89 of the total 90 assembly seats leaving the Bhiwani segment for INDIA bloc ally CPI-M. In his speech, Kharge while referring to Congress’s poll promises in Haryana said the party has given seven guarantees in its manifesto including Rs 2,000 per month for women and told Hooda, who was standing behind him, “You will have to keep my honour”. Congress has not named its chief ministerial candidate, but Hooda is a frontrunner for the post. Invoking Lal Bahadur Shastri’s “Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan”

slogan, he said the BJP doesn’t “know about jawans or kisans”. “They only know the RSS’ agenda. No one is a farmer in the RSS or BJP. This is why they don’t understand the pain of the farmers. They help people like Adani-Ambani and not farmers. They don’t give MSP guarantee, but Modi waives Rs 16 lakh crore debt of the rich,” he said and also criticised the Agnipath military recruitment scheme. Keep such people at bay, Kharge said. He also fired a fresh salvo at the BJP after his “will not die till Modi is ousted” remarks. “I had gone to Jammu and Kashmir and felt dizzy for a while. There I said till the time we oust the BJP from power, till that time I won’t breathe my last. But they played it up so much, they taunted me by saying may he live for 125 years and see ‘Viksit Bharat,’” he said. “Pehle to ye dekho, aapke log dekhne ke liye zinda rahege ya nahi rahege, wahan toh Congress aake baithne wali hai” (first, you see whether your people will be alive or not to see it, The Congress is about to sit in power),” he said. Kharge said Modi made so many promises during the past 10 years including “putting Rs 15 lakh in everyone’s bank account and giving two crore jobs to youth each year, but everyone knows the fate of these promises”. The Congress president said the BJP is saying during the polls in Haryana that they will give five lakh jobs, whereas they did not fill over 1.60 lakh vacant posts.

# Maharashtra Government launches inquiry into Akshay Shinde encounter death

T N RAGHUNATHA ■  
MUMBAI

After stinging observations made by the Bombay High Court and fierce criticism by the Opposition Maha Vikas Agadi (MVA), the BJP-led MahaYuti government has set up a Commission of Inquiry into the “encounter killing” of Akshay Shinde, the prime accused in the Badlapur nursery school children sexual assault case. Justice Dilip Bhosale (Retd), former Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court, has been appointed as head of the judicial inquiry – set up under section 3 of the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952 to look into the circumstances leading to the alleged encounter death of Shinde on September 23. The Inquiry Commission has been asked to submit its report to the Maharashtra government within three months from the date of its appointment. Akshay Shinde -- key accused in the sensational Badlapur child sexual assault --was shot dead at a point blank range while he was being taken from Badlapur to Thane in a van for investigation in another case. As per the terms of the reference given to it, the Inquiry Commission will probe the sequence of events leading to the death of Shinde that took place at Mumbra Bypass, Thane on September 23 leading to the exchange of fire between accused and the police team that was escorting him to Thane on September 23 . It will fix responsibility for the incident. The Commission will look



into whether the steps taken by the police in handling the aforesaid situation were appropriate and suggest short term and long term measures to be taken by the Police in order to avoid reoccurrence of such incident. Narrating the incident, the notification issued by the Home department said: “...an incident occurred at Mumbra Bypass, Thane on 23rd September 2024, wherein there was an exchange of fire between one accused person named Akshay Shinde, and the accompanying police escort arty, resulting into injuries to both, the accused and one police officer. The accused Shri Akshay Shinde was taken to the hospital for treatment where he was declared dead on arrival...”. At hearing held on September 25, a HC bench of Justice Revati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan had questioned the version put out by the police Shinde was shot by the police in self

defence. Justice Chavan said “it is hard to believe” that a man of slight build as Akshay Shinde could be overpowered by the four policemen when he turned violent and pulled the slide back on a 9 mm pistol for firing which “requires strength”. It may be recalled that two nursery girls – aged four and six years -- were sexually abused allegedly by sweeper Shinde when they in the washroom of the kindergarten school run by Adarsh Vidya Prasarak Sanstha (AVPS) on August 13 for using the toilet there. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Thane police that investigated the case has filed a charge-sheet in the case before the special Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act court in Kalyan. The incident caused a major public uproar in the state and always as other parts of the state. The Opposition MVA – comprising Congress, Uddhav Thackeray-headed

Shiv Sena (UBT) and Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) – had demanded a judicial probe into the suspicious circumstances leading to the accused Shinde’s death in a police can. At a hearing held on October 1, the Bombay High Court pulled up the Maharashtra Police SIT for its failure to arrest two trustees of the Badlapur school where two minor girls were allegedly raped in August – with the prime accused Akshay A. Shinde was shot dead in a police encounter on September 23. A division bench comprising Justice Revati Mohite-Dere and Justice Prithviraj Chavan was hearing a suo-motu PIL into the alleged sexual assault on the two nursery girls, aged 3 and 5 years at the Badlapur-based nursery school. In a related development, a single-judge bench of Justice Rajesh Laddha rejected the anticipatory bail applications of the school trust’s Chairman and Secretary who are on the run since the incident and after the Trust was superseded as per the state government orders. “Considering that the (2) victims are minors, the trauma they have endured will have profound impact on their adolescent years, leaving long lasting and irreparable psychological scars. The applicants (Trustees) hold important positions in the school... There are chances that they may tamper with the evidence and pressurize the witnesses who are employees of the school,” Justice Laddha said while rejecting the anticipatory bail applications made by the Chairman and the secretary.



## Modi wishes Netanyahu, Jewish community on Rosh Hashanah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday greeted his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu and the Jewish community on their new year. He said in a social media post, “Best wishes on Rosh Hashanah to my friend PM @netanyahu, the people of Israel and the Jewish community across the world. May the new year bring peace, hope and good health in everyone’s life. Shana Tova!”

# Two Indian navy officers set sail on historic global expedition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
PANAJI

Two women officers of the Indian Navy - Lt Commander Dilna K and Lt Commander Roopa A - on Wednesday embarked from Goa on a challenging expedition to circumnavigate the globe covering 21,600 nautical miles over eight months. Flaggng off their journey, Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi said the two women officers represent an India which defies societal dogmas and aspires to explore new frontiers and the expedition will also contribute towards progressing national scientific research. “The two officers are expected to return to Goa in May 2025. The voyage was flagged off from the Naval Ocean Sailing Node, INS Mandovi near Panaji, as both the officers sailed on the Indian Naval Sailing Vessel (INSV) Tarini. Chief of the Southern Naval Command Vice Admiral V Srinivas and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.



“Addressing a gathering, Admiral Tripathi said the ‘Navika Sagar Parikrama’ will contribute towards progressing national scientific research in collaboration with the National Institute of Oceanography (CSIR-NIO) in Goa for a study on marine micro-plastics and ferrous content across the seas. “It will also contribute with the Wildlife Institute of India for an exploration on megafauna or large sea mammals, Sagar Defence (start up) for their drones that promise spectacular visuals of the voyage, and Defence Food Research Laboratory towards providing customised precooked Indian meals so

that “our valiant warriors always feel at home,” he added. “He said both the women officers represent the confidence, courage and conviction of today’s India and her Navy. Both the officers represents an India that draws on the experience of 6,000 years of civilisational wisdom and radiates the ambition of a 77-year young independent nation, he said. ““An India that defies societal dogmas and aspires to explore new frontiers. An India that is confident of its capabilities, and has the courage to overcome any challenge along the way,” Admiral Tripathi

added. ““At a time, when our nation is once again taking to the seas on its transformational journey to be Viksit Bharat, this edition of Navika Sagar Parikrama embodies the indomitable spirit of Sashakt and Saksham India,” he said. “Talking to reporters after the ceremony, Admiral Tripathi said it is a proud moment for everyone in the Indian navy that the two sailors will be demonstrating their skills, sense of adventure, fearlessness and focus and ability to fight the tough situations. “Indian Navy would be monitoring their adventure. We wish them all the best as they commence their journey today,” he said. The adventurous journey will take the two women officers through some of the most treacherous waters, including the perilous passage around the three great capes -- Cape Leeuwin, Cape Horn and Cape of Good Hope, he said. There are only two crew members but the mission is one to fly high the Indian flag, Admiral Tripathi said.

# Liquor worth ₹8.20 crores, narcotics, cash seized in Gurgaon

PARVESH SHARMA ■  
GURGAON

After the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct, so far Rs 8.20 crores of illegal liquor, narcotics and cash have been seized in Gurugram district. District Election Officer and Deputy Commissioner Gurgaon Nishant Kumar Yadav said the administration is in active mode to maintain law and order in the district before the upcoming polling on October 5 for the Haryana Assembly Elections. He informed that 12 flying squad teams of the district administration and the police have now seized cash, illegal liquor, narcotics and other materials worth Rs 8.20 crores “The seized items include cash worth Rs 5.80 crore, 28,000 liters of illegal liquor worth Rs 1 crore, drugs and other valuables worth about Rs 1.28 crores,” Yadav said. He said that action will be taken against carrying more than 50,000 cash during the Model Code of Conduct. “To maintain law and order



and conduct peaceful polling during the Assembly General Elections, cash and illegal liquor along with other material that can influence the elections are being monitored at the district borders,” Yadav asserted. The district administration is fully alert in view of the assembly elections. “Various FST teams, administration and police are checking border area roads namely Khedki Toll Plaza, KMP Toll Plaza at Panchgaon, MCD Toll Plaza on Delhi-

Gurgaon border, Ghamdoj Toll, Kapasada Border and Bandhwadi Toll by setting up checkpoints each so that cash, illegal liquor and other items can be confiscated,” Yadav added. Earlier the police had disclosed that around 399 people were arrested and 26351.805 litres of liquor worth over Rs 95.43 lakh has been seized from them with the period of 16 September to 29 September and around 359 case were registered after imposition of the poll code.

# Polarisation in Kerala over CM Vijayan’s gold smuggling remarks

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A statement made by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in a press meet held on 21st September where he disclosed details about the seizure of smuggled gold and hawala money from Malappuram district has polarized Kerala community on communal lines and that too after a fortnight. In a media interaction on 21st September, Chief Minister Vijayan had said that out of the 147 kg smuggled gold seized in the State during the last three years Malappuram district accounted for 124.47 kg yellow metal. He also said that the district accounted for Rs 87.22 crore out of the Rs 122.5 crore hawala cash seized during the same period. Vijayan’s answers were in response to the independent MLA P V Anvar’s allegation that the police as well as a senior official of the chief minister’s office were hand in gloves in tormenting those who brought gold when they



returned home from West Asian countries. What the chief minister told a daily known more as the English version of CPI(M)’s mouthpiece ‘Deshabhimani on 29th September at New Delhi was that the money generated out of gold smuggling and hawala transaction was being used for anti-national activities. Interestingly, Vijayan did not name any political party or communities as accused in the illegal activities. Within 24 hours of the Chennai daily publishing the

interview with Vijayan, the press secretary to the chief minister issued a release stating that the interview has been distorted by the reporter and the paper had put words into his mouth. The newspaper, the honcho of which is described as a close confidante of the Marxist bosses, issued a correction stating that some sentences that were not part of the interview were added in the published version at the request of the PR person who helped arrange the interview, “We unreservedly apologies

for this serious error of judgment on the part of the reporter and the lack of editorial oversight in this instance,” said the newspaper in its columns on Wednesday. Political and cultural Kerala sees this as part of appeasing the Muslim community. The Muslim League and various Islamist outfits had come out strongly against the chief minister’s disclosures on gold smuggling and hawala deals. “Their approach itself is shocking as what the chief minister told the media was based on data he might have sourced from official sources. It is surprising to hear the statement made by Anvar and others that the chief minister had hurt the sentiments of Muslims in Malappuram district,” said Valsan Thillankeri, top RSS leader in Kerala. Valsan pointed out that Malappuram district which has a population of 45 lakh out of which nearly 20 per cent belong to Hindu community while the Muslims constitute 75 per

cent. How come the Muslims claim monopoly over gold smuggling and hawala transaction, asked Valsan. Anvar, an Islamist politician who had succeeded in infiltrating into the inner coterie of the chief minister’s office and residence, had alleged that P Sasi, Vijayan’s political secretary as a criminal. Vijayan had said that Sasi was a role model for all Marxists and he does not need any good service entry from anybody. Interestingly, no mainstream media in the State had reported about the data about gold and hawala transaction furnished by the chief minister during his 21st September press meet. But Governor Arif Mohammed Khan told reporters at Kozhikode on Wednesday that it was mandatory on the part of the chief minister to inform Raj Bhavan about the gold smuggling and hawala deals since these were issues concerning national security.

# Gurgaon to webcast polling stations for peaceful voting

PARVESH SHARMA ■  
GURGAON

To conduct peaceful voting in Gurgaon assembly elections, all 1507 polling stations of the district will be webcasted by installing CCTV cameras. For this, a district level control room will be set up in the auditorium of the Mini Secretariat complex. Deputy Commissioner and District Election Officer of Gurgaon, Nishant Kumar Yadav said that on October 5, voting will be held from 7 am to 6 pm at 1507 polling stations in Badshahpur, Sohna, Gurgaon and Pataudi assembly constituencies of the district. For this purpose, CCTV cameras will be installed at the polling stations, which will be webcasted. Yadav said that there are 257 critical booths in the district,

where two cameras will be installed to record the inside and outside activities. If any person tries to disrupt the voting system, it will be recorded in CCTV and strict action will be taken immediately. “Three more booths have been added in Badshahpur assembly constituency with the permission of the Election Commission. Now there are 521 booths here. Apart from this, there are 435 booths in Gurgaon assembly, 292 in Sohna and 259 in Pataudi. Election officers of all four assembly constituencies can also view any booth through webcasting in their control rooms,” Yadav said. Apart from this, to ensure peaceful voting here in Gurgaon district the Gurgaon police have placed full security arrangements which includes the deployment of

security personnel as 257 polling premises marked critical. Police said they have deployed 4,800 police personnel and home guards and half a section of central paramilitary forces in addition to the 10 companies of paramilitary forces, home guards, special police officers (SPOs) and 6,000 personnel of the Gurugram. “Salutes in plain clothes have been deployed to keep a close tab on illegal activity during the elections, which includes tracking illegal cash transactions, distribution of liquor, or any other items suspected of the voters,” police said. Over 14 lakh people are eligible to exercise their franchise in the upcoming elections of the Gurgaon district’s four assembly constituencies, where polling will be held on October 5.



## West Asia on edge

Iran-Israel conflict escalates amid missile strikes and global concerns. It is high time to de-escalate the tension

The fragile peace in West Asia has once again been shattered as Iran launched a missile barrage against Israel, intensifying fears of a broader conflict in the region. On Tuesday night, Iran fired 181 ballistic missiles, forcing nearly 10 million Israelis into bomb shelters as the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) scrambled to intercept the attack. While the Iron Dome and Arrow defence systems managed to neutralise most of the missiles, some projectiles penetrated Israel's defences, causing minor damage. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu immediately condemned the assault, calling it a 'big mistake' by Iran. He warned that Tehran would face severe consequences, though stopping short of declaring a full-scale war. This marked Iran's second missile strike against Israel this year, following a similar offensive in April. Iranian officials claimed that the missile salvo was in retaliation for the recent killings of senior Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, targeted in Israeli military operations.



The missile strike has drawn immediate international reactions, with the United States issuing a stern warning to Iran. US President Joe Biden has assured military support for a joint response to any further aggression from Iran. However, the involvement of the US in the conflict could further destabilise the already volatile region, raising concerns of potential Iranian retaliation not just against Israel but also against US military interests in the region. Add to this the entry of Russia and China into the conflict. Meanwhile the humanitarian crisis is escalating, with hundreds of thousands displaced across Lebanon

and Gaza. As the death toll rises, regional stability is being tested, with fears that Iraq and Jordan, both geographically close to the conflict, could be drawn into the violence. The global community is urging de-escalation, with United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres leading calls for an immediate ceasefire. While diplomatic efforts continue, the possibility of a long-lasting peace seems distant, with both Israel and Iran preparing for further confrontations. The time is running out for the peace in the region and the world. As it would not be long before both Russia and China also join the war should the US and the West get involved any deeper. The path to de-escalation lies in concerted diplomatic engagement by major global powers, especially the US, Russia, and European nations. In this scenario India could play a crucial role which has a neutral stance and is friends with both Russia and the US and also Israel and Iran. Indeed, the immediate focus should be on creating humanitarian corridors for civilians caught in the conflict zones and ensuring that aid reaches those affected by the violence in Lebanon, Gaza and Israel. Establishing a no-fly zone and enforcing a temporary halt in military operations could create a conducive environment for peace talks.

### PICTALK



Mahatma Gandhi's statue, decorated with flower on his birth anniversary, in New Delhi

PTI

## The battle over CPI(M) leader M M Lawrence's final journey

The Kerala High Court now holds the fate of his remains as the ideological clash within his family raises larger questions about faith and political ideology

One may apologise for seeing some similarities between the 1983 movie *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron* (directed by Kundan Shah) and the demise of CPI(M) leader M M Lawrence last month. *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron* was immortalised by the black humour associated with Indian politics and a splendid show by Satish Shah who perfected his role as the dead body of D'Mello.

It has been more than a fortnight since Lawrence (95) breathed his last. But his dead body has become a subject of litigation and it is waiting for a verdict from the Kerala High Court as his younger daughter Asha Lawrence challenged the decision of the late leader's son M L Sajeevan to hand over the mortal remains to Government Medical College, Ernakulam, for the MBBS students for studies. Sajeevan, a Kerala Government lawyer, claims that his late father did not believe in any religion and had left word with him to donate the body to the MCH students. But Asha released the wedding pictures of Lawrence which were held in a church and which was being



solemnised by a Catholic priest. She also argues that her elder sister Suja and her husband were evangelists working in West Asia to free the sinners from their sins. When it was time for the relatives, friends and well-wishers of Lawrence to bid 'Lal Salam', a scuffle broke out between the deceased leader's son, daughter, and son-in-law on one side and Asha on the other side. Asha and her son Milan Joseph wanted the mortal remains to be interred as per Catholic rites in a cemetery where they had buried their mother. Following a plea by Asha, the High Court asked the Medical College authorities to take possession of the body, and keep it in the mortuary till a final decision is made on the issue. When it was time for

the body to be removed to the MCH, a sobbing Asha fell on the coffin and started weeping uncontrollably saying that she would not allow her father's body to be left to the students to dissect and mutilate. The relations of Sajeevan physically assaulted Asha and her son Milan alleging them to be RSS agents. Sajeevan alleges that the RSS and other Sangh Parivar 'elements' were behind the showdown. A CPI(M) leader claimed that Communists across the world hand over their bodies to medical colleges as they do not believe in religious rites. But bodies of EMS Namboodirippadu, E K Nayanar, CPI(M) state boss Kodiyeri Balakrishnan and A K Gopalan were consigned to flames as per Hindu rites. In contrast, the body of T V Thomas was interred at a special cemetery meant for comrades. Even E K Imbichi Bawa, a former Marxist minister, was buried as per Islamic rituals in a grave after the recital of Quranic verses and Janazah. The new age leaders in the CPI(M) like Elamaram Kareem (Kareemikka), A A Rahim MP and K T Jaleel, may have to take immediate

decisions regarding their last journey. Archie Brown (author of *The Rise and Fall of Communism*) has stated that the downfall of Communism began with it turning into a religion. The life sketch of Castro says that his mortal remain was consigned to flames and the ashes were interred in the Santa Ifigenia Cemetery. If the Communist parties make it mandatory that the dead bodies of all comrades be handed over to medical colleges for teaching purposes, our medical students stand to benefit. Devika, a second-year MBBS student in a famous Government Medical College in Chennai says that only postgraduate and final semester students get the chance to dissect dead bodies because of shortage of bodies. According to George Orwell, the Communist parties have a unique rule: all are equal but some are more equal. Hence the leaders and their close family members may get a reprieve from the scalpel of wannabe doctors.

(The writer is South India bureau chief with the Pioneer; views are personal)



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Madam — The Supreme Court not only addressed the Tirupati laddu controversy, asserting that religious matters should remain separate from politics, but also admonished Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu for publicly alleging without basis that adulterated ghee was used to make laddus at Tirumala Tirupati temple, causing distress among devotees. The bench of Justices B R Gavi and K V Viswanathan questioned the State and Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) for proof and discussed the potential transfer of the investigation to an independent agency, seeking assistance from the solicitor general. Though the SC observed that politics should be kept out of the issue of faith, how to keep God out of politics? At the Ram Mandir inauguration, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was doing Aarti. In Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud's house PM Modi was doing Ganapati Puja while CJI was only standing by. People want to know why PM Modi was invited to the CJI house if God is to be kept out of politics. No doubt Naidu's allegation about animal fat seems to be a simple political allegation. Very rightly, the top court questioned whether there was any material with the CM to conclude definitively that animal fat had been used to prepare laddus at the Hindu shrine in Andhra Pradesh, where Lord Venkateswara is worshipped. However, the fake story by Chandrababu Naidu is nothing but to take revenge against his predecessor YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, because he jailed him? But he did not even think it would hurt crores of Hindu devotees.

### IMPROVING URBAN WATER RESOURCES

Madam — Apropos the article, 'Revive shallow aquifers for urban water woes in India', published on October 1. Aquifers can be a useful and permanent solution to improve groundwater levels across the country during the summer. Bore wells that

When controversy and suspicion surround an innocuous sweet like Srivari Laddu sold by the Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanam, it does not stop there. It has gone much further in the past week and become a political weapon for Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu to beat his predecessor, Jagan Mohan Reddy. Other political parties like the Congress and the BJP use it to their advantage. Some see it as a religious issue. Some others see it as a food quality issue. The spiritual leaders claim that laddu is divine food and that contaminated laddus should not be offered to the deity.

The political row surrounding the laddu highlights the delicate balance between politics, religion, food quality, and the public. The delicious laddus are made in pure ghee with sugar, cardamom, raisins, cashews and gram flour. Fourteen tons of cow ghee were used daily to make laddu prasadam in a modernised kitchen. They are first offered to god and distributed to the devotees as the divine 'prasad'. The laddus also bring Rs 500 crores annually by selling them to the devotees. Naidu seized the laddu controversy to attack Jagan. He accused the Reddy government of allowing contaminated laddu with beef fat in the ghee as prasad. He raised it at a celebration of the Modi government completing 100 days in his third term. TDP is part of the Coalition government at the Centre. Laddu came into focus in the sixties and seventies also. At that time, there were concerns about adding Dalda vanaspati, a vegetable fat, to the ghee. Shipments with this added fat were rejected, and the suppliers were blocked. In another case, there was a dispute between two Vaishnavite groups about the tilak on Lord Venkateswara. The two groups apply different types of tilaks to Venkateswara's forehead. The top court ruled that both tilaks should be used, fifteen days each in a month. The TDP won the Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections in June. Reddy's YSRCP was



trounced. After winning the Assembly election, TDP used the laddu issue as Naidu, claiming that the Jagan government's cost-cutting measures led to the purchase of low-quality ghee, compromising the quality of the Tirumala Laddu. Naidu accused Jagan of neglect of Hindu religious practices during his regime. Significantly, Jagan and his late father and Chief Minister, Rajashekar Reddy, are Christians. Reddy has refuted the allegations, claiming it was politically motivated. Jagan has complained to Prime Minister Narendra Modi that Chandrababu was trying to settle political scores against him. The YSRCP also criticised Naidu and performed the purification ceremony. Jagan was denied permission to enter the temple for any penance. The laddu controversy has been blown out of proportion in the past week. Jagan did not find support from the other parties. Even Jagan's sister Sharmila joined the Congress and became the Andhra Pradesh unit chief. She has taken the issue to the Andhra Pradesh governor and seeks a CBI inquiry. Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister, Naidu's

THE LADDU CONTROVERSY HAS ALSO LED TO DEMANDS THAT TEMPLES BE FREED FROM STATE CONTROL. THIS HAS COME UP NOW AND THEN. BUT NO GOVERNMENT WANTS TO LET GO OF THEIR MASSIVE TEMPLES

coalition partner, and a famous movie star, Pavan Kalyan, is taking up the issue on religious grounds. He has gone on an 11-day penance claiming the corrupted ghee was a grave offence. While Naidu plays the political card, Kalyan plays the religious card, saying Sanathana Dharma should be protected. The laddu controversy has spread widely when the media, public figures and some Political leaders have questioned the quality of laddus. It has sparked nationwide outrage among seers and devotees. Unsurprisingly, other organisations like the VHP, a sister organisation of the BJP, the Ayodhya seers and other religious institutions have demanded a thorough enquiry. The Ayodhya and Puri Jagannath priests have sent their prasad for quality check-up. The laddu controversy has also led to demands that temples be freed from State control. This has come up now and then. But no government wants to let go of their massive temples for free. On the legal side, Surjit Singh Yadav, President of Hindu Sena Samiti, has taken the issue to the Supreme Court, demand-

ing a special Investigation team to go into the issue. The State government has also set up a committee. The Centre has asked the State to send a report. Meanwhile, the TTD tried to contain the damage. It conducted a purification ritual and assured the devotees that laddus were not contaminated. The issue is evolving and may take longer to resolve now that it has gone to court. It suits Babu and Modi to keep the issue burning. However, such a sensitive issue could go out of control and become a law and order problem if not checked. The longer it remains, the more the risk of religious sensitivity looming. The controversy shows the need to balance politics, food and religion. Political and religious leaders must carefully consider how different segments of society will perceive their actions regarding spiritual matters. When faith is politicised, it becomes susceptible. Politicians must be vigilant not to make it an emotional issue. In any case, we must wait to see what the Supreme Court does as it has the final word.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Dada Saheb Phalke for Mithun Da



Apropos to 'Dadasaheb Phalke finally acknowledge Mrigayaa actor' published on October 1. Gouranga Chakraborty aka Mithun Da was born in Barisal, Bangladesh. He

has had his share of struggle when he had to sleep on Bombay pavements with a hungry stomach in his early life. He even assisted yesteryear's dancing sensation Helen. He is the only actor to be awarded a National award for his debut film and later he won two more National awards. He also holds a black belt in martial arts. Today it is common for chiseled body actors to flaunt their six or eight packs, but it was Mithun Chakraborty who started this trend. His super hit film 'Disco Dancer' not only became a hit movie in India but has a cult following in the former USSR, Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East. A Limca Book of Records in his name, 19 movies released in 1989, is still unbroken. His rise to the top is indeed a testament that one can fulfil his dreams. He truly deserves this esteemed honour.

Bal Govind | Noida

are sunk several feet deep have much affected the groundwater resource. , the open wells, which tap the top shallow aquifer, can help preserve rainwater. This is a traditional method followed immediately after the rains during winter. The groundwater source is in two discontinuous layers: one, the top or shallow aquifer comprising water-bearing rocks like sandstone, and two, sand and gravel and the deeper aquifer. These two are separated by hard rocks. The top aquifer is fed with water from the rain that percolates. Based on the geology of the area, some of these aquifers could, in fact, have more water than those below, experts say. But how big are the aquifers beneath us, and what is their storage capacity? Well, it is for the respective state water boards to find answers to these complex questions.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

### PARENTING IN DIGITAL AGE

Madam — It refers to 'The challenges of parenting in the age of technology' (October 1). The pressures of parenting have become overwhelming in the past two

decades, especially in this new age of technology. While countless resources, both books and online guides, offer seemingly perfect solutions, none can fully deal with each child's unique needs. The communication barriers of gadgets introduced in this era are disrupting the natural flow of interaction. As Freud proposed social responsibilities, along with the implications of rewards and punishments, this can profoundly impact mental health, particularly in today's highly competitive environment. Not only teens, but parents these days feel compelled to showcase their children on social media as stars of extracurriculars and academics, often succumbing to the added pressure of 'helicopter parenting', which can lead to more harmful methods of discipline. The harsh reality is that the extreme consequences of strict parenting can lead to perilous consequences, proving that striking a balance is the key to avoiding such tragedies.

Shaswat Jena | Ghaziabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

TRAITS OF A TRUE LEADER

The impact of servant leadership on a team or organisation brings about profound transformation



RACHNA LAKHPAT

The concept of servant leadership is an interesting and refreshing approach to leadership in the competitive corporate environment of the present day. In this style of leadership, the focus is on empowering individuals within the team to grow and excel in their careers, fostering a culture of success and personal development. Servant leadership is a strong force in building teams that are high-performing, loyal, and motivated. At its essence, servant leadership revolves around genuine concern and care for individuals. It's not about seeking popularity or seeking approval. Creating the right atmosphere is crucial for everyone to thrive.

A true leader understands that their success is intertwined with the success of those they serve. Small gestures can have a big impact on the team. Whether it's a thank-you note, lending an ear, or offering a helping hand during tough times, these actions can make a difference. Creating a culture that values humility, acknowledges mistakes, and respects diverse perspectives fosters an atmosphere of respect and openness. When leaders prioritise the well-being of their members in their leadership, they earn loyalty through a genuine concern for their people rather than relying on their authority or instilling fear. Only then will they likely go the extra mile when they sense genuine care and understanding on a deeper level. Loyalty is not something that can be demanded, but rather something that can be earned through consistent and authentic action.

A manager or supervisor who truly appreciates the hard work of their team members goes beyond just words and takes action, offering growth opportunities, publicly recognising achievements, and providing support during challenging times. This fosters a positive atmosphere, resulting in members who are more motivated and dedicated to the group. Inspiring leaders foster a strong sense of camaraderie and purpose within their teams by instilling a deep sense of belonging to the vision. They create a sense of collective purpose while ensuring that every individual feels included in the task at hand. This will ignite a fire within the team members, driving them to reach new heights of productivity and effectiveness. Leaders who prioritise the success of the team over personal recognition are more effective at inspiring and rallying people.

By doing so, a powerful chain reaction is set in motion: It fosters a spirit of collaboration and cooperation. We thrive on collaboration, celebrating achievements as a team, and fearlessly tackling obstacles together. Contrary to what many believe, the foundation of strong and influential leadership lies in humility and compassion. Leaders who embrace a servant mindset are not afraid to get their hands dirty and collaborate with their team members. They understand that true power comes from empowering others, rather than simply exerting authority.

The impact of servant leadership on a team or organisation runs deep and brings about profound transformation. The servant leader places a high emphasis on the growth and success of their members, using actions that instil a strong sense of loyalty, dedication, and motivation. Acts of kindness, modesty, and generosity are not signs of weakness but powerful tools for creating strong and cohesive teams. In a world where leadership is often seen as a display of power, servant leaders demonstrate that true strength lies in selflessly serving others.

*(The writer is a motivator and a freelance writer; views are personal)*

# Navigating the new safety norms for heavy industry



A S MITTAL

## The manufacturing landscape in India is set for a seismic shift as the Ministry of Heavy Industry rolls out the ‘Machinery and Electrical Equipment Safety Regulation 2024’

The manufacturing industry is already grappling with a complex web of regulations, and a new stringent regulation has been added to the mix. Recently, The Ministry of Heavy Industry has introduced the 'Machinery and Electrical Equipment Safety Regulation 2024' to ensure that safety practices in India align with global standards. While these new standards aim to enhance safety and compliance, they are expected to significantly impact Indian manufacturers, primarily micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which previously also complied with over 400 regulations. The new regulation will impact over 50,000 types of machinery, including industrial equipment like pumps, compressors, cranes, and transformers. Manufacturers must adhere to stringent safety requirements set by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). However, many Indian manufacturers, particularly MSMEs, may struggle to meet these new standards within the given one-year deadline (August 2025), as they often operate with limited resources. Under the new machinery safety standards, all manufacturers must register with the BIS and obtain a BIS standard mark or certificate of conformity. Compliance will be governed by three distinct safety standards: Type A, B, and C. Type A standards are general safety guidelines for all machinery. At the same time, Type B covers generic safety requirements, and Type C standards are machine-specific safety guidelines.

While the regulation does not apply to machinery exclusively manufactured for export, most companies produce goods for domestic and export markets, making BIS certification necessary for their entire product range. The requirement for prior BIS approval for both production and imports could create bottlenecks in production and impact the availability of essential machinery and equipment.

**Fiscal and Technical Burden:** The new machinery safety standards will impose a significant financial burden on MSMEs. Compliance costs vary widely, ranging from Rs 50,000 to Rs 5 lakh, depending on the type and complexity of the machinery. These costs cover certification, safety upgrades, risk assessments, employee training, and the technical requirements to bring machinery up to standard.

Many MSMEs operate within thin margins, and these costs may lead to closure for some businesses. In addition to financial challenges, many smaller firms need help with a technological gap, as they may need access to advanced machinery or technology that complies with the new standards. Retrofitting existing equipment or purchasing new machinery will require a significant investment, which may be out of reach for smaller businesses.

Furthermore, MSMEs often need a more skilled workforce to implement the necessary safety measures, which can strain already tight budgets. Another major challenge is the complexity of the regulations themselves. The technical language used in the order is complex for smaller firms to navigate, and the lack of detailed implementation guidelines from BIS has only added to the confusion.

MSMEs, which frequently operate with



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limited administrative resources, struggle to understand how to comply with these multi-layered standards. More precise instructions would enable many firms to proceed with the necessary upgrades. Impact: This regulation will have a significant effect. India's machinery and electrical equipment imports, totalling \$25 billion in FY2024, could face delays as companies await BIS approval. With 39.1 per cent of these imports originating from China, delays could worsen supply chain bottlenecks, further slowing industrial growth.

Domestic manufacturers catering to the local and export markets must successfully navigate the new compliance landscape, which adds to the regulatory burden on an already stressed sector. While machinery intended for export is not subject to the regulation, most manufacturers produce goods for both domestic and international markets. This means that even businesses focused on exports will need BIS certification for their entire product line. Consequently, the exemption offers limited relief, and manufacturers must adhere to the same safety standards. Challenges in Implementation: Adopting a phased approach to implementation is imperative to address these challenges.

The current one-year compliance timeline is unequivocally inadequate, particularly for MSMEs that lack the financial and technical resources to meet stringent safety standards. Extending the deadline to afford MSMEs more time to adapt is not just a preference but a necessity. A three-year timeline for meeting Type A standards and an addi-

tional five years to comply with Type B and C standards is not just a suggestion but a requirement. This approach aligns with the phased regulatory models in other countries, such as the European Union, where industries are routinely allocated five to seven years to transition to new safety standards. Furthermore, implementing the standards in phases based on the machinery's complexity and risk level is not just a recommendation but a mandate. This approach allows firms to prioritise safety upgrades without jeopardising their operations. For example, enforcing horizontal safety standards (Type A) followed by vertical (Type B and C) standards as businesses gain the technical and financial capacity to comply is not just an option but a necessity.

The medical devices industry in India provides a practical example, where voluntary registration was initially encouraged, followed by mandatory standards based on the risk level of the device. This model is not just a suggestion but a blueprint that could be adapted for the machinery sector, providing a more manageable path toward compliance.

**The Way Forward:** Government support is crucial in helping MSMEs meet the new safety standards. Financial assistance, such as subsidies or low-interest loans, must help smaller firms afford the necessary upgrades to their machinery. Additionally, the government must conduct awareness campaigns and training programs to educate businesses on the importance of these regulations. It is imperative to establish a dedicated helpdesk to guide MSMEs through the certification process,

alleviating confusion and streamlining compliance efforts. MSMEs often lack the expertise needed to navigate such complex regulations, and without access to trained consultants, many businesses will struggle to meet compliance requirements. Here, industry associations can and must play a pivotal role. By negotiating bulk certification agreements, conducting training sessions, and providing technical guidance to MSMEs, these associations are ideally placed to bridge the gap between government regulations and industry readiness, ensuring a smoother transition for smaller firms. Certifying technical professionals who can assist in implementing these standards is essential. The Machinery and Electrical Equipment Safety Regulation-2024 represents a necessary step toward improving manufacturing safety in India. However, the challenges facing MSMEs in complying with these new regulations are substantial. Therefore, a phased approach to implementation, combined with targeted government support, is crucial to ensure that the benefits of these new regulations are fully realised without unduly burdening the MSMEs, the backbone of Indian manufacturing.


*(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika ITL Group, Vice-Chairman (Cabinet minister rank) of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President of Tractor and Mechanization Association (TMA); Views expressed are personal)*

# Navigating opportunities and challenges in a shifting energy landscape

## The Adani Group finds itself at a critical juncture as Bangladesh gears up to renegotiate the Power Purchase Agreement

The energy market dynamics, particularly in rapidly growing economies like India, present unique opportunities for merchant and untied capacities. For the Adani Group, one of India's largest conglomerates with a substantial footprint in the energy sector, the current Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Bangladesh is both an opportunity and a potential challenge. With growing voices within Bangladesh calling for the renegotiation of the PPA, the landscape is shifting, presenting both risks and advantages for Adani.

Background of the Agreement The PPA between Adani and Bangladesh was established to enhance energy security for a nation facing persistent power shortages and increasing



SURYA SARATHI RAY

the northern regions of the country.

**Current Challenges** Recent criticisms from Bangladeshi media allege that Adani is selling power at exorbitant rates. In response, Adani has referenced government data to assert that its electricity is indeed the cheapest compared to other similar fuel-based power plants. However, Bangladesh is facing a significant financial crunch, with over \$800 million owed to Adani for power supplied. Despite this outstanding debt, Adani has continued its supply but finds the situation increasingly untenable, given its obligations to lenders and suppliers. This growing receivable issue threatens to affect Adani's credit profile, potentially raising the cost of funds

across its operations. In a significant policy shift, the Indian government recently allowed power plants exporting electricity to connect to the national grid. This move could be advantageous for Adani Power, as it opens up the domestic market for the Godda plant, which is currently not integrated with the Indian grid. Adani remains committed to honoring its contract with Bangladesh while also requesting the early settlement of outstanding dues. If Bangladesh fails to meet its payment obligations or decides to terminate the PPA, Adani can pivot its focus towards sales within India.

**Economic Considerations** One of the main economic factors influencing this scenario is the disparity in electricity

rates between India and Bangladesh. The Indian power market has seen a marked increase in electricity prices driven by robust economic growth. By redirecting power supplies to India, Adani could take advantage of these higher rates, thus boosting profitability. Recent trends indicate that peak power prices have reached around Rs 10/kWh for extended periods, a figure



likely to rise due to heightened demand for coal-based power. The cost of coal, crucial for power generation, is influenced by global market fluctuations. While the Godda plant operates on imported coal, its proximity to India's coal reserves allows for reduced logistical costs, further enhancing Adani's operational efficiency.

Given this context, Adani stands to benefit significantly from redirecting its power supply to the Indian market, rather than continuing to fulfill its obligations under the existing PPA with Bangladesh.

**Regulatory Environment** The Indian government's focus on self-reliance and energy security has created a favorable environment for domestic power producers. Initiatives

like "Atmanirbhar Bharat" and "Make in India" seek to reduce import dependency and promote local production and consumption. In line with these national priorities, Adani could leverage its resources to address India's escalating energy demands effectively.

The National Electricity Plan forecasts that India's peak power demand will surge from 203 GW in FY22 to 277 GW by FY27, and further to 366 GW by FY32. This growth implies the need for an additional 80 GW of coal-based capacity by FY32. With its existing 1.6 GW capacity at the Godda plant, Adani is well-positioned to play a pivotal role in meeting this demand.

**Navigating Future Decisions** While the potential benefits of terminating the PPA are com-

prising, such a move carries inherent risks. Breaking an international agreement could lead to diplomatic consequences and adversely affect Adani's global reputation. Nevertheless, if the Bangladesh government were to initiate a renegotiation or termination of the agreement, Adani would likely find itself in a more advantageous position, allowing it to pivot toward the lucrative Indian market without the constraints of the PPA. The company must balance its commitment to the agreement while remaining agile enough to capitalise on emerging market conditions in India, ensuring its long-term growth and sustainability in the energy sector.

*(The writer is a financial journalist; views are personal)*



# UK PM condemns Iran’s missile attacks on Israel

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has condemned Iran’s missile attacks against Israel as he embarked on a tour to Brussels on Wednesday, where the issue will feature high on the agenda during his talks with European Union (EU) leaders. Starmer spoke to Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu to express the UK’s “steadfast commitment” to Israeli security and the protection of civilians, adding that the UK stands with Israel and its “right to self-defence”.

He also made phone calls to French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to discuss the serious risk of regional escalation and the “urgent need for de-escalation, with all parties needing to show restraint”. “I utterly condemn this attempt by the Iranian regime to harm innocent Israelis, to escalate this incredibly dangerous situation and push the region ever closer to the brink,” said Starmer in a televised address from 10 Downing Street in London on Tuesday night. “We stand with Israel, and we recognise her right to self-defence in the face of this aggression,” he said. He called on Iran to “stop these attacks”, saying it had “menaced the Middle East



Demonstrators celebrate Iran’s missile strike against Israel during a gathering in front of the British Embassy in Tehran, Iran, Tuesday.

for far too long.” “I am deeply concerned that the region is on the brink, and I’m deeply concerned about the risk of miscalculation,” he added. Earlier, Downing Street said that Iran’s attack on Israel began

during the leaders’ conversation in which Starmer expressed the UK’s support for Israeli security. “During the call (with Netanyahu), the Prime Minister also underlined the importance of a ceasefire in Lebanon to

allow space for a political solution in line with UNSC Resolution 1701. The Prime Minister also raised the situation in Gaza and the importance of a ceasefire and action to bring home the hostages,” Downing

Street said. On Tuesday, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said it had launched missiles in retaliation for recent attacks that killed the leaders of the Hezbollah and Hamas militant groups, as well as a senior Iranian commander. Israel said most of the 180 missiles fired were intercepted. UK forces were also involved in supporting Israel, with Defence Secretary John Healey saying British forces had “played their part in attempts to prevent further escalation”, without giving more details. “I completely condemn Iran’s attack against Israel. British forces have this evening (Tuesday) played their part in attempts to prevent further escalation in the Middle East,” Healey said. “I want to thank all British personnel involved in the operation for their courage and professionalism. The UK stands fully behind Israel’s right to defend its country and its people against threats,” he said. While Healey will make his way to Cyprus to visit British personnel stationed there, Starmer will be in Brussels for his pre-planned meeting with EU leaders. Besides the escalating situation between Israel and Iran, he is scheduled to continue his drive to improve the UK’s relationship with the EU. Downing Street said he wants to set out his determination to move beyond Brexit and make

the UK’s relationship with the EU work for the British people, focused on delivering a broad-based security pact, securing our borders and tackling barriers to trade. In a statement ahead of the tour, Starmer said: “The UK is undeniably stronger when it works in lockstep with its closest international partners. This has never been more important – with war, conflict and insecurity all knocking on Europe’s door. “We will only be able to tackle these challenges by putting our collective weight behind them, which is why I am so determined to put the Brexit years behind us and establish a more pragmatic and mature relationship with the European Union. “Better cooperation with the EU will deliver the benefits the British people deserve – securing our borders, keeping us safe and boosting economic growth.” He has meetings scheduled with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, European Council President Charles Michel and President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola. The central message would be to reiterate the importance of like-minded countries cooperating more closely on areas of shared interest at a time of wars in Ukraine and West Asia, as well as the rise of smuggling gangs trafficking people across Europe.

# Houthi rebels seek gains from ongoing Middle East conflict

AP ■ CAIRO

In the days since Israel intensified its campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon, including the strike that killed the militant group’s leader Hassan Nasrallah, Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthi rebels have been quick to show they are an important player in the complex conflicts convulsing the Middle East. In a brazen attack on Saturday, the Houthis fired a ballistic missile at Israel’s main airport as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was arriving back from New York, where he had addressed the United Nations. On Monday, they threatened “escalating military operations” to target Israel after apparently shooting down a U.S. military drone flying over Yemen. And on Tuesday, an explosive-loaded drone crashed into one ship in the Red Sea as a missile exploded against another, the British military and private security officials said, the latest in the Houthis’ assaults on commercial shipping in the key waterway. The salvo of Houthi attacks has again drawn attention to the Yemeni rebels and raised questions about their goals and strategies. Who are the Houthis and why are they in this fight? The rebels, armed by Iran, seized most of Yemen’s north and its capital, Sanaa, a decade ago, pushing the country’s internationally recognized government into exile. A Saudi-led coalition backing Yemen’s government entered the war in 2015 and the Houthis have since been fighting what has become a long-running but now largely stalemated civil war in Yemen. However, when the Israel-Hamas war erupted in the Gaza Strip a year ago, the Houthis began targeting shipping throughout the Red Sea corridor — part of a campaign they say aims at pressuring Israel and the West over the war. Analysts and observers say a widening conflict could boost the Houthis militarily and expand their already outsized role across the region — despite retaliatory strikes by Israel, the United States and the United Kingdom. Ahmed Nagi, a senior Yemen analyst at the Crisis Group, says that before

the war in Gaza, the Houthis were seen as an often-forgotten and less-prominent faction in an axis that includes Iran, Syria’s government forces, Lebanon’s Hezbollah, the Palestinian Hamas and other groups in the region. That changed when the Houthis began hitting ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden making their way to the Suez Canal, suddenly posing a much wider threat. “Over the past year, the Houthis have taken center stage,” Nagi said. After Hamas attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 people and taking some 250 hostages, Israel responded with a blistering offensive on the Gaza Strip, a coastal enclave run by the Palestinian militant group. Israel’s retaliatory invasion of Gaza has killed more than 41,000 Palestinians and wounded more than 95,000, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and militants in its count but says that over half of those killed are women and children. The toll the war has taken and the extent of Gaza’s destruction have shocked the world. Meanwhile, the Houthis see the Yemenis’ prevailing solidarity with Palestinians as a useful tool for recruiting new fighters and swelling their ranks, Nagi said. In June, the Houthis unveiled a new, solid-fuel missile in their arsenal that resembles aspects of one earlier one displayed by Iran, which Tehran described as flying at hypersonic speed. The rebels fired their new “Palestine” missile — complete with a warhead painted like a Palestinian keffiyeh checkered scarf — at the southern port of Eilat in Israel, setting off air raid sirens but causing no damage or injuries. The extent of the Houthis’ actions was a surprise to some, mainly because of their limited resources and Yemen’s own costly civil war. Nagi described their strategy as one of “gradual escalation” towards Israel. As their prominence grows, the Houthis — who have for years relied on portable missile launchers and hit-and-run tactics — will likely be eager to get their hands on more advanced weapons, he added.

# After pushing on Israel-Hezbollah cease-fire, Biden administration shifts its message

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Biden administration says there is a significant difference between Israeli actions that have expanded its war against the Iranian-backed militant groups Hamas and Hezbollah and Iran’s retaliatory missile attack against Israel, which it condemned as escalatory. In carefully calibrated remarks, officials across the administration are defending the surge in attacks by Israel against Hezbollah leaders in Lebanon, while still pressing for peace and vowing retribution after Iran fired about 200 ballistic missiles at Israel on Tuesday. President Joe Biden praised the U.S. and Israel militaries for defeating the barrage and warned, “Make no mistake, the United States is fully, fully supportive of Israel.” Secretary of State Antony Blinken called the Iranian missile attack “totally unacceptable, and the entire world should condemn it.” There was little criticism that Israel may have provoked Iran’s assault. “Obviously, this is a significant escalation by Iran,” national security adviser Jake Sullivan said. Just a week after calling urgently for an immediate cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah to avoid the possibility of all-out war in the Middle East, the administration has shifted its message as Israel presses ahead with ground incursions in Lebanon following a massive airstrike Friday in Beirut that killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Iranian Revolutionary Guard Gen. Abbas Nilforushan. U.S. officials stress that they have repeatedly come out in support of Israel’s right to defend itself and that any change in their language only

reflects evolving conditions on the ground. And, officials say the administration’s goal — a cease-fire — has remained constant. The U.S. has been quick to praise and defend Israel for a series of recent strikes killing Hezbollah leaders. In contrast to its repeated criticism of Israel’s war in Gaza that has killed civilians, the U.S. has taken a different tack on strikes that targeted Nasrallah and others but also may have killed innocent people. At the Pentagon, Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder made it clear that while the U.S. is still “laser focused” on preventing a wider conflict in the Middle East, he carved out broad leeway for Israel to keep going after Hezbollah to protect itself. “We understand and support Israel’s right to defend itself against Hezbollah,” Ryder said. “We understand that part of that is dismantling some of the attack infrastructure that Hezbollah has built along the border.” He said the U.S. is going to consult with Israel as it conducts limited operations against Hezbollah positions along the border “that can be used to threaten Israeli citizens.” The goal, he said, is to allow citizens on both sides of the border to return to their homes. Part of the ongoing discussions that the U.S. will have with Israel, Ryder said, will focus on making sure there’s an understanding about potential “mission creep” that could lead to tensions to escalate even further. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said Tuesday that Israel’s targeting of senior Hamas and Hezbollah leaders as well as its initiation of ground incursions into Lebanon are justified because they were done in self-defense.

# 2 predawn blasts around Israeli Embassy in Copenhagen, no injuries reported

AP ■ COPENHAGEN

Police in the Danish capital said two predawn explosions took place Wednesday in the vicinity of the Israeli Embassy in Copenhagen, prompting the nearby Jewish school to close for the day. Police said no one had been injured and they were investigating whether there was a link between the blasts at around 3:20 a.m. (local time) and the Israeli diplomatic mission, which is close to several other embassies. They declined to say whether anyone had been arrested. Heavily armed officers, search dogs and forensic teams were inspecting the area which had been cordoned off. Copenhagen’s Jewish school, Carolineskolén, which is just down the street from the embassy, was already due to close on Thursday and Friday for the Jewish New Year hol-



idays, Michael Rachlin, a spokesperson for Denmark’s Jewish community told The Associated Press. There will also be extra security around the main synagogue in downtown Copenhagen, the Jewish community said in a statement. Community chairman Henrik Goldstein wrote that he “would like to encourage people to be aware when moving in public spaces.”

“And be critical of what you hear on social media and rumors,” he wrote, adding that “there is no reason to refrain from participating in Jewish life.” Police refused to give details about the intensity of the reported blasts or the damage they may have caused. Denmark’s Justice Minister Peter Hummelgaard told broadcaster TV2 that the incident was “inherently serious,” adding it was too early to say

anything about a motive. On Tuesday night, the area around the Israeli Embassy in Stockholm was also closed off after a loud bang was reported. Police later announced that findings from the scene indicated that the embassy was hit by bullets. No one has been arrested, they said. Swedish broadcaster TV4 said that a weapon and an empty shell casing had been found at or near the embassy. Sweden’s domestic security agency told the AP that it was not conducting a preliminary investigation and referred to the ordinary police. “It is true that the police have made findings at the Israeli embassy (in Stockholm), but we will not go into detail about what these findings are, police spokeswoman Rebecca Landberg told the AP, citing pre-investigation confidentiality.

# Trump, Harris campaigns claim victories after VP debate

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The Trump and Harris campaigns have claimed victories in the vice-presidential debate as their running mates, Senator J D Vance and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, battled fiercely in a live televised debate wherein they tried to convince their fellow Americans to support, vote and elect them. But unlike the presidential debate, this one lacked high-clash moments. The only vice-presidential debate was hosted by CBS News in New York. As the two vice presidential candidates concluded the 90-minute debate, Walz patted Vance on the side of his arm, and Vance gave Walz a pat on the back. Usha, wife of the US Senator from Ohio gave Vance a warm hug. Vance then introduced Usha to the moderators. “Thank you guys for hosting,” he said. The Walzes also chat-



ted with the moderators. “I think it was a good debate. The public got to see a contrast, and I think the ending sums it up. The democracy issue is important,” Walz told reporters after the couple picked pepperoni pizza from Justino’s pizza in the city. “Senator (J D) Vance unequivocally won tonight’s debate in dominating fashion. It was the best debate performance from any Vice-Presidential candi-



date in history,” Susie Wiles and Chris LaCivita, from the Trump Campaign said soon after the conclusion of the debate in New York. “Senator Vance spoke the truth, eloquently prosecuted the case against Kamala Harris’ failed record, and effectively held Governor Tim Walz accountable for his lies on behalf of the Harris-Biden Administration,” they claimed. But the Harris Campaign

thought otherwise. “Tonight, Governor Walz showed exactly why Vice President Harris picked him: he is a leader who cares about the issues that matter most to the American people. In the debate, Americans got to see a real contrast: a straight talker focused on sharing real solutions, and a slick politician who spent the whole night defending Donald Trump’s division and failures,” Harris-Walz Campaign Chair Jen O’Malley Dillon. “On every single issue – the economy, health care, foreign policy, reproductive freedom, gun violence – Governor Walz won. He spoke passionately about the Vice President’s vision for a new way forward for the country. And in what was the most critical moment of the entire debate, which came in its final exchange, he stood up for our Constitution, while Vance admitted he’d put Trump ahead of the country,”

she said. According to Dillon, Walz showed once again that he would be an experienced governing partner on day one for Vice President Harris as they worked together to deliver for working families. And he showed that he continues to be a powerful force on the campaign trail, holding Vance accountable while sounding the alarm on Trump’s Project 2025 agenda, she said. “The choice facing the American people in November was on full display tonight: between charting a new way forward or going backwards. Vice President Harris believes that the American people deserve to see her and Trump on the debate stage one more time. She will be in Atlanta on October 23 – Donald Trump should step up and face the voters,” Dillon said. However, according to the Trump Campaign, Vance perfectly articulated the Trump-Vance vision to make America

safe again with their plan to launch the largest mass deportation operation in history; to make America strong again with peace through a strong foreign policy agenda; and to make America wealthy again by cutting taxes, unleashing American energy dominance, and ending inflation. “Tonight, Senator Vance proved why President Trump chose him as his running mate. Together, they make the strongest and most dynamic presidential ticket ever, and they are going to win on November 5,” said Susie Wiles and Chris LaCivita in a statement issued by the Trump Campaign. Following the debate, Nourbese Flint, President of All In Action Fund in a statement alleged that Donald Trump orchestrated the largest rollback of abortion access in 50 years and has continued to promote dangerous, untrue rhetoric about life-saving care.

# Trump rallies in Wisconsin’s Democratic stronghold ahead of VP debate

Wisconsin (AP): Former president Donald Trump spent more than an hour ahead of Tuesday night’s vice-presidential debate campaigning in a Democratic county that is crucial to Kamala Harris’ hopes for winning the key battleground state of Wisconsin. Republican Trump appeared at a manufacturing facility in Wauwaukee, a suburb of Wisconsin’s capital city of Madison in the Democratic stronghold of Dane County. Trump had never campaigned in Dane County nor visited as president. In an event advertised as economic-themed, Trump bounced from subject to subject, also taking on Democratic

nominee Harris on issues, including foreign policy, crime and immigration, while intermittently pivoting to criticism of outgoing President Joe Biden. “I’m asking every citizen to join me in launching sort of a new golden age for America,” Trump told hundreds inside Dane Manufacturing, a metal fabricator that has a long history of hosting Republican candidates and officeholders. Trump also could not pass up a jab at former president Jimmy Carter on the Georgia Democrat’s 100th birthday. With hollow praise, Trump declared the one-term Carter “the happiest man” because he “is considered a brilliant pres-

ident” compared to Biden. Trump did not note Carter’s birthday, nor his status as the longest-living former president. Later on Tuesday, Trump was to hold an event at a museum in Milwaukee, Wisconsin’s largest city and home to the state’s largest number of Democratic voters and second-largest number of Republicans. His appearance there was also meant to give him reach into the city’s conservative suburbs, a part of Wisconsin where his support has softened but where he must do well to win. In Milwaukee, Trump was slated to speak in a small auditorium at a science museum

along Lake Michigan’s lakefront. His event was not open to the public and his audience was to consist only of news media. Last Saturday, he held a rally in western Wisconsin where he blamed Harris for crimes committed by people in the country illegally. Both of his planned stops were ahead of Tuesday’s debate in New York between Trump’s running mate JD Vance, a senator from Ohio, and Democratic vice-presidential nominee Tim Walz, the governor of Minnesota. Dane County, the location of Trump’s first stop, is Wisconsin’s fastest-growing county and an economic engine for the state, fueled by jobs in the health care and tech industries.

# Chinese dancers, children perform during Gandhi Jayanti celebrations

PTI ■ BEIJING

Gandhi Jayanti was celebrated on Wednesday at China’s sprawling Chaoyang Park with local school children reciting his teachings in Mandarin and an Odissi dance was performed by Beijing-based dancers on his favourite bhajan. Beijing’s picturesque Chaoyang Park where Gandhi’s statue, sculpted by famous Chinese sculptor Prof. Yuan Xikun, was installed in 2005 came alive with recitation of his teachings in Mandarin by a group of Chinese school children. It was followed by a graceful

Odissi dance performance on ‘Vaishnav Jan To’ by noted Beijing-based Odissi dancer Zhang Jinghui and her troupe. The Indian community came together to stage a play, “Ahimsa: The Gandhi Way”, directed and written by Ketke Thakar and Ayushi Sugandhi respectively. Pradeep Kumar Rawat, besides Chinese Ambassador to Maldives, Dr Fazeel Najeed, Beijing-based Indian diaspora and local admirers of Gandhiji paid floral tributes to the widely-admired statue. Rawat in his speech conveyed his deep appreciation to Prof. Yuan Xikun for creating the statue of Mahatma Gandhi, the

first statue in the Chaoyang Park honouring great leaders of the world. He also recalled Prof Yuan mentioning to him that he is deeply inspired by the vision of Gandhiji. The installation of the Gandhi statue in the Chinese capital has its own political significance as Gandhiji and the founder of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) Mao Zedong headed their respective national liberation movements with contrasting ideologies. While India became independent from British rule in 1947, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) headed by Mao was formed in 1949. “Gandhiji was

not just a leader of the Indian independence movement; he was a visionary who championed the values of truth, non-violence, and social justice. It is only fitting that Gandhiji’s birthday is observed worldwide as the International Day of Non-Violence,” Rawat said in his speech. Prof Yuan could not attend the event as he was unwell. In his speech read in absentia, Pro Yuan said for the last several years the Indian Embassy officials and the members of the Indian community gathered at the statue of Gandhiji Jayanti to pay tribute to the “saint” by laying flowers and reciting his teachings.







# Air India updates cabin crew policies, allowances

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Air India is introducing a revised policy for the cabin crew members of domestic and international flights, wherein certain sections of the members will have to share rooms during layovers, according to a source.

The revised policy will also be applicable for Air India Express, which has merged AIX Connect with itself.

Among other changes, the source in the know said the allowances for cabin crew of international flights will be increased from USD 75-125 bracket to USD 85-135 bracket.

There is no change in the allowances for the cabin crew of domestic flights.

An airline spokesperson said that with the merger of Air India and Vistara formalising, there is a need to



harmonise these policies for employees of both the organisations.

"As part of that exercise, we have communicated the changes applicable to Air India employees. The revised compensation and benefits

continue to be competitive and benchmarked to industry standards," the spokesperson told PTI in a statement.

Under the revised policy, cabin crew members, excluding in-flight managers

and executives, will have to share rooms during layovers, the source said.

In-flight managers and executives are generally senior people with at least 8-9 years of experience. While room sharing for

cabin crew is already there at Air India Express and Vistara, this will be the first time such a practice will be introduced at the Tata Group-owned loss-making Air India.

The changes in the policy also comes against the backdrop of a section of Air India Express cabin crew members seeking redressal of their HR issues under the labour law. The case is in progress before the Central Labour Commissioner.

Meanwhile, the Air India spokesperson also mentioned about the airline introducing a performance-linked compensation and benefits policy for all employees in April 2023.

The merger of AIX Connect with Air India Express was completed on October 1 while the integration of Vistara with Air India will be completed next month.

# India plans to promote Made in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government is discussing a proposal to formulate a scheme for the 'Made in India' label with a view to promote brand India in the global markets, an official said.

The official said that a high-level committee is examining the details of the scheme. The objective is to create a strong brand identity for India, similar to how 'made in Japan' or 'made in Switzerland' evokes about specific images and qualities.

"That we want for India also," the official said, adding for instance, "when we think of Switzerland, we often think of their watches, chocolates, and banking systems."

"We are having discussions on how we can do that. Do we make this scheme for specific sectors like textiles, where we have strength in that. So we are looking into such things," the official added. According to experts, quality consciousness is key to promote Brand India.

The Government at present has India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF) to promote and create international awareness about the 'made in India' label in overseas markets and to facilitate dissemination of knowledge of Indian products and services. It is a trust established by the Department of Commerce.

Think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) suggested that India's branding



strategy should focus on three pillars brand high quality products; improve product quality for less than best products, do not focus on branding; and actions to improve product quality.

"India can take several actions to naturally improve its branding. Consistent product quality and reliability should be a priority. For instance, the Indian pharmaceutical industry has gained global trust through its production of high-quality generic drugs. To protect this reputation, India must enforce strict actions against substandard suppliers. For example, between 1990 and 2010, China quietly became the largest contract manufacturer of electronics like TVs and refrigerators without pushing its firms to focus on branding. Once confident in its product quality, China then aggressively promoted its brands," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

Srivastava said India could establish a unified brand called 'India Quality Product' that signals excellence and reliability.

# Conflict in West Asia threatens Indian exports

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The escalation of conflict in the West Asian region is expected to push already high logistics costs besides hurting trade in sectors such as oil, electronics and agriculture, according to exporters.

They said that insurance costs for exports to the countries directly involved in the war could also go up, which will impact Indian exporters' working capital.

Think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) stated that the conflict is already hurting India's trade with countries like Israel, Jordan, and Lebanon.

The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) said the Iran-Israel conflict has the potential to significantly impact world trade and the global economy in several ways.

"Iran is a key player in the oil

market. Any escalation in conflict could disrupt oil supplies, leading to higher prices, which would impact global economies, especially those reliant on oil imports. Oil prices have already moved up by USD 4 per barrel," FIEO DG Ajay Sahai said.

Expressing concerns, he said increased tensions could destabilize the Middle East, affecting trade routes like the Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant portion of the world's oil passes.

"Disruptions could lead to higher shipping costs and delays. Many global supply chains depend on the stability of the Middle East. Conflict could disrupt transportation and logistics, affecting industries ranging from electronics to agriculture," Sahai said.

Further, if the western world would put sanctions or trade restrictions, it would further



complicate the global trade dynamics, he said adding "overall, the conflict could lead to increased volatility in global markets".

Hand Tool Association Chairman S C Ralhan said orders to these countries will be on hold and gradually it will be "very risky and difficult" to do trade in this region.

"Insurance costs will go up or

even we may not get any insurance cover in that region," Ralhan said.

During January-July 2024, India's trade with countries directly impacted by the conflict has faced significant challenges.

"Exports to Israel dropped sharply by 63.5 per cent, Jordan saw a 38.5 per cent decline due to spillover effects,

and Lebanon experienced a 6.8 per cent decrease," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava has said.

The Israel-Hamas war, which erupted in October 2023, has now extended to Lebanon, Syria, and is indirectly impacting Jordan and Iran.

Key regional players like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar have thus far remained uninvolved in the conflict.

India's exports to Israel stood at USD 639 million during April-July this fiscal. It was USD 4.52 billion in 2023-24. Imports from Israel were USD 469.44 million during the first four months of this fiscal. It was USD 2 billion in 2023-24.

India's exports to Iran stood at USD 538.57 million during April-July this fiscal. It was USD 1.22 billion in 2023-24. Imports from Iran were USD 140.69 million during the first four months of this fiscal. It

was USD 625.14 million in 2023-24.

Similarly, the country's exports to Jordan stood at USD 228.56 million during April-July this fiscal. It was USD 1.46 billion in 2023-24. Imports from Jordan were USD 699.28 million during the first four months of this fiscal. It was USD 1.4 billion in 2023-24.

India's exports to Lebanon stood at USD 116.86 million during April-July this fiscal. It was USD 344.91 million in 2023-24. Imports from that country were USD 39 million during the first four months of this fiscal. It was USD 113 million in 2023-24.

India's major items of exports to West Asian countries include basmati rice, man-made yarn, fabrics, gems and jewellery, cotton yarn, and fabrics.

India is Israel's second-largest trading partner in Asia.

# SBI plans 600 new branches nationwide during FY25



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State Bank of India (SBI) is planning to open 600 branches across the country in the current financial year in a bid to tap business opportunities in emerging areas including large residential townships.

"We have strong branch expansion plans...This would be mainly focused on emerging areas. A lot of residential colonies are not covered by us. Around 600 branches is something we are planning in the current year," SBI Chairman C S Setty told PTI in an interview.

The country's biggest lender opened 137 branches last fiscal. Of the total, 59 new rural branches were inaugurated.

SBI has a network of 22,542 branches across the country as of March 2024.

Apart from branch presence, SBI has 65,000 ATMs and 85,000 business correspondents.

"We serve about 50 crore customers and we take pride in saying that we are the banker to every Indian, and, more importantly, to every Indian family," he said.

He also said it would be his endeavour to transform SBI into the best bank, the most valued bank not only from a shareholder point of view but from the point of view of every stakeholder who deals with SBI.

"It could be my customers, it could be our shareholders, it could be the larger ecosystem -- the society, the institutional framework all the

stakeholders should be saying that this is the best bank to deal with," he added.

In a bid to attract depositors, State Bank of India is contemplating to come out with innovative products including a combo product of recurring deposit and SIP.

With the economy progressing, he said, customers are becoming financially more aware and demanding, and have started looking for innovative investment instruments.

"Obviously, nobody wants to put everything in a risky asset or a speculative asset...Banking products will always be part of the basket. So, we are trying to bring products which will appeal to them," he said.

"We are trying to bring innovation in some of the conventional products like recurring deposit, which is actually a conventional SIP...Maybe, we can combine both fixed deposit/recurring deposit and SIP, a combo product that could be digitally accessible," he said.

Besides, he said, the bank has undertaken a massive outreach programme for the deposit mobilisation.

"As I said, for us, deposit mobilisation is a franchisee job. We have the largest number of physical outlets across the country. We are leveraging our huge physical reach by initiating outreach programmes where customers are contacted. Today, the effort on part of SBI is to reach out to every customer both existing as well as new customers," he said.

# Coal India plans to lease old washeries

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Coal India Ltd is exploring options to monetise its four old washeries by leasing out those assets and plans to bundle lease contracts with long-term coal supply agreements. The move aims at optimising asset utilisation.

"We are exploring the monetisation of four old washeries," Coal India Ltd (CIL) said in a report.

The company which accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal output is diversifying its portfolio by setting up a non-coking coal washery at Ib Valley, Lakhanpur in Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL) one of the subsidiaries of CIL.

The public sector enterprise commissioned the operation of Madhuband Washery having 5 million tonnes of annual capacity during 2023-24 to further enhance coking coal beneficiation capacity.

The company is also setting up three new washeries in Bharat Coking Coal Ltd

(BCCL) another arm of CIL with a total throughput capacity of seven million tonnes per annum.

Besides, five coking coal washeries with a total capacity of 14.5 million tonnes per annum are being set up in Central Coalfields Ltd (CCL). CCL is also an arm of CIL.

Currently, CIL operates 12 coal washeries with a combined operable washing capacity of 29.35 million tonnes per annum.

Among these, 10 are dedicated to coking coal, while the remaining two handle non-coking coal, with operable capacities of 18.35 million tonnes per annum and 11 million tonnes per annum, respectively. In 2023-24, the total washed coal production from the existing coking coal washers amounted to approximately 2.26 million tonnes (MT), marking a 4.8 per cent growth year on year.

The company has an ambitious coal production target of one billion tonnes by 2025-26.



# Royal Enfield's sales rise

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Motorcycle maker Royal Enfield on Wednesday said its total wholesales increased 11 per cent year-on-year to 86,978 units in September.

The company had dispatched 78,580 units in September 2023.

In the domestic market, dispatches increased 7 per cent year on year to 79,326 units from 74,261 units in the year-ago period, Royal Enfield said in a statement.

Exports increased from 4,319

units in September last year to 7,652 units last month.

"We have registered steady growth in the month of September owing to our recent launches. The 2024 Classic 350 has continued to solidify its iconic status and popularity among riders and has been performing well," Royal Enfield CEO B Govindarajan said.

As the company continues to innovate and deliver pure motorcycling experience, the momentum will only accelerate, he added.

# Air India to use 'AI2' prefix for Vistara flights post-merger

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Air India on Wednesday said flights operated with Vistara aircraft will have numbers starting with the prefix 'AI2' after the merger next month while Vistara's planes, crew and service will continue to operate as before.

The Tata Group-owned full service carrier also emphasised that the Vistara experience will remain post merger.

The merger of Vistara -- a joint venture between Tata and Singapore Airlines -- with Air India is scheduled for November 12 that will mark a major consolidation in the Indian aviation space after the integration of AIX Connect with Air India Express.

There are concerns in certain quarters on whether Vistara passengers will continue to get the same services like now, post merger as Air India, which is in the transformation phase, has been facing certain service issues in recent times.

An Air India spokesperson on Wednesday said the teams of Air India and Vistara have



been working hard for over a year to ensure that the merger of the legal and regulated entities is seamless for both customers and staff.

"Though the legal entities and Air Operator Certificates will become one on 12 November, the Vistara experience will remain.

"Vistara aircraft, crew and service will continue to operate as before, but with AI2XXX flight numbers bookable via airindia.Com," the spokesperson said in a statement to PTI.

Air India's airline code is 'AI' and that of Vistara is 'UK'. The latter will fly into the sunset after the merger.

Among other elements, Vistara's catering is being extended to Air India.

# Stock brokers to offer UPI-based fund blocking account to investors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Starting February 1, qualified stock brokers will have to either offer the facility of trading in the secondary market using the UPI-based block mechanism to their clients, similar to the ASBA facility, or a three-in-one trading account facility, a move that will empower investors.

Qualified Stock Brokers (QSBs) must offer one of these two options, in addition to the current mode of trading.

A three-in-one trading account combines a savings account, a demat account, and a trading account into a single integrated solution.

In this case, the clients would have their funds in their bank account, earning interest on the cash balances.

"This initiative will empower and benefit investors with enhanced security, improved



transparency, interest earnings and ease of making payments at a time when UPI payments are witnessing significant growth," Rahul Jain, CFO, NTT DATA Payment Services India, said.

Additionally, the move will improve fund management and further enhance investors' convenience, allowing them to create a payment mandate by blocking funds for trading which will

safeguard their amount from misuse, he added.

On Monday, Sebi's board approved a proposal whereby, in addition to the current mode of trading, the QSBs shall provide either the facility of trading supported by blocked amount in the secondary market (cash segment) using UPI block mechanism (ASBA-like facility for the secondary market) or the 3-in-1 trading

account facility, with effect from February 1, 2025.

In the UPI block mechanism, clients can trade in the secondary market based on blocked funds in their bank accounts, instead of transferring the funds upfront to the trading member.

Clients of the QSBs will have the option, to either continue with the existing facility of trading by transferring funds to trading members or opt for the new facility.

Trading members (TM) are classified as QSBs based on factors such as the size and scale of their operations, including the number of active clients, the total assets held by clients with the TM, the end-of-day margin of all clients, and the trading volume of the TM.

Being designated as a QSB, brings with it enhanced responsibilities and obligations.

# Diljit, Coldplay concerts drive travel surge: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Upcoming concerts of British band Coldplay in Mumbai and Indian singer Diljit Dosanjh in Chandigarh and other cities triggered a travel rush by fans, leading to over 300 per cent surge in flight bookings, online travel agency ixigo said in a report on Wednesday.

The Grammy award-winning band Coldplay is scheduled to perform at Mumbai's DY Patil Stadium during January 18-21 as part of its 'Music of the Spheres' world tour.

Punjabi singing sensation Diljit Dosanjh will perform at a live concert in Chandigarh in December this year as part of his DIL-UMINATI India tour.

The country is witnessing a



surge in travel bookings as fans flock to see these two live performances, said the ixigo report, adding that the platform has observed a sharp rise in flight, train, and bus bookings and searches to key concert cities.

Mumbai has experienced a staggering 350 per cent year-on-year (YoY) increase in flight bookings, said the report.

Chandigarh, one of the

destinations for the DIL-UMINATI India tour, has seen a 300 per cent YoY surge in flight bookings, it said.

Other DIL-UMINATI concert cities like Delhi, Ahmedabad, and Indore have also recorded an average 100 per cent YoY growth in flight bookings on their respective event dates.

"We've observed a significant shift in Indian travellers' preferences, with more people willing to spend on experiences like music concerts and festivals. The passion for live performances is driving fans to travel, and this surge in bookings across flights, trains, and buses shows how music tourism is becoming a major force in the country," ixigo Group CEO Alok Bajpai said.

# BBF appoints Anup Gupta as chairman

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) Brokers' Forum (BBF) on Wednesday said it has appointed Anup Gupta as the chairman, succeeding Kishor Kansagra.

The appointment has been effected from September 30, the Forum said in a statement. Gupta, who is a director of Sykes & Ray Equities (I) Ltd, brings extensive financial expertise, including M&A, corporate finance, and derivatives.

The Forum represents over 650 securities broking firms in India and actively contributes to regulatory policy. It also engages globally through affiliations with international financial bodies and focuses on professional development and investor education.



# INDIA ADD FIVE MORE GOLD MEDALS IN ISSF JUNIOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Divanshi and Mukesh Nelavalli clinched gold medals in their respective women's and men's 25m pistol as India added another five gold medals on day four of the ISSF Junior World Championship in Lima, Peru. The added haul took India's overall tally to 14 with the country's shooters claiming 10 gold, one silver and three bronze medals so far in the competition. USA (10) and Italy (8) are placed second and third respectively. Divanshi shot a score of 35 to pip Italian Cristina Magnani by two points in the final as France's Heloise Fourre was third. Divanshi bagged another gold on the fourth day as she teamed up with Tejaswini and Vibhuti Bhatia to win the junior women's 25m pistol team with a combined tally of 1711 ahead of Czechia and Germany. Divanshi had a tough road to winning the gold medal after missing seven of her first 15



targets in the final, which put her in sixth position initially. However, Divanshi staged a fine recovery to hit 16 of her next 20 to move up to second with three more series of five shots remaining in the 10-series final. The silver winning Magnani, who had led from the beginning, found herself tied

with Divanshi on 31-hits after the ninth series as the Indian nailed a four when it mattered most, while the Italian missed three. France's Heloise Fourre, who had piped Divanshi to second after the eighth series, had to settle for bronze after missing three shots in the ninth series. In the 10th and final series,

Divanshi repeated her four-hits score from the ninth series to seal the deal, as the Italian went down missing three targets yet again. Earlier in the day, Divanshi reached the final by finishing fifth in qualification with a score of 577 over the precision and rapid-fire rounds of 30-shots each.

Tejaswini (569) was 13th, Vibhuti (565) was 22nd and Naamya Kapoor was 40th with 552. Nelavalli also added two more golds to take his tally to three for the championship so far. He picked up the junior men's 25m Pistol gold with a score of 585, putting him two ahead of compatriot Suraj Sharma, who won India's first silver of the competition. Nelavalli, Sharma and Pradhyumn Singh (561) combined to snatch the team gold in the event from Poland, whose tally of 1726 fell three short of India's. Italy was third. India's fifth gold of day four came in the junior men's 50m rifle 3 positions (3P) team competition, when Shourya Saini, Vedant Nitin Waghmare and Parikshit Singh Brar tallied 1753 to equal the junior world record in the elimination round to win gold. Norway was five points behind in second while Sweden were a further two behind in third. Shourya then made it to the final, finishing seventh in the qualification round, with a score of 583 over the three positions. He finished seventh eventually.



## Alcaraz rallies past Sinner to win China Open

AP ■ BEIJING

Carlos Alcaraz won seven straight points in the decisive tiebreaker to beat top-ranked Jannik Sinner 6-7 (6), 6-4, 7-6 (3) and win the China Open on Wednesday, extending his recent mastery over his biggest rival — who is dealing with an ongoing doping case. The third-ranked Alcaraz has now won all three of his meetings with Sinner this year, having also come out on top in semifinals at Indian Wells and the French Open. Alcaraz also ended Sinner's winning streak at 14 matches and denied the Italian three straight titles after trophies in Cincinnati and at the U.S. Open. Sinner, who was the defending champion in Beijing, had to

refocus after the World Anti-Doping Agency announced on Saturday that it was appealing a decision to clear him of wrongdoing following two positive steroid tests. Alcaraz wasted a 5-2 lead in the first set and also let Sinner get back in the third after leading 4-2 before eventually edging it out after also falling behind 3-0 in the final-set tiebreaker. Sinner and Alcaraz have accounted for all four Grand Slam titles this year between them — evenly split at two each: Sinner won the Australian Open and the U.S. Open while Alcaraz won the French Open and Wimbledon. Alcaraz improved to 6-4 in his career against Sinner after their 10th meeting in what has become tennis' top rivalry following

the 60 matches between Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic. WADA is seeking a ban of one to two years for Sinner in a case that might not be resolved before Sinner begins the defense of his Australian Open title in January. Sinner tested positive twice for an anabolic steroid in March but was not banned in a decision by an independent tribunal announced by the International Tennis Integrity Agency in August because the ITIA determined he was not to blame. Sinner's accepted explanation was that the banned performance-enhancer entered his system unintentionally through a massage from his physiotherapist, who had used a spray containing the steroid to treat his own cut finger.



## Dortmund scores 7 while Barcelona MAN CITY AND ARSENAL ALL WIN IN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

AP ■ LONDON

Karim Adeyemi starred as Borussia Dortmund ran riot against Celtic while Barcelona and Manchester City claimed their first wins in the restructured Champions League. Adeyemi scored a first-half hat trick as Dortmund routed Celtic 7-1 at home. It was the second big win from a German team in the competition after Bayern Munich's 9-2 bashing of Dinamo Zagreb in the first matchday. Robert Lewandowski got Barcelona off the mark as the Spanish giant eased to a 5-0 home win over Swiss team Young Boys, while his former teammate Ilkay Gundogan got City off to a 4-0 win at Slovan Bratislava. Erling Haaland scored his 42nd goal in his 41st Champions League game. City was held 0-0 by Inter Milan in their opening game, while Barca responded to its 2-1 loss at Monaco, the team's first defeat under new coach Hansi Flick. Mikel Arteta's Arsenal outclassed his former team Paris Saint-Germain in a 2-0 win with Kai Havertz and

Bukayo Saka scoring in the first half for the Gunners. PSG coach Luis Enrique's gamble on leaving Ousmane Dembélé out did not pay off. Arteta enjoyed a successful 18-month loan spell at PSG while still he was still a teenager at Barcelona. Though the Dortmund team appears to have adapted to the new competition format very well - last season's beaten finalist has 10 goals from two games after starting with a 3-0 win over Club Brugge - its fans made their opposition to the reforms clear with a huge tifo slamming UEFA. This season UEFA changed the structure of Europe's premier competition to add four more teams. The group stage was scrapped for a league system with each of the now 36 participating teams playing eight opponents once in a first phase of the competition. UEFA claimed the changes would ensure more evenly matched games, but Tuesday's results - the big wins for Barca, City and Dortmund - appear to belie that claim. There were more big wins Tuesday with Inter Milan defeating Red Star Belgrade 4-

0, and tournament debutant Brest routing Salzburg 4-0 away for its second win in as many games in Europe's premier competition. Iran forward Mehdi Taremi struck a penalty past Israel and Red Star goalkeeper Omri Glazer and set up two more goals for Inter hours after his country launched a barrage of missiles at Israel. Senegalese forward Abdallah Sima netted twice for Brest to take his tally to three goals in two games after he scored in the French team's tournament-opening 2-1 win over Austrian champion Sturm Graz. Also Tuesday, Bayer Leverkusen defeated AC Milan 1-0 in Germany thanks a well-worked move finished by Victor Boniface. Daniel Braganca scored late to earn Sporting Lisbon a 1-1 draw at PSV Eindhoven. Kaan Kairinen's brilliant free kick was enough for Prague to draw 1-1 at Stuttgart. Stuttgart fans displayed a huge choreography saying "Back in Europe" behind one of the goals. It was the German team's first Champions League match at home since a 1-1 draw with Barcelona in February 2010.

## Sergio Lobera hunts 10th win against Kerala Blasters as Tuskers visit Odisha FC

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha FC would look to build a winning momentum after their previous match success when they host Kerala Blasters FC in their Indian Super League outing here on Thursday. OFC is coming after beating Jamshedpur FC 2-1, its opening win of the season, whereas Kerala settled for a 1-1 draw versus NorthEast United FC in Guwahati. Odisha head coach Sergio Lobera has had a great outing against the Tuskers to date, winning nine out of his 11 match against the side, possessing a success rate of 82%. As for Kerala, it has managed only a victory in their eight ISL meetings this year, having conceded goals in all of them, which will indeed be a matter of concern for their head coach Mikael Stahre. Speaking ahead of the match, Lobera



conveyed gratitude towards his side for braving through difficult moments. "I am very happy because finally, we got three very important points. And, also the atmosphere on the ground, in the

stadium is amazing," he said. "Every time more supporters come here, they are pushing us in difficult moments. I am happy for these people." Meanwhile, Stahre expressed

confidence that his team is heading in the right direction. He said his team will play to its strengths in the upcoming games. "I'm not happy, but I'm not extremely unhappy either. We can do much better. We are still solid and taking points," he noted. "It's just the beginning, and I feel we will become better eventually. I think we are on the right track." The two sides have clashed against each other on 23 occasions in the tournament, with Kerala winning nine times, and Odisha prevailing in seven, while seven outings resulted in a draw. The Blasters' Noah Sadaoui has so far netted four goals versus the Juggernauts — his highest tally versus a single team in the ISL. OFC's duo of Roy Krishna and Diego Mauricio have both scored seven goals against the Tuskers — the joint-highest by any player versus the team.

## Sabalenka beats Keys at China Open and equals her career best win streak

AP ■ BEIJING

Second-ranked Aryna Sabalenka matched her career-best 15 straight wins after beating Madison Keys 6-1, 6-3 to advance to the quarterfinals of the China Open on Wednesday. The three-time Grand Slam winner started her streak with a title at Cincinnati in August and continued with a run to the championship at the U.S. Open last month. She also won the Australian Open earlier in the year. Her previous streak of 15 was achieved across the 2020-21 seasons. "When you're able to sacrifice a lot and you're able to work hard and you're able to get these wins, that's the best feeling," Sabalenka said. "You're just living your best life. You're excited to play your matches. You're excited to face

whatever fight you going to face." The Belarusian has won 30 of 31 sets played during her current streak, dropping only one set to Ekaterina Alexandrova in the third round of the U.S. Open. That form guide quickly played out on Wednesday as Sabalenka broke the No. 24-ranked Keys in the third game of the first set and then dominated on serve throughout an efficient 65-minute outing, which improved her head-to-head record against the American to 4-1. The 26-year-old Belarusian only lost five points on her first serve in the match and was able to save both break points against her, despite Keys making 22 winners against 10 unforced errors. Sabalenka will play Karolina



Muchova in the quarterfinals after the Czech player routed Cristina Bucsa 6-2, 6-0. Paris Olympics gold medalist Zheng Qinwen played a night match against Amanda

Anisimova. Later Wednesday, top-ranked Jannik Sinner will play rival Carlos Alcaraz in the men's final. Sinner and Alcaraz have

accounted for all four Grand Slam titles this year between them. Alcaraz leads the head-to-head series 5-4 - including wins at both their meetings this year in semifinals at Indian Wells and the French Open. The 23-year-old Italian hasn't appeared distracted by the World Anti-Doping Agency announcing Saturday it was seeking a ban of one to two years for the U.S. Open champion, who tested positive twice for an anabolic steroid in March. SHANGHAI MASTERS: French veteran Gael Monfils eased through to the second round of the Shanghai Masters with a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Damiir Dzumhur. The 38-year-old Monfils will play the 22nd-seeded Argentine Sebastian Baez next. Arthur Rinderknech also advanced with a 6-4, 7-6 (5) win over American Reilly Opelka, while Botic van de Zandschulp of the Netherlands defeated Pablo Carreno Busta 7-6 (5), 6-2. Also, Alexandre Muller rallied from a set down for a 4-6, 6-1, 6-1 victory over Italian Luca Nardi.

## Kartik buoyed by SAI and IGU's encouragement for young golfers

PTI ■ GOTEMBA (JAPAN)

"It is like a reunion with a lot of friends", says Kartik Singh, who is just 14 years old but is ready to battle it out for the title with several of his pals in his second start at the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championships. The 2024 Asia-Pacific Amateur Championships (AAC) gets underway on Thursday at the Taiheiyo Club here with the amazing Mount Fuji in the backdrop. In the year since he became the youngest ever to make the cut in the 2023 AAC in Melbourne, Kartik is ready to contend for one of the biggest amateur events in the world. In the last 12 months, he has played almost 12-15 international events in a dozen countries. "I have played in a lot of places, learnt

a lot in golf and made many friends all over the world," he says. "I have learnt a lot in the last one year. I have been playing with most of the top juniors in the world and have seen a lot of events and courses," said Kartik ahead of the 2024 AAC. Kartik is one of the four Indian players who have been sent by the Indian Golf Union for the event. He is the highest-ranked Indian amateur at 171. Earlier this year, Kartik was invited for a special week-long camp at the AAC Academy at the Taiheiyo Club here. However, he had to miss it because he was in the middle of his busiest season. He is also aware of the opportunities that can come his way with the inclusion of golf at the Olympics in 2016.

"The Indian Golf Union helped me get into TOPS (Target Olympic Podium Scheme). The government is keen on sports and the Sports Authority of India (SAI) has been supportive. Now, with their support and IGU's backing I can go to more events. They are now willing to give all we want. The President of the IGU (Brijinder Singh) walked with us even during practice round," said Kartik. "That encourages us a lot." "Since I came here (Gotemba), I have played the course twice." He has scoped out the course well and is ready to show that his growth chart in golf is rising exponentially. The players feel the fairways are tighter here and driving is going to be important. The greens look great but could be



soft. Then there are a lot of undulations... It is up-and-down at places and downhill putts will be fast. "I have played some of the best events like the AAC last year, won once in Asia (Singapore Juniors), the R&A Junior Open — where I was sixth —, the Junior PGA, the Junior Players — where I was third —, and recently I played on the Internationals Team in the Junior Presidents Cup," added a confident Kartik. "Playing such big events and seeing the world's top junior players, I have learnt a lot." Kartik is one of the six players, who played at the Junior Presidents Cup in Canada last month. "They (six players) are all very good. I have played many events with them. We talk and learn," he said and then with a smile adds, "Now, I have

friends all over the world." Kartik, who made the cut and finished T-57 last year, leads the Indian challenge, which includes debutant Rakshit Dahiya, Krishnav Nikhil Chopra — playing his third AAC — and Vedant Sirohi, who is making a second appearance. In the first round on Thursday, Sirohi will be the first among Indians to start as he plays with Bowen Chai of China and Ingtawan Wangrungwichaisri of Thailand. Dahiya is grouped with Qawi Aslimon of Brunei and Junee Choi of Korea. On the other side of the course, Chopra plays from the 10th tee with Zaqian Fang of China and Robby Turnbull of New Zealand, while Kartik Singh goes out with Rayhan Latief of Indonesia and Ryan Ang of Singapore.



# RIVALS AIM TO END AUSTRALIA'S DOMINANCE IN T20 WORLD CUP

PTI ■ DUBAI

The likes of India, England and South Africa will strive to end Australia's unrivalled dominance in the Women's T20 World Cup, beginning with a double header in Sharjah on Thursday. Bangladesh will take on Scotland in the tournament opener in an afternoon fixture followed by a clash between Asian teams Pakistan and Sri Lanka later in the day at Sharjah. Political unrest in Bangladesh forced the International Cricket Council to shift the 10-team event to the UAE back in August. **AUSTRALIA THE TEAM TO BEAT AGAIN:** Australia will be the team to beat once again, having won the last three editions and overall six out of the nine editions staged thus far. England, India and South Africa have repeatedly shown that the Australian fortress can be breached but when it comes to World Cup events, the team from Down Under remains invincible. With Meg Lanning walking

into the sunset following the triumph in South Africa about 18 months ago, Alyssa Healy has been handed captaincy to maintain Australia's supremacy in global events. Healy would like to lead from the front but if she is not able to, she can rely on the squad full of match winners including Ellyse Perry, Ashleigh Gardner and Grace Harris. Witnessing the pace duo of Tayla Vlaeminck and Darcie Brown in operation will also be exciting. Australia have been clubbed in Group A alongside India, Pakistan, New Zealand and Sri Lanka while Group B has England, South Africa, West Indies, Bangladesh and Scotland. Top two teams from each group qualify for the semifinals. **ENGLAND SHOW OMINOUS FORM AHEAD OF WORLD CUP:** England, who won the inaugural edition in 2009 before losing three finals to Australia, will take a lot of confidence from the series win against their main rival during the Women's Ashes last year. The pitches in the UAE are



expected to favour the spinners, bringing England's trump card Sophie Ecclestone into play. She will be supported by Sarah Glenn and Charlie Dean. Veteran Nat-Sciver Brunt will provide the X-factor in the batting department. Opener Maia Bouchier will be one of the World Cup debutants to watch out for. England will be supremely confident about their chances this time around, having whitewashed Pakistan and New Zealand in the summer. **CAN INDIA GO ALL THE WAY THIS TIME?:** Another team who always challenges Australia but has hitherto not able to cross the final hurdle is India. The Harmanpreet-Kaur led side has lost two big T20 finals to Australia - the Commonwealth Games in 2022 and T20 World Cup in 2020. India go into the event having not got a lot of game time following their surprising loss to Sri Lanka in the Asia Cup final. The team has worked extensively on its fitness and fielding, hoping it will make a big difference to its World Cup campaign. The conditions could favour a

spin-heavy India. In the batting department, the onus will be on openers Shafali Verma and Smriti Mandhana while Harmanpreet and Richa Ghosh will be expected to hit the sixes in the middle and death overs. Harmanpreet, who has led the team since the 2018 T20 World Cup, will be under tremendous pressure this time around as another loss could bring an end to her captaincy tenure. South Africa look to go one better after memorable run at home. South Africa rode a wave of home support to make their maiden World Cup final last year. Tasting defeat to Australia in the showpiece in Cape Town, the Proteas have been busy in their preparations to do one better. The side, now led by Laura Wolvaardt, got its revenge over the reigning champions in Canberra at the beginning of the year. However, South Africa lost that series and also went on to lose to Sri Lanka. The South African women have drawn series with Bangladesh, India, New Zealand before victory came over Pakistan earlier this month.



## With Australia, you can't afford to make mistakes: Mandhana

PTI ■ DUBAI

There are no shortcuts to beating Australia and every team has to give its best if it aspires to overcome the six-time world champions, said India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana ahead of the Women's T20 World Cup which begins here on Thursday. Australia's dominance in the global showpiece has been unrivalled with the team winning the last three editions of the tournament. With charismatic former skipper Meg Lanning calling it a day following the victory in South Africa about 18 months ago, Alyssa Healy has taken over the captaincy as Australia aim to maintain their dominance in global events. "Every game in the World Cup is important, and you have to give your 100 per cent in each one. New Zealand and

Sri Lanka are strong teams, but with Australia, you know you can't afford to make mistakes," said Mandhana as India gear up to take on New Zealand in a Group A match here on Friday. "You have to bring your best game on that particular day to get the better of them. There's always excitement when facing Australia because they're such a good team, and beating them is a great challenge," added the India vice-captain. She added that the clash against Pakistan always brings out a lot of passionate response from the players. The arch-rival will lock horns here on October 6. "I think the India-Pakistan rivalry is more about the emotions of the fans than anything else. It's not like the players don't talk to each other; it's the emotions from both nations that make it so intense," Mandhana said.

"For me, every World Cup match is special, and we put the same amount of effort into each game. But there's definitely a lot of emotion attached to the India-Pakistan games," said the veteran of 141 T20Is. Mandhana said that playing Pakistan in the afternoon heat of Dubai would be challenge and that her team had a couple of sessions lined up to acclimatise to the conditions. "The afternoon game is going to be a challenge due to the heat, but when you play for India, there are no excuses. You have to prepare well, and I think we have a couple of afternoon sessions lined up to help us get used to the conditions. "By the time we face Pakistan, I'm sure we'll be ready. Mentally, we need to stay strong and keep pushing, staying hydrated is key," she said.

## Bumrah regains top spot in ICC Test rankings, Jaiswal jumps to spot 3

PTI ■ DUBAI

India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah is back at the summit of the ICC Test bowling rankings following his match haul of six wickets in the second Test against Bangladesh in Kanpur. The 30-year-old replaced his India team-mate Ravichandran Ashwin - Player of the Series against Bangladesh - at the top of the chart. Spinner Ravindra Jadeja maintained his sixth place, while fellow spinner Kuldeep Yadav stayed in 16th. In batting, Player of the Match from the Kanpur Test, Yashasvi Jaiswal, moved to a career-high third position



after just 11 Tests. Jaiswal played scintillating knocks of 72 and 51 and helped India win the rain-marred match by seven wickets. With 792 rating points, the 22-year-old is behind second-placed Kane Williamson (829) and Joe Root (899).

Also, veteran Indian batter Virat Kohli is back in the top 10, gaining six places to rise to the sixth position after knocks of 47 and 29 in Kanpur. Rishabh Pant, too, remained in the top 10, dropping three spots to ninth, with skipper Rohit Sharma and Shubman

Gill on 15th and 16th, respectively. As for the all-rounders, there has been no significant change in the rankings, with Jadeja holding the top spot, followed by Ashwin at second and Axar Patel at seventh. In team rankings, India were in the second spot with 120 rating points, separated from leader Australia by four points, while England remained in the third place with 108 points. Meanwhile, the Indians continued to rule the World Test Championship (WTC) table, having a point percentage of 74.24% after 11 fixtures, above second-placed Australia (62.50% in 12 Tests).



## Sumit Nagal crashes out in first round of Shanghai Masters

PTI ■ SHANGHAI

Indian tennis ace Sumit Nagal's campaign in the Shanghai Masters ended in the first-round exit after he suffered a 6-3, 6-3 defeat to China's Wu Yibing here on Wednesday. The 27-year-old, who has been in the news recently due to his dispute with the All India Tennis Association (AITA) regarding his participation in the Davis Cup fixture against Sweden, went down in straight sets leading to his second straight first-round elimination. In August, he had crashed out of the US Open in the first round after losing to Tallon Griekspoor of the Netherlands. Nagal, who had been battling a back injury, was accused of demanding an annual fee of USD 50,000 by the AITA to represent India in the Davis Cup tie but the country's top singles player defended himself, saying it is "standard practice" for athletes across the world to be paid for their services. Nagal had opted out of the recent Davis Cup tie against Sweden, citing a back strain that also forced him out of the US Open men's doubles competition last month. This was Nagal's first event on the ATP Tour since his first-round exit from the US Open.

## Tim Southee quits New Zealand captaincy

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

Tim Southee has stepped down from New Zealand captaincy ahead of the three-Test series against India and Tom Latham has been appointed in the veteran pacer's place. Southee captained New Zealand in 14 Tests in which the Kiwis won six, lost six and drew two. "I've always tried to put the team first throughout my career and I believe this decision is the best for the team," said Southee in a New Zealand Cricket statement. "I believe the way I can best serve the team moving forward is focusing on my performances on the field and getting back to my best, to continue taking wickets and helping New Zealand win Test matches." The 35-year-old right-arm pacer has so far played 102 Tests alongside 161 ODIs and 126 T20Is. With 382 wickets, he is the second-highest wicket-taker for the Kiwis after legendary Richard Hadlee

LATHAM TO TAKE OVER IN INDIA TOUR



(431). "I will, as I've always done, continue to support my teammates, especially the exciting young bowlers making their way on the international stage. "I wish Tom all the best in the role and he knows I'll be there to support him on his journey, as he has done for me over the years," said Southee. New Zealand head coach Gary Stead said

Southee took the decision in the best interests of the team. "Tim's a fantastic player and a very good leader who is held in high regard by the players and support staff." "He's been a great servant of New Zealand Cricket over nearly 17 years playing on the international stage, and I'd like to acknowledge his humility in stepping down from the role as Test captain. "It's not easy giving up something you love, but Tim is a true team-man and he's made the decision with the team's best interests at heart. He's one of our greatest ever players and we still very much see him playing a part in our Test side moving forward." Southee took over as New Zealand captain after Kane Williamson stepped down from the role in December 2022. Currently on tour of the subcontinent, New Zealand have played a two-Test series in Sri Lanka while their one-off Test against Afghanistan in Noida was washed out.

## Dwindling black soil resources force UPCA to look beyond Unnao

PTI ■ KANPUR

For years, the UPCA has procured black soil from Unnao to prepare pitches at the Green Park Stadium but the natural resource is vanishing fast in that city, leaving the state cricket association worried. Not only the high-quality resource is dwindling in Unnao — about 25km from Kanpur — the quality of the available soil has also suffered considerable degradation. The soil with more than 50 per cent of clay particles is suitable for preparing a cricket pitch. The Green Park stadium hosts about 150 matches on nine pitches in a season and that requires renovation in the off-season. According to UPCA pitch curator Shiv Kumar, the soil requirement in each season is 1200 cubic feet. "In my entire career, we have used soil only from Unnao. What worries me now is that Unnao is not left with much



of that natural resource. We can manage two more years with the available stock and before it finishes, we need to identify a new area," Shiv Kumar told PTI. "The soil has almost finished in that area and the quality we are getting now is not up to the mark." UPCA procures black soil from a pond in Unnao and a village called 'Kali

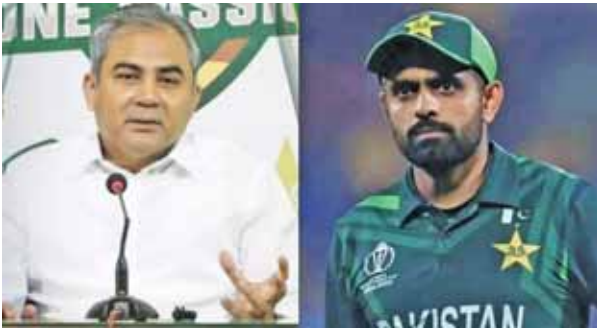
Mitti'. The agricultural fields in that area are the biggest source of soil but the years of digging means the resource is emptying. Explaining the phenomenon, the UPCA curator said that the main content of soil is clay. "The main particle in the soil is clay. It's such a small particle, about 0.002 microns. It takes about 30-40 years for

the soil to convert into clay in a pond. Then there is sand, gravel, and other things. Soil with 50-60 per cent clay presence is considered good." Shiv Kumar said earlier the good-quality soil was available just one foot below the top of the field but it's not the case anymore due to the consistent digging over the years. "The curators have started to understand the soil with which they work. So, the selection of soils has also changed, not in our place but everywhere with BCCI's education programme. "Earlier we just used whatever was available and just watered and rolled the pitch. No one knew about the roots of the grass. No one knew about the compaction potential of the roller. "Now we are checking the moisture, temperature, how much water is to be kept and how much compaction should be given. We can see good cricket only if the pitch is made using a scientific method," he said. UPCA is now looking at places like Odisha and Andhra Pradesh to get soil. "They have high-clay fields. There is good clay in MP also. We will see something from there. It can be an issue when we have to make new pitches, if we do not find a place nearby."

## PCB could appoint separate captains in all three formats

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan could have separate cricket captains in all three formats, given the heavy schedule of the side and the pressure it could put on one white-ball skipper, according to sources. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) was expected to hand over Babar Azam ODI captaincy as well for the upcoming white-ball matches, but the charismatic skipper tendered his resignation around midnight on Wednesday to focus on his batting. Insiders suggest that it would not be easy for white-ball head coach, Gary Kirsten or the selection committee to appoint the next captain in the shorter formats. "Muhammad Rizwan is the obvious choice for the white-



ball captaincy given that, along with Babar, he is the only player who is an automatic selection in all formats of the game," said an insider. "But things are not so simple because, with the hectic international calendar of the team, the workload on Rizwan is a worrying factor for red-ball coach, Jason Gillespie, Kirsten, the PCB

and the selectors," he added. Rizwan, Babar and Shaheen Shah Afridi are all-format players, so workload management is going to be a big issue. Pakistan are scheduled to play 18 ODIs and T20Is in Australia, Zimbabwe and South Africa between November and December, which will be followed by a two-Test series in South Africa.