



the pioneer

Established 1865
NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 16, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4

www.dailypioneer.com



ALEX FERGUSON
TO STEP DOWN AS
CLUB AMBASSADOR
11 SPORTS

November's poll results will decide politicians festive mood

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

With the Election Commission's announcement of another round of Assembly elections in the crucial states of Maharashtra and Jharkhand, and bypolls to several Assemblies and Lok Sabha seats across the States, the decks are now cleared for Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi to plunge into active politics by contesting from Wayanad in Kerala on November 13. The election in Wayanad has been necessitated after Congress Member of Parliament Rahul Gandhi vacated the seat for Rae Bareilly, the other seat he had won during the Lok Sabha elections earlier this year. With Priyanka's potential entry into active politics, the Congress' first family will be looking to solidify its influence in the Parliament. Additionally, with Priyanka's presence in Wayanad, the party hopes to send a strategic message to the public, signalling the Congress's presence in both northern and southern regions. Election Commission (EC) announced single phase Assembly polls in Maharashtra for on November 20, while Jharkhand to vote in two phases on November 13 and 20. The votes for both the polling states and bypolls will be counted on November 23. Keeping in view of the several upcoming festivals, including Diwali from October 29 to November 1, Chhath and Dev Deepawali on November 15,

Priyanka Gandhi will make LS debut from Wayanad



Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar with Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu

Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

CEC punctures Exit Poll balloon

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday said a huge distortion was created due to exit polls, and called for introspection by pollsters. The EC also questioned the practice of showing winning/losing trends five to ten minutes after the official beginning of counting at 8 am on election result days. "Showing winning/losing trends at 8.05 am or 8.10am, which is just five or ten minutes after the start of counting at 8 am is nonsense. Political parties felt there was a huge distortion due to exit polls. Need self-introspection by pollsters," Chief Election

Commissioner Rajiv Kumar said. Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, Kumar also said exit polls create a huge distraction by raising expectations and it was a matter for self-introspection for the media, particularly electronic media. "We do not govern exit polls, but there is a need for self-introspection. What was the sample size, where was the survey done, how did the result come and what is my responsibility if I did not match to that result, are there disclosures - all of these need to be seen," Kumar said, flanked by two Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and SS Sandhu.

Continued on page 2

the dates were decided and this will allow voters, particularly those temporarily migrating for the festivals, ample time to return to their registered voting locations. The term of Maharashtra Assembly will end on November 26, while the term of Jharkhand Assembly will end on January 5, 2025. Maharashtra has 288 seats while Jharkhand has 81 seats. Bye-elections to 47 Assembly seats and the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat will be held on November 1. Announcing the schedules Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar said the date of issue of Gazette notification for the Maharashtra Assembly election is October 22, last date of filing nominations is October 29, the date for scrutiny of nominations will be October 30 and the last date for withdrawal of candidatures is

November 4. "There are 9.63 crore eligible voters in Maharashtra while the number of eligible voters in Jharkhand is 2.6 crore," Kumar said. Expressing concern over urban apathy affecting voter turnout, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Tuesday said that polling days in Maharashtra and Jharkhand have been kept mid-week so that more people vote. The EC has been flagging the issue of low polling in urban centres including those like Mumbai and Pune in Maharashtra, and has been taking a number of steps to increase voter awareness. In Maharashtra, turnouts in 62 of 64 urban Assembly constituencies were less than the state average in 2019, as was the case in Lok Sabha elections, he said, adding "We will have a special drive for urban areas". He said in the recent Haryana election, there were booths in the "poshest" areas where voting was less than 20 per cent. After the Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir polls, the BJP hopes to make a return to power in Maharashtra, where it has an alliance with Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena. The Maharashtra election is expected to witness a two-way fight between the ruling Mahayuti Alliance of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Shiv Sena-Eknath Shinde and NCP-Ajit Pawar and Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition, of the Shiv Sena (UBT), NCP-Sharad Pawar and the Congress.

Continued on page 2



Omar to be CM today... Nayab's turn tomorrow

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI

Fifty four-year-old Omar Abdullah is all set to take oath as the first chief minister of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday. His party, Jammu and Kashmir National Conference recorded a historic victory winning 42 Assembly seats in the maiden assembly elections held after the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35-A in 2019. This will be Omar Abdullah's second term in office. However, this time, he will be governing a Union Territory without the special status that Jammu and Kashmir once held. He remained Chief Minister from January 2009 till October 2014. The oath-taking ceremony will take place at the Sher-e-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC) on the banks of Dal Lake in Srinagar, where elaborate security and other arrangements have been made. The swearing-in ceremony is expected to witness several prominent leaders from the INDIA bloc, a coalition of opposition parties, in attendance. Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav and Supriya Sule from the NCP have already reached Srinagar to attend the swearing-in ceremony. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of the opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi are also expected to attend the oath ceremony. The National Conference has also extended invitations to the top brass of the DMK, Shiromani Akali Dal, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, MK Stalin, Uddhav Thackeray, Sharad Pawar, Lalu Prasad Yadav, Arvind Kejriwal, and D Raja. Meanwhile, speculations were rife about the list of probable members of the Council of Ministers. The NC is expected to induct a congress nominee in the council along with Independent legislators from the Jammu region to balance the regional aspirations.

The meeting of the Haryana Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLAs to elect the State legislature party leader of the State will be held on Wednesday. Nayab Singh Saini, who replaced Manohar Lal Khattar as the Chief Minister of Haryana in March is likely to be the CM choice. He was the BJP's chief ministerial face in the state Assembly polls, and Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav are the central observers for the election of the state legislature party leader in Haryana. It is learnt that Shah and Yadav were named central observers after reports of rebellion by Union minister Rao Inderjit Singh and nine of his Ahirwal loyalist MLAs. The minister, however, clarified that he was "solidly" behind the BJP. BJP experimented by naming one of the senior-most party members Union Minister Rajnath Singh to iron out the heavy factional differences in Rajasthan after the Assembly elections. The meeting, which will be held in Panchkula, will elect the state legislature party leader, Haryana BJP president Mohan Lal Badoli said. The state legislature party leader will be the next chief minister. On Tuesday, Saini held meetings with senior officers making preparations for the BJP's big event. Hectic lobbying for ministerial berths have been doing the rounds and names of probabilities shall be shared to shared party high command on Wednesday. The oath-taking ceremony of the new Haryana Cabinet will take place at Panchkula's Parade Ground in Sector 5 on Thursday and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend. The BJP secured a third term in the Assembly polls in Haryana, results of which were declared on October 8. It won 48 seats against the Congress' 37 in the 90-member Assembly in the state.

Delhi AQI dips to 'severe' category

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The Air Quality Index (AQI) in certain parts of Delhi dipped to severe, a day after GRAP-1 rules kicked in with the national Capital's AQI falling under 'poor' category on Monday. The Anand Vihar pollution control monitoring centre recorded an AQI of 461 at 12:30 pm on Tuesday, data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) showed. Amid the air becoming increasingly hazardous, Chief Minister Atishi announced that 99 teams will inspect private and government construction sites in Delhi to ensure compliance with dust mitigation measures. The average AQI for Delhi stands at 198 in the 'moderate' category at 4 pm, according to the CPCB. With GRAP Stage 1 implemented along with other related measures in the national Capital, the Delhi government convened a high-level meeting to review the implementation of the first stage of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP). The meeting was chaired by Atishi and included representatives from various departments such as the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPPC), Public Works Department (PWD), Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) and the revenue department among others.

Continued on page 2

National Capital Region's second airport almost ready for operations



RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The National Capital Region's second airport, Noida International Airport has successfully completed the calibration of the instrument landing system and precision approach path indicator to assess navigation systems. The calibration, carried out by Airports Authority of India (AAI) with support from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), represents a crucial milestone in the airport's journey towards operational readiness. The airport plans to apply for an aerodrome licence in December, this year. The airport is strategically

located at about 72 km from Indira Gandhi International Airport, about 52 kilometres from Noida, about 130 kilometres from Agra and about 90 kilometres from Multi-Modal Logistics Hub at Dadri. The Instrument Landing System (ILS) is a radio navigation system that provides precise guidance to pilots during approach and landing, particularly in low visibility conditions. The Precision Approach Path Indicator (PAPI) is a system of lights positioned beside the runway to provide visual indication to pilots regarding their correct descent angle during the final approach.

"A Beech King Air 360ER from the Airports Authority of India (AAI) began the calibration process on Thursday, 10th October, with the process concluding on 14th October 2024," a media release stated on Tuesday. Yamuna International Airport Pvt Ltd (YIAPL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Zurich Airport International AG, is developing the airport. The foundation stone for the project was laid in November 2021. The concession period for Noida International Airport commenced on October 1 2021 and will run for 40 years. The airport, which aims to start commercial operations in April 2025, is expected to submit the application for aerodrome licence in December after completing the validation flights. In the first phase, the airport will have one terminal, one runway, 10 aerobridges and 25 parking stands. Once all four development phases are completed, the airport will have a capacity to handle 70 million passengers per year.

Continued on page 2

26 arrested, Bagraich tense, but under control



BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

In a significant development, Uttar Pradesh police have arrested 26 individuals in connection with the recent violence in Bagraich. The arrests were made earlier today, and the accused were sent to jail following medical examinations, according to SP's Public Relations Officer (PRO) Shivesh Shukla. To prevent the spread of misinformation, internet services in the district have been suspended until October 16. Normalcy is returning in the area as shops in the affected area opened on Tuesday afternoon. "The situation in Bagraich remains tense but under control", District Magistrate Monika Rani said.

Continued on page 2

More bomb hoaxes keep airports on edge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Airport staffers and security agencies on Tuesday went into a tizzy to undertake specific counter-terrorist drills at various airports after five planes, including one bound for the United States, received bomb-threat messages through a social media handle on Tuesday. The threats via microblogging platform X came a day after five hoax bomb threat messages to three international flights, a mail train and a university on Monday, caused trouble to hundreds of passengers and airline crew. According to sources, an X handle issued threats on Tuesday to five flights, an Air India Express flight from Jaipur to Bengaluru via Ayodhya (IX765), a SpiceJet flight from Darbhanga to Mumbai (SG116), an Akasa Air flight from Bagdogra to Bengaluru (QP 1373), an Air India flight from Delhi to Chicago (AI 127) and an Indigo flight from Dammam (Saudi Arabia) to Lucknow (6E 98). The Air India Express aircraft underwent a security check at the Ayodhya airport. The SpiceJet and Akasa Air planes have landed, according to flight-tracking websites. An Air India flight from Delhi to Chicago was diverted to Iqaluit Airport in Canada following a bomb



threat. "Flight AI127 operating from Delhi to Chicago on October 15, 2024, was the subject of a security threat posted online and, as a precautionary measure, has landed at Iqaluit Airport in Canada," the airline said. It further said, "Air India notes that it, and other local airlines, have been subject to a number of threats in recent days. Though all have subsequently been found to be hoaxes, as a responsible airline operator all threats are taken seriously." An Ayodhya-bound Air India Express flight also received a bomb threat, which was sent via phone call for the IX 765 flight that flew from Jaipur at 12.25 pm. The Boeing 737 Max8 aircraft with call sign AXB765 landed at Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya airport by 1.59 pm. The aircraft is currently parked in an isolated bay area of Ayodhya airport, while passengers have been alighted from the aircraft.

Continued on page 2



Weekly markets offer bargains, and traffic jams as a bonus!

Large carts piled with clothes, fruits, vegetables, household items, take up road space

BY ABHI SINGHAL

Festive season in Delhi is also shopping and gifting season, this inturn is a major factor that contributes to the severe traffic jams that are taking a toll on daily commuters. The glittering lights of the bustling streets bring little cheer to the stagnant long lines of traffic that make navigating the city a daunting experience, especially in the North-West areas, during evening hours. The traffic congestion in the North West Delhi starts intensifying at Britannia Chowk, a crucial crossroad connecting Punjabi Bagh, Netaji Subhash Palace and Rani Bagh. Commuters heading towards Rani Bagh from the crossroad, face long red lights due to excessive rush.

When travelling to the Shakurpur Basti Railway Station one will find sweet shops and small roadside markets in between. The condition becomes disastrous every Wednesday due to the 'Buddh Bazaar' (the ubiquitous Wednesday market) choking the two way road. Large heavy carts piled high with clothes, fruits, vegetables, household items, toys and more for sale take up road space. This leads to bumper-to-bumper traffic, exacerbated by many traffic signals on the road. The traffic situation is further complicated on Mahatma Gandhi Road, as major thoroughfares of car modification shops and fruit vendors occupy the sidewalks, leaving little space for vehicles to manoeuvre. The stretch from Shri Ram Mandir crossroads to Mahindra Park Red Light is a notorious bottleneck. The narrow



road bends towards Madhuban Chowk, creating a choke point that disrupts traffic flow for buses and other vehicles. Punjabi Zaika, a restaurant on the Mahindra Park crossroad seems to have earmarked its own parking in the service lane and the road itself. The main road is more difficult to travel on, due to the movement of DTC buses and crowded bus stands. The buses line up one behind the other, and this affects the complete stretch. Illegal parking along these routes adds to the chaos, affecting connectivity to Chandra Shekhar Azad Marg and M2K Rohini. Delhi's traffic woes are not new, the traffic but the festive season has made matters worse. "As soon as I leave home, I'm stuck in a jam. The whole of Delhi is gridlocked," Varun Singh, who was on his way to meet friends, said. Another

commuter, Sanyam, lamented, "What used to be a 10-minute ride now takes at least 30 minutes." Meanwhile Traffic volunteers, and police do what they can to manage the situation. "We too illegally parked vehicles and try to keep things moving, but during the festive season, it's nearly impossible to control," a traffic volunteer stationed at Ashok Vihar Circle, said. Another volunteer explained the challenge of this job, "khade hona asaan nhi hai, aur logo ko samjhana mushkil hai" (It is not easy to stand for so long and make people understand the traffic rules and curate the traffic.) As the peak office hours wear on, the congestion extends to other areas, with heavy traffic beginning at the Punjabi Bagh flyover, leaving Delhiites hoping for a smoother ride amidst the festivities.

Photo: Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

Seven Governor-approved Maha Yuti nominees sworn in as MLCs in Maharashtra

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Hours before the Election Commission of India (ECI) declared the schedule for the Maharashtra Assembly polls, seven Maharashtra Governor-approved ruling MahaYuti nominees were sworn in as the members of the Maharashtra Legislative Council on Tuesday. The seven persons -- whose names were recommended by the BJP-led MahaYuti government on Monday afternoon and were approved by Maharashtra Governor CP Radhakrishnan later on Monday night -- were administered oath as MLCs by Maharashtra Legislative Council's deputy chairperson Neelam Gorhe on Tuesday at a hurriedly held swearing ceremony at Vidhan Bhavan. The swearing-in ceremony took place a few hours before the ECI declared the schedule for the Maharashtra Assembly polls.



The newly sworn-in MLCs include three representatives from the ruling BJP and two each from the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar-led NCP. The seven new MLCs are: BJP's state women wing chief Chitra Wagh, the party's general secretary; and Dharmaguru Babusing Maharaj Rathod, a priest from the Banjara community (all from the BJP quota), former MLC Manisha Kayande and former MP Hemant Patil (both from the Shinde Sena), senior NCP (Ajit Pawar) min-

ister Chhagan Bhujbal's son Pankaj Bhujbal and Idris Naikwadi, former Mayor of Sangli (both from the Ajit Pawar-led NCP). In all, 12 MLC vacancies from the Governor's quota have remained unfilled for more than four years. At a meeting presided over by chief minister Eknath Shinde, the State Cabinet had on Monday recommended seven names to the Governor who approved the same late in the night. The remaining five MLC vacancies would be filled after the State Assembly polls.

Haryana-wary Congress appoints 11 leaders as senior observers for Maharashtra Assembly polls

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After its bitter experience in Haryana Assembly polls where it failed to translate its expectations into votes, the once-bitten twice shy Congress leadership on Tuesday appointed as many as eleven senior observers and two senior coordinators to supervise the party matters during the State Assembly polls in Maharashtra. On a day when the Election Commission of India (ECI) scheduled the Maharashtra Assembly polls for November 20, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) high command appointed 11 senior leaders drawn from various states as senior observers for five different regions in the state. In addition, the Congress appointed the party's senior leaders from Maharashtra -- Mukul Wasnik and Avinash Pande -- to oversee the details of the party's candidate selection and electioneering during the polls. That the Congress is not tak-



ing any chances in handling the State Assembly elections in Maharashtra can be seen from the choice of leaders chosen as senior observers for various regions for the State Assembly polls. Rajasthan's former chief minister Ashok Gehlot and Karnataka Home Minister Dr. G. Parameshwara have been chosen as the party's senior observers for Mumbai and coastal Konkan regions respectively. The responsibility of the politically crucial Vidarbha region has been entrusted to former chief minister of Chhattisgarh

and Telangana Minister Dansari Anasuya popularly known as Seethakka have been nominated as senior observers for north Maharashtra. Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, party president Mallikarjun Kharge and party leader Priyanka Gandhi will lead the campaign in Maharashtra. The Congress-led Maha Vikas Agadhi had elicited wonderful response from the people across the State in the recent Lok Sabha polls, in which the three-party alliance had collectively won 31 out of total 48 seats. After its unforgettable experience in Haryana where it failed to come to power despite expectation that it would post a comfortable victory in the state Assembly, the Congress high command has warned the party leaders in the state against bickering among them during the campaigning for the November 20 Assembly polls. Rahul Gandhi has asked the party leaders to put up a united face during the electioneering.

Mumbai cops make fourth arrest in Baba Siddique murder case

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Mumbai police arrested one more person in connection with the brutal murder of NCP (AP) leader and three-time former MLA Baba Ziauddin Siddique in Mumbai on October 12, taking the total number of arrests made in the sensational crime to four. Identifying the newly arrested person as Harishkumar Balakram (23), the police said that he was arrested from Bahraich in Uttar Pradesh. Balakram works as a scrap dealer in Pune. He had absconded after the murder of Baba Siddique on Sunday night. The three persons arrested earlier are in police custody. The police will seek the formal custody of Balakram, the fourth arrested person, from a court. In addition, the police have detained two persons -- Gullu and Monu -- from Pune for questioning. It may be recalled that Baba Siddique was shot dead by



three miscreants outside his MLA-son Zeeshan B. Siddique's office in Nirmal Nagar in Bandra (East) in north-west Mumbai on Saturday night. A former minister, 66-year-old Baba Siddique --- who had initially been with the Congress for more than three and a half decades before joining to the Ajit Pawar-led NCP in February this year for some reasons -- had suffered three bullet wounds -- two in his chest and one in his abdomen -- after seven rounds of fire were opened at him by the miscreants. He succumbed to bullet wounds later at the nearby Lilavati Hospital.

DU withdraws circular increasing workload of senior faculty members

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi University on Tuesday withdrew a circular that increased the workload of senior faculty members to match that of junior counterparts after it faced backlash from the teaching staff on social media. The circular, issued earlier in the day by the university administration, directed principals and directors of DU colleges and departments to assign professors and associate professors the same workload typically given to lower-ranked positions like assistant professors. According to UGC norms, senior faculty members (professors and associate professors) are required to work 14 hours a week, while junior faculty (assistant professors) have a 16-hour weekly workload. The circular proposed increasing the workload of senior positions by two hours citing the Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) promotions. "The incumbent(s) will assume the workload associated with the core post of Assistant Professor, regard-



less of any promotions as Associate Professor or Professor, since the promotion under CAS is specific to the individual," read the order issued by the deputy registrar's office. The move drew objections and criticism from faculty members on social media, with some accusing the administration of increasing the workload to compensate for the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) rather than recruiting additional teaching staff. "When the UGC regulations do not differentiate between associate professors through direct recruitment or promotion, then why is DU issuing this notification? This needs

to be completely rejected, and DU must immediately roll back this notification," said Mithuraaj Dhusiya, a DU professor and member of the Academic Council. Another faculty and secretary of the Democratic Teachers' Front (DTF) said, "Instead of asking the government for additional teachers, existing faculty is burdened with more teaching hours. Yet another assault by Delhi University, while DUTA remains silent on policy issues! The UGC Regulations of 2018 (and prior regulations from 2010) do not make any such distinctions. According to the regulations, direct teaching hours are 14 for senior faculty and 16 for junior faculty. The DU Ordinance also reiterates the UGC Regulations of 2018." Following the criticism, DU issued a fresh circular in the evening stating that the earlier circular regarding the workload of teachers had been withdrawn. "Further, it is informed that subsequent clarification, if any, in this regard will be issued by the university in due course," it added.

Two men held for firing at petrol pump employee during robbery attempt

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police arrested two men for firing at a petrol pump employee during an alleged robbery attempt near the facility in northeast Delhi's Gokulpuri. According to the police on Tuesday, the accused has been identified as 45 years old Satender, alias Baba and 39 year old Rahul Kashyap, alias Deepak. The 48 year old Ravinder Pal Singh, who got a gunshot injury at left arm, is currently undergoing treatment at Guru Tegh Bahadur (GTB) hospital. DCP Northeast Delhi Rakesh Paweriya said, "A PCR call at 10.36 am on Monday was received in the Gokalpuri police station regarding firing by weapon and manager of petrol pump was injured. He along with his associate was going to deposit cash from the petrol pump into the bank when two persons on a bike stopped them and tried to snatch the bag." He added that when he resisted, the accused fired on him. The police said that no cash



was robbed and accordingly a case under sections of 309(5) (robbery), 311 (Robbery, or dacoity, with attempt to cause death or grievous hurt) and 3 (5) BNS and relevant sections of Arms Act was registered. Accused Satender was found previously involved in 12 cases including cases of Maharashtra Control Of Organized Crime Act, 1999 (MCOCA), Murder, Robbery and Arms Act. Accused Rahul was also found previously involved in

Delhi AQI dips to 'severe' category

From page 1

Regulations in this stage include rigorous inspections of polluting vehicles and improved traffic management has been kicked in. Stringent emission controls are applied to industries, power plants, and brick kilns. The plan also prohibits the open burning of waste, restricts the use of diesel generators, and bans coal or firewood use in restaurants. Speaking after the meeting, CM Atishi emphasised the urgency of addressing pollution with the air quality falling into the "poor" category over the

past two days. The teams will report their findings daily to the 'Green War Room', which monitors air quality control measures across the city. Meanwhile, Delhi traffic police have also been directed to identify traffic congestion hotspots and deploy extra personnel as needed. "If additional support is required, home guards will be made available to manage traffic flow and prevent vehicle emissions from adding to the pollution," she stated. Atishi appealed to Delhiites to carpool, avoid burning crackers and garbage, and report pollution incidents on Green Delhi app.

More bomb hoaxes keep airports on...

From page 1

The SpiceJet aircraft landed safely at the Mumbai Airport and was directed to an isolation bay as a precautionary measure. "All passengers disembarked normally, and security agencies were immediately notified. After thorough security checks, the aircraft has been cleared for further operations," a SpiceJet spokesperson said. An Akasa Air spokesperson said their flight received a security alert on board. "The captain followed all required emergency procedures and landed safely at the Kempegowda

International Airport, Bengaluru at 13:39 hours. All passengers were deplaned and the local authorities undertook the necessary safety and security checks after which the aircraft was released for operations," the spokesperson said. Indigo said in a statement that it was "cognisant of a situation involving flight 6E 98 from Dammam to Lucknow". The Dammam-Lucknow flight landed at the Jaipur airport following its diversion. The aircraft has been sent to an isolation bay, an official at the Jaipur airport said. The X handle tagged the airline and police handles, claiming that bombs were

placed on these planes, the sources said. Four different X handles had issued a similar threat to three international flights originating from Mumbai on Monday. All the messages on Monday were declared a hoax after security and intelligence agencies as well as airlines and airport operators carried out stipulated anti-terrorist security drills that are activated in case of bomb or hijack threats, the sources said. Officials said the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) has sought the help of Indian cyber-security agencies and police to trace the person or people behind these threats.

CEC punctures Exit ...

From page 1

The CEC said associations such as the News Broadcasting and Digital Standards Authority should do some self-regulation. "Counting happens roughly on the third day after the elections end. Expectations rise from 6 pm, but there is no scientific basis to this in public disclosure," he said. "When counting starts, results start coming (in the media) from 8:05 am and 8:10 am. This is nonsense. My counting starts at 8:30 am," Kumar said, wondering whether the initial trends were shown in the media to justify exit polls. The CEC said the Election Commission starts putting out trends or results on its website from 9.30 am onwards

at two-hour intervals. Kumar said that a correspondent of a media organisation at counting stations can get results early, but the poll authority has to display the result on the screen, get the polling agents to sign it, and offer justification to observers. "It may take 30 minutes for the results to come on the official website," he said. "So, when the actual results start coming in, there is a mismatch. That mismatch can lead to serious issues sometimes. The gap between expectations and achievements is nothing but frustration," the CEC said. The Congress had questioned the delay in displaying results on the EC website in the recently concluded Haryana Assembly polls.

AAP's measures to tackle pollution ad hoc: Delhi Congress

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress President Devenver Yadav on Tuesday called the AAP government's measures to tackle pollution 'ad hoc', claiming that the ruling party only comes up with it when the air of Delhi becomes toxic and unbearable. "The various measures announced by Chief Minister Atishi and by Environment Minister Gopal Rai earlier to combat air pollution was recycled measures which the AAP government has been repeating every year, without taking effective, sustained steps to end air and water pollution on a permanent basis," he said.

November's poll results will...

From page 1

In the 2019 Assembly election, the BJP, and undivided Sena, coalition had come to power in the state which won 105 seats, while the Congress secured 44. The BJP's performance in the recent Lok Sabha elections saw a drop, winning only nine seats out of 48, compared to 23 in the previous term, while the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) won 30 seats. Bypolls to the Kedarnath Assembly seat in Uttarakhand and the Nanded Lok Sabha seat in Maharashtra will be held on November 20. Bypolls to the Basirhat Lok Sabha seat in West Bengal and Milkipur in Uttar Pradesh were not announced as election

petitions are pending for the two seats. The BJP hopes to make a dent this time in Jharkhand. The ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), part of the INDIA Bloc, is up against National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which comprises the BJP, the Janata Dal (United), and the All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU). In 2019, Hemant Soren's JMM had won 30 seats while the Congress bagged 16 seats paving way for Soren to be sworn in as CM. The BJP-led NDA has already started campaigning to regain lost ground, deploying Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Assam

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma who have been raising the issues of "Bangladeshi infiltration" and "rampant corruption". For the much to be watched bypoll, after Rahul vacated the Wayanad seat, Congress announced that Priyanka Gandhi would contest the bypolls there. Rahul chose the Rae Bareilly seat because of the Congress's strong history in the constituency, having won all Lok Sabha elections except in 1977, 1996, and 1998. Rahul's grandparents, former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Feroz Gandhi have also represented this constituency, as did his mother the longest serving party president Sonia Gandhi who is now a Rajya Sabha MP.

National Capital Region's second airport almost...

From page 1

Noida International Airport (IATA code - DNX) will connect the greater Delhi area and also Western Uttar Pradesh with other cities in the country and the world. "The airport will combine Swiss efficiency and Indian hospitality to offer rich experiences and comprehensive commercial attractions and services to its passengers. NIA is committed to an ambitious net-zero emissions goal supported by sustainable design and operations principles," said the airport. Prime Minister Narendra

Modi laid the foundation stone of Jewar Airport on November 26, 2021. The airport is expected to be operational later this year, two years before IGI Airport reaches its threshold traffic handling capacity. To facilitate connectivity between the airport and its catchment area, the Uttar Pradesh government has enlisted the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) to develop a proposal for a high-speed rail link. Additionally, plans are underway to integrate the RRTS in Ghaziabad with the forthcoming Noida airport.

26 arrested, Bahraich tense...

From page 1

The violence in Bahraich saw over 50 houses being vandalised, and their residents fled. To maintain law and order, police patrolling has been intensified across a 20-kilometre radius in Hardi and Mahsi areas. Security measures include the deployment of police vehicles for continuous surveillance and strict entry protocols, allowing access to the affected areas only after verifying identification through Aadhaar cards. Amid the ongoing tension, the family of Ram Gopal, who was killed during the violence, met with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at the CM House. Ram Gopal's father, visibly distressed, pleaded for justice

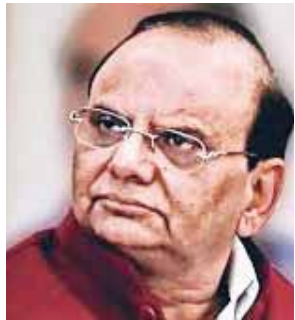
with folded hands before the CM. Mahsi MLA Sureshvar Singh accompanied the grieving family during the meeting. The CM assured them of a relief package, which includes financial assistance of Rs10 lakh, a PM house, an Ayushman Bharat health card, and a contractual job for Ram Gopal's widow. The situation in the violence-stricken areas remains tense, with the Rapid Action Force (RAF), Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC), and local police deployed to maintain order. District Magistrate Monika Rani stated that the administration is assessing the extent of the damage to the vandalised houses. Additional director general (ADG), law and order (L&O)

Amitabh Yash, along with other senior police officials, is currently stationed in Bahraich, closely monitoring the situation. Meanwhile, Union Minister Giriraj Singh criticised the Samajwadi Party (SP) over the violence, accusing the SP and Congress of orchestrating the unrest. Singh questioned, "What will Akhilesh ji say now? The country was divided on religious grounds- Hindu and Muslim. Are we to face bullets in our own country for taking out processions or immersing idols? Why do such incidents happen in our own country?" He alleged that the Bahraich violence was a conspiracy by the SP and Congress, claiming that Akhilesh Yadav remains silent when such incidents occur.

LG approves acquisition of land for completion of Metro Phase IV

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Tuesday approved the acquisition of land at Khanpur Village in South Delhi facilitating the completion of the Aerocity-Tughlakabad Corridor of Metro Phase-IV. A senior Raj Niwas official said, "A major hurdle in the completion of the Aerocity-Tughlakabad Corridor of Metro Phase-IV, lying unresolved since 2020 has finally been resolved with Delhi LG Vinai Kumar Saxena approving the acquisition of land measuring 1688 sq.mtr at Khanpur Village in South Delhi." He added that a land belonging to Education Department has also been transferred to Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC). "In another important move, the LG has also approved the transfer of land measuring 1600 sq.mtr belonging to the Education Department, for an year to DMRC, in lieu of a rent of Rs



13,37,135," the officer said. "This decision will facilitate the construction of interchange station on the RK Ashram - Majlis Park and Indraprastha - InderLok Corridors of Delhi Metro," he added. The official said that this vacant land will be used for construction activities for development of the underground station at the Idgah Road, which is to be named as Nabi Karim Metro Station. "The underground station will be constructed below the piece of land being transferred to DMRC and once the construction is completed, it will be handed over back to the

Education Department," a statement said.

It added that the land to be acquired at Khanpur had been pending for more than four years, with DMRC having made a request for acquisition way back on July 7, 2020. "Once the acquisition takes place now, this critical section of the Aerocity- Tughlakabad Metro Corridor will be completed in a period of about one year," it said.

"This in turn will help people commuting from densely populated colonies of South-East Delhi to the Airport and other locations on the line far easier, in the process also addressing the issue of perpetual traffic jams on the Mehrauli-Badarpur Road," it added.

An official said that similarly, once developed, the Nabi Karim interchange station at Idgah Road will help seamless metro travel for people commuting on the heavily traversed RK Ashram-Majlis Park and Indraprastha-InderLok Corridors of Delhi Metro.

B. Tech dropout held for selling fake Diljit concert tickets

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police arrested a B.Tech dropout for allegedly duping several people of lakhs of rupees by selling fake tickets for the upcoming Diljit Doshanj's concert. According to the police on Tuesday, the accused has been identified as a 29 year old Kaushik Raj, who belongs to Bihar's Muzaffarpur and came to Delhi in 2013. While he used to do freelancing work in event management, he sold the fake tickets to earn quick money. He bought an iPhone worth Rs 1.35 lakh and one Apple watch amounting to Rs 50,000 from the defrauded money. He also travelled to Bengaluru, Goa and Mumbai and spent the amount in clubs and hotels. According to police officials, they received a complaint from a resident of Neb Sarai that Raj had sold him 69 fake tickets of the Diljit Doshanj's concert to be held on October 26 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Ankit Chauhan



said, "Soon after receiving the complaint, an FIR was lodged and further investigation was taken up. The complainant told police that he was searching for tickets when his Chandigarh-based friend provided the contact number of the Kaushik Raj." The complainant then contacted Raj for the tickets after which he first sold him five tickets for the event and sent them through e-mail. The complainant then decided to purchase more tickets for his friends and family. "Till September 11, the complainant had purchased 69 tickets of the concert in different categories, amounting to Rs 4.76 lakh," DCP said.

He called the helpline number to verify the tickets and found them to be fake. He then approached the police. Based on the complaint, a case was registered. During the investigation, the police found that Raj had cheated a man in Delhi and two others in Chandigarh and West Bengal. He sold them fake tickets of Diljit Doshanj's concert. After receiving the money, Raj switched off his mobile phone and fled from Delhi. "He then travelled to Bengaluru, Goa and Mumbai, staying at various hotels. Raj spent the cheated money at clubs during his stay in these cities and purchased an iPhone and Apple watch," Chauhan said. "The police team analysed bank transactions of the accused in which the entire cheated amount was transferred. During analysis of the statement of the bank account, it was found that amount of Rs 4.61 lakh in 16 transactions was transferred to the bank account and the same was utilised by the account holder," Chauhan said.

INBRIEF

WATER SUPPLY TO BE HIT IN OUTER NORTH DISTRICT TODAY

New Delhi : There will be no water supply in parts of Delhi's Outer North district for 18 hours from Wednesday 10 am, due to maintenance work, the Delhi Jal Board said. According to a statement issued, the affected areas include Bawana Village and surrounding colonies, Sultanpur Dabas Village, Pooth Khurd Village, Barwala Village, Majra Dabas Village, Chandpur Village, the area under Ward 35 Kanjhawala and Ward 36 Rani Khera, and their adjoining areas.

GGSIU STUDENTS, FACULTY CLEAN UP CITY STREETS

New Delhi : Over 200 students of National Service Scheme (NSS) and faculty members of Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIU) cleaned up the streets and other public places in the nearby Pochanpur village under the 'Swachhta Abhiyan 4.0' titled 'Swachhta hi Seva hai'. The drive was carried out in collaboration with the MCD sanitation workers, local community members, GGSIU students and staff. GGSIU has adopted two villages of Amberhata and Pochanpur under its outreach program with a commitment to enhance the quality of life for village residents.

NAMO BHARAT BOOK FAIR ORGANISED AT RRTS STATION

New Delhi : The National Capital Region Transport Corporation will organise a three-day Namu Bharat book fair at Ghaziabad RRTS station. The fair, hosted in collaboration with the National Book Trust, will be held at the concourse level, gate number-4. According to the statement the entry is free for all and it will take place from Wednesday to Friday between 10 am and 7 pm. The collection will also feature bilingual books, scientific publications, creative writing series, and titles from the PM Yuva series, catering to readers of all ages and interests. Visitors will have access to inspiring stories, educational content, and a variety of genres with special 10 per cent discount available on all purchases during the fair (terms and conditions apply), it added.

INSPECTOR, SI ARRESTED FOR BRIBERY

New Delhi : The CBI arrested an inspector and a sub-inspector posted at the Burari police station here for allegedly taking a bribe of Rs 10 lakh on Tuesday, officials said. The agency nabbed Sub-Inspector Bhupesh Kumar while he was receiving a part payment of Rs 10 lakh of a total demand of Rs 1.5 crore on behalf Inspector Sandeep Ahlawat, the officials said.

Government rolling out AI-based system for detecting traffic violations

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has rolled out the process for setting up an artificial intelligence-based system for effective detection of traffic violations and road safety. The government has floated a tender for an Intelligent Traffic Management System (ITMS) with Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) violation detection system using artificial intelligence and deep learning technology. The ITMS will deploy ANPR technology across around 500 key junctions in the city, with plans to expand as needed. The system will monitor traffic violations in real-time and leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to analyse data, producing actionable inputs for traffic management, an official statement said. "Key use cases of the system include real-time detection of various traffic violations. The

system is equipped to identify speed violations, red light infractions, and instances of motorists using mobile phones while driving. Additionally, it will monitor compliance with safety regulations, such as seat-belt and helmet usage, and detect overloaded vehicles," it added.

The ITMS will also have the capability to capture images of vehicles not complying with lane discipline and to detect two-wheelers riding on footpaths, and it can even generate alerts for vehicles using fake or duplicate license plates, the official said. By automating the violation detection process, the system aims to streamline law enforcement efforts and ensure that offenders are penalized promptly.

The system will also offer comprehensive support for law enforcement and city planning with the integration of various existing databases, including VAHAN and



SARTHI, it added. "Road safety is a critical concern for us. With the introduction of this intelligent system, we aim to significantly reduce traffic violations and, consequently, the number of road accidents in the city," an official of the Transport Department. "This initiative represents a leap toward a data-driven approach in managing traffic effectively," he said.

According to the official, the primary objective of the ITMS is to establish a centralised traffic database that assimilates

data from multiple cameras installed throughout the city which will facilitate in-depth analysis of traffic patterns, allowing for better planning and decision-making by city officials.

The innovative dashboards will provide insights into various parameters, such as traffic counts, vehicle classifications, and historical trends, thus aiding traffic planners in developing effective strategies to alleviate congestion, the statement said. In an effort to bolster the system's effectiveness, traffic planners will have access to metrics such as average travel times, congestion levels, and accident statistics, all presented in an easily interpretable graphical format, the statement said.

This data will not only facilitate immediate operational decisions but also contribute to long-term urban planning strategies, it added. By leveraging AI and data

analytics, the government aims not only to monitor and enforce traffic laws but also to cultivate a culture of road safety that prioritizes the well-being of all citizens, it reads.

According to the statement, this initiative is part of a broader strategy mandated by the Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety, which aims to create a safer driving environment in the National Capital Territory, the statement said.

The establishment of a dedicated lead agency for road safety, as directed by the Supreme Court in 2014, has paved the way for this ambitious project, it said.

The lead agency, formed in 2017, comprises senior officers from the Transport Department, Delhi Traffic Police, Public Works Department (PWD), Education Department, and Health & Family Welfare, the statement said.

AAP Government lacks will, action plan to tackle pollution: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Even as the GRAP-1 rules kicked in the National Capital, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva on Tuesday criticised the AAP led Delhi Government, calling it 'visionless' and stated that it lacks the will and action plan to tackle pollution.

He said that Chief Minister Atishi's press conference, held alongside Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai, lacked any information on effective measures taken so far or solid plans for the future.

He called stubble burning in Punjab and dust from local construction sites and roads as the two primary causes of winter pollution in Delhi. "Sadly, the Chief Minister made empty promises without presenting any concrete plans from her government," he alleged.



Criticizing Rai, Sachdeva said, "Only in Delhi can the same minister claim the air is clean in the morning, ban firecrackers in the afternoon, and implement emergency GRAP measures by night." He accused the senior AAP leader of misleading the public without backing his statements with serious studies or reports. "I wish the Chief Minister had explained what her government has done with Punjab's allied administration to curb stubble burning or shared steps taken to control peak winter

pollution. Instead, she repeated the same narratives Gopal Rai has been giving for the past month," Sachdeva remarked. The Delhi BJP chief dismissed promises about mechanical street cleaning, sprinklers, and anti-smog guns as 'deceptive rhetoric' that Delhi residents no longer believe. He further criticized the condition of roads and stated, "Despite claims of increased street cleaning and repairs, no visible progress has been made."

"Instead of taking responsibility, Gopal Rai tried to blame Haryana and Uttar Pradesh for Delhi's pollution. The truth is, no winds from Uttar Pradesh reach Delhi; rather, Delhi's polluted air and water flow towards UP," Sachdeva said, adding that scientific reports show that stubble burning in Haryana has reduced by 90 per cent over the past four years.

Baijayant Panda appointed as BJP Election In-Charge for Delhi State polls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday announced the appointment of Baijayant Panda as the Election In-Charge for the Delhi State elections, which is slated to be held early next year in 2025. Panda, who currently serves as the BJP's National Vice President, will be responsible for overseeing the party's electoral strategy. Atul Garg, a BJP Lok Sabha MP from Ghaziabad, has been named as Co-Incharge. Both appointments come into immediate effect. He added that this appointment comes into immediate effect. Panda, a former MP, joined the BJP ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections after resigning from his previous party Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and stepping down as MP in 2018. Since join-



ing the BJP, he has been entrusted with key roles, including his current position as national vice president and spokesperson for the party. He was the BJP's Delhi Election incharge during the 2020 Assembly polls as well. In January 2024, he was appointed as the party's election incharge for Uttar Pradesh during the Lok Sabha elections. Atul Garg, an MP representing Ghaziabad, will assist Panda in coordinating the BJP's cam-

paign efforts in the national capital. Meanwhile, a party leader said that the BJP is considering 'early declaration' of its candidates for the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls to get a headstart over its rivals AAP and Congress. The suggestion to announce early the list of party candidates for the assembly polls due in February was also discussed in the recent 'Chintan Baithak' (brainstorming session) of Delhi BJP's extended core committee held in Rajasthan's Ranthambore, said a former state party chief. "The issue of candidate selection and announcement of names of candidates was raised by some leaders, including a party MP. It was contended that early announcement of tickets will benefit the party in campaigning," he said.

Vijender Gupta seeks CVC investigation into illegal construction at Kejriwal's former residence

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Vijender Gupta on Tuesday wrote to the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), demanding an investigation into the illegal construction at the Chief Minister residence by AAP Convener Arvind Kejriwal.

In his letter to the CVC, Gupta stated that former Chief Minister Kejriwal, flouting all building regulations, erected a grand 'Sheesh Mahal' on a vast area of 40,000 square yards. Stating that the construction is matter of 'grave concern', he said, "The former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, has reportedly carried out extensive illegal construction at his official residence, which includes the amalgamation of neighbouring government



bungalows and flats without seeking necessary approvals from concerned authorities and due adherence to legal procedures." He also visited Flag Staff Road and its surrounding areas. During his inspection, he noted that the construction at Bungalow No. 45, adjacent to 6, Flag Staff Road, remains incomplete which he claimed

is the same bungalow that was illegally merged into 6, Flag Staff Road. "Unauthorized demolition of eight Type-V flats located at 45 and 47 Rajpur Road and merging of two government bungalows (8-A and 8-B Flag Staff Road) with the Chief Minister's residence," he highlighted. He alleged that while tenders

were invited as an addition and alteration of the existing CM's residence, an entire building was constructed to replace the existing structure. "No approval has been obtained from the competent authority for the aforesaid new construction actually taking place," Gupta claimed. He added that the construction disregarded approved limits for ground coverage and floor area ratio (FAR), and no approval for the layout plan was obtained from the competent authority. "Environmental norms, including those set by the National Green Tribunal (NGT), have been flouted. Several trees were felled, and mandatory compensatory afforestation of 19,700 trees was not undertaken," the LoP alleged. He accused that some con-

struction was also hurriedly stopped upon its exposure. Condemning Kejriwal, Gupta remarked that the man who once claimed to be a 'common man' has swiftly transformed into a 'special man'. "The gravity of this situation lies in the fact that the Chief Minister, who holds a constitutional office, had engaged in this illegal activity while flouting the very rules and regulations that he is expected to uphold. It is deeply concerning that such large-scale illegal construction has been undertaken without any accountability," the letter read. "In light of these serious violations, I urge Central Vigilance Commission to initiate an immediate and thorough investigation into the illegal construction at 6, Flag Staff Road, and take necessary action in accordance with the law," it added.

Two men held with more than 104 kg firecrackers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Two men were arrested and more than 104 kilograms of firecrackers were seized from their possession in outer Delhi's Sultan Puri. Upon inspection of a white plastic bag on the motorcycle, it was found to contain food items like rusk, fan, and matthi, under which 10.300 kg of banned firecrackers were concealed," the DCP added. During interrogation, Aakib revealed that he had procured the firecrackers from a warehouse owned by a 46 years old Talib Yusuf. "Acting on this information, the police team conducted a raid at B-709, Aman Vihar, Rohini, and apprehended Talib Yusuf based on Aakib's statement. From his warehouse, 93,900 kg of banned firecrackers were seized," the officer said. He added that both suspects confessed to attempting to sell the firecrackers during the festive season for quick financial gain.

spotted a suspect riding a motorcycle bearing registration No. DL 11S C 8798. Acting on the tip, the team intercepted the motorcycle and apprehended the rider. Upon inspection of a white plastic bag on the motorcycle, it was found to contain food items like rusk, fan, and matthi, under which 10.300 kg of banned firecrackers were concealed," the DCP added. During interrogation, Aakib revealed that he had procured the firecrackers from a warehouse owned by a 46 years old Talib Yusuf. "Acting on this information, the police team conducted a raid at B-709, Aman Vihar, Rohini, and apprehended Talib Yusuf based on Aakib's statement. From his warehouse, 93,900 kg of banned firecrackers were seized," the officer said. He added that both suspects confessed to attempting to sell the firecrackers during the festive season for quick financial gain.

GMDA conducts first-ever demolition drive on bus stand road

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

A first-ever demolition drive was conducted by Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) on the bus stand road wherein the stretch from Agrasen Chowk to bus stand via Mahavir chowk and further up to Gausala on Old Delhi Road was covered. Almost all unauthorized carts were removed and about 15 illegal carts were demolished during the drive. Officials of Municipal Corporation Gurugram (MCG) were also present and actively participated in clearing the carts & demolished material from the road and issuing challans to the violators. Additionally, on the entire stretch approximately 150 shops were razed and many eateries which had illegally extended their premises up to the main carriageway of the master road faced severe



action. It was also found that roughly 50 bike repair shops and accessory shops on Old Delhi Road had encroached about 10 meters of the 30-meter road area. During the drive, DTP GMDA, R.S. Bath directed the owners to remove all vehicles and clear the front premises/area of the shops and ensure adequate waste management in the area. Though the offenders tried to agitate and disrupt the drive,

but the Enforcement Wing of GMDA explained to them the laws and told the violators to abide by them. "This first-ever anti-encroachment drive conducted on this highly congested stretch will have a major impact on the traffic situation and improve the commuting experience for citizens. We won't spare any offender who encroach such important roads in the city and cause nuisance for the public at large," said R.S. Bath.

Gahlot: AAP Government exploring to replace physical RCs with digital versions

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot on Tuesday said that the AAP led Delhi Government is exploring to replace physical Registration Certificates (RCs) with digital versions. A meeting, which was held with representatives from the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) and the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), focused on key issues such as delays in vehicle registration, non-compliance at multi-brand outlets, and backlogs in High-Security Registration Plate (HSRP) requests. The possibility of replacing physical RCs with digital versions was also discussed during the meeting with the senior AAP leader directing the Transport Department to take strict action against non-compliant dealers. He said that dealers found dis-

venience and streamline the process for residents. Commenting on the discussions, Gahlot stated, "Timely delivery of vehicle registration certificates and adherence to compliance standards are critical to ensuring a seamless experience for vehicle owners in Delhi. The Delhi government is committed to improving these processes, and any non-compliance will be dealt with strictly. We are working towards making our systems more efficient and accessible for all." During the meeting, Kailash Gahlot addressed the issue of delays in receiving Registration Certificates (RCs) for vehicles, despite dealers having access to self-registration facilities. He expressed concern over reports of delays lasting several days and directed the Transport Department to take strict action against non-compliant dealers. He said that dealers found dis-

regarding timelines may face cancellation of their trade certificates. He also emphasized the possibility of conducting surprise inspections to ensure adherence to the rules. "The Delhi Government initiated the printing of RCs through self-registration by dealers in March 2021, with the first RC issued on 17th March 2021. This initiative was expanded across Delhi, and by September 2021, all self-registration dealers in the city were empowered to print RCs," a statement said. "Delhi has 263 dealers authorized to print RCs at their dealer points. By June 2024, a total of 15,11,428 RCs had been printed directly by dealers at the point of vehicle purchase. 3,07,630 RCs were printed in 2021, which increased to 4,72,311 in 2022. The number further rose to 4,96,828 in 2023. From January to June 2024 alone, 2,34,659 RCs were issued," it added.

Supreme Court dismisses plea against Ex-CJI Gogoi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Annoyed over the allegations levelled by a litigant against former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi, the Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed a plea and ordered the security personnel to remove him from the courtroom. The litigant accused the former CJI following which a bench comprising Justices Bela M Trivedi and Satish Chandra Sharma asked the security personnel to escort him out of the courtroom. In an earlier hearing, the SC had asked the petitioner to remove the name of Justice Gogoi while leveling allegations for non-favourable judgment in a service case. Arun Ramchandra Hublikar filed a plea against his "illegal termination" from the service while seeking an in-house inquiry against the former CJI for dismissing a plea previously in the service dispute case.



On September 30, a bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud took a strong exception to the submissions seeking an inquiry against the former CJI and asked him to remove the judge's name from the list of parties.

On Tuesday, the bench was irked when the litigant took the name of the former CJI during the hearing. "We are going to impose a cost on you. Don't take the name of any judge. There is nothing in your case," the bench said.

The litigant, however, retorted, "How can you say that there is nothing in my case. How can it be said...It is injustice against me. At least, I should get justice before my death." The bench subsequently said it will dismiss the petition following

which the security personnel was directed to remove the litigant from the courtroom. The CJI-led bench had previously asked him to remove the name of the former CJI from the list of parties as a condition precedent to list his petition for the hearing. "How can you file a PIL with a judge as a respondent? There has to be some dignity. You cannot just say I want an in-house inquiry against a judge. Justice Ranjan Gogoi was a former judge of the Supreme Court," the CJI had remarked. "He retired as the Chief Justice of India. You cannot say I want an in-house inquiry against a judge because you did not succeed before the bench. Sorry, we cannot tolerate this," the bench had said. After Hublikar assured deletion of the name of the former CJI from the list of parties, the CJI ordered listing of the petition which came up for hearing on Tuesday.

CEC promises strict measures against political violence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Days after NCP leader Baba Siddique was killed in Mumbai, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar on Tuesday said the Election Commission will take a strict view on preventing violence, especially against political personalities, as the Model Code of Conduct comes into force in Maharashtra. Asked about concerns following Siddique's killing, especially as the poll panel is already dealing with the issue of urban apathy towards voting, the CEC said they will make it clear to police that violence of any sort should not take place. "After the MCC declaration, we will make it extremely clear to the police authorities in a particular state that you are mentioning that violence of any kind and a crime of this nature,



Photo: Ranjan Dimri/ The Pioneer

which has political overtones, would be absolutely a no-go area for the commission," Kumar said. "So far, we did not have a role. As the MCC comes into force, we will have a strict view on this. We will direct everyone that any kind of violence or crime, especially against any political person, should not happen," he added. "We ensured that it did not happen in Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir. States after

states," the CEC said. Siddique (66), a former Maharashtra minister who joined the Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) in February after quitting the Congress, was waylaid by three men at Kher Nagar in Mumbai's Bandra area, just outside his MLA son Zeeshan Siddique's office, and shot dead on Saturday night. The Maharashtra Assembly polls will be held in a single phase on November 20.

India secures deal for 31 US predator drones to enhance military readiness

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a big boost to its defence preparedness, India on Tuesday inked a mega deal with the US to procure 31 Predator long-endurance drones from American defence major General Atomics under the foreign military sales route at a cost of nearly USD four billion to boost Indian military's combat prowess along the contested borders with China. The deal, signed in presence of top defence and strategic brass of India in the national capital, marks a significant upswing in military ties between the two countries. The procurement of the drones was finalised just weeks ahead of the US presidential elections. Last week, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi cleared the procurement of the MQ-9B 'hunter killer' drones. The drones are being procured

at an estimated cost of around USD 4 billion, officials said. India is acquiring the drones primarily to crank up the surveillance apparatus of the armed forces, especially along the contested frontier with China. In June last year, the Defence Ministry approved the procurement of the MQ-9B Predator armed drones from the US under a government-to-government framework. The MQ-9B drone is a variant of the MQ-9 "Reaper" which was used to launch a modified version of the Hellfire missile that eliminated al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in the heart of Kabul in July 2022. While the Navy will get 15 Sea Guardian drones, the Indian Air Force and the Army will each get eight Sky Guardian drones. The high-altitude long-endurance drones are capable of remaining airborne for over 35 hours and can carry four Hellfire missiles and around 450 kgs of bombs.

Cancer, Dementia heighten sepsis mortality risk: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Cancer and dementia are significant risk factors that elevate mortality rates among patients with sepsis in the emergency medical department, a study released on Tuesday has raised alarm. Sepsis is a critical condition arising when the body's immune system reacts excessively to an infection, leading to organ dysfunction. This extreme response damages the body's own tissues and organs, potentially resulting in shock, multiple organ failure, and even death if not promptly recognized and treated. The research team from Denmark found that age and heart disease are additional factors contributing to increased mortality risk in sepsis patients within two years. "We found that certain factors increased the risk of death after sepsis, including, not surprisingly, advanced age," said Dr. Finn E. Nielsen, a senior



scientist in the Department of Clinical Epidemiology at Aarhus University Hospital, Denmark. "Additionally, conditions such as dementia, heart disease, cancer, and previous hospitalisation with sepsis within the last six months before admission also elevated the risk of dying during a median follow-up period of two years," Nielsen said. In the paper, presented at the European Emergency Medicine Congress in Copenhagen, the team examined deaths over a long follow-up period in a prospective study of 714 adult patients admitted to the emergency department with sepsis

between October 2017 and the end of March 2018. The team found that after a median of two years, 361 (50.6 per cent) of the patients with sepsis had died from any cause, including sepsis. Older age increases the risk of death by 4 per cent for every additional year of age. Sepsis can affect anyone, but people who are older, very young, pregnant or have other health problems are at higher risk. Common signs of sepsis include fever, fast heart rate, rapid breathing, confusion and body pain. It can lead to septic shock, multiple organ failure and death.

Paramesh Sivamani appointed next Coast Guard Chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

DG Paramesh Sivamani took over as the 26th Director General of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) here on Tuesday. The Flag Officer, during his illustrious career spanning over three and a half decades, has served in various capacities in ashore and afloat appointments. He specialises in Navigation and Direction and his sea commands include all major vessels of ICG which include Advanced Offshore Patrol Vessel 'Samar' & Offshore Patrol Vessel 'Vishwast'. The Flag Officer was at the helm of Coast Guard Region (East), Coast Guard Region (West), Coast Guard Commander Eastern Seaboard. DG Paramesh Sivamani was elevated to the rank of Additional Director General in September 2022, and was subsequently posted at the Coast Guard Headquarters, New Delhi. He was given the additional charge of Director General Coast Guard in August 2024.



During the period, many significant operations and exercises were accomplished that includes the seizure of drugs/narcotic substances and gold worth crores of rupees, rescue of mariners during severe cyclonic storms, joint exercises with the Foreign Coast Guards, anti-poaching operations, humanitarian assistance during cyclones/natural calamities & Coastal Security exercises. The Flag Officer was conferred with the Tatrakshak Medal in 2014 and the President Tatrakshak Medal in 2019 for his illustrious service. He was also awarded the DG Coast Guard Commendation in 2012 and Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (East) Commendation in 2009.



Exercise MALABAR 2024 sea phase begins

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Sea Phase of Exercise MALABAR 2024 commenced on Monday off the coast of Visakhapatnam, navy said here on Tuesday. Naval warships, embarked integral helicopters and long-range maritime patrol aircraft from Australia, India, Japan and USA are now exercising in unison in the Bay of Bengal, demonstrating a high level of collaboration and operational synergy. As part of this phase, the participating navies will engage in a wide range of maritime warfare operations, covering the surface, sub-surface, and air warfare domains. These advanced and complex exercises are designed to enhance mutual understanding and coordination, with the aim of operating seamlessly as a Combined Task Force at sea. In sub-surface warfare exercises, Indian Naval submarines would be participating and combined drills of Special Forces from participating nations will also be featured in this phase. This Sea Phase will further strengthen interoperability between the participating nations and contribute towards enhancing regional security and stability in the Indo-Pacific. The sea phase will culminate on October 18 with the closing ceremony for MALABAR 2024.

Defence Minister lays foundation stone for VLF station

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With the objective of providing secure and safe communication network for warships and submarines, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday laid the foundation stone of a new Very Low Frequency (VLF) Station of the Indian Navy at the Damagundam Reserve Forest site, Pudur Mandal in Vikarabad, Telangana. The facility, built at a cost of Rs 3,200 crore, will be spread across 2,900 acres. It will bolster the Indian Navy's operational readiness, ensuring effective command and control capabilities in challenging maritime environments. It will play a pivotal role in strengthening the Naval communication infrastructure, enabling reliable and secure transmission over long distances. Speaking on the occasion, he exuded confidence that the VLF station would expand the military capabilities of the



country, proving to be a boon to the Armed Forces. "Effective coordination between men and machines is becoming extremely important in view of the evolving methods of warfare. This VLF station is being built with the vision of securing our maritime interests. It will ensure secure and real-time communication between our ships & submarines with the command centres of the Armed Forces. A fool-proof communication proves to be a decisive factor between victory and defeat. Without real time communi-

cation, we cannot gain an edge despite having adequate equipment or manpower," Rajnath said. Further highlighting the significance of a strong communication system, the defence minister termed it as pivotal for coordination in any complex operation. He emphasised that a clear and secure communication channel not only helps in timely and effective decision making, but also an important medium to convey the orders of the command to the field formations and obtain the feedback. Rajnath added that if soldiers are fully informed in a battlefield or an operational environment, their morale and unity receive a major boost, enhancing both safety and strategy. The defence minister laid stress on the need to continuously empower the Indian Navy in view of the ever-growing global interest in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). "Our interest is spread across the Indo-Pacific

region. We have also emerged as the first responder and a preferred security partner in the IOR. If India has to secure its commercial and security interests and remain a strong deep sea force, it is necessary to possess state-of-the-art platforms/equipment and a strong communication system," he added. Allaying concerns about the impact of the project on the environment, Rajnath stated that all environmental conditions are being taken care of. It is being ensured that arrangements will be made for the rehabilitation of the affected people, if needed, at the time of construction, he added. In his address, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi stated that the project is set to herald a new chapter in Indian Navy's communication capabilities by ensuring a secure, robust, responsive, and reliable command, control and communication network across the oceans.

Opposition MPs write to Speaker for gross violation of parliamentary code of conduct

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition MPs on Tuesday wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on the "gross violation of parliamentary code of conduct" in the meeting of the joint committee examining the Waqf (Amendment) Bill by panel chairman Jagdambika Pal. The letter came a day after several opposition MPs boycotted a sitting of the committee over the submission of former Karnataka State Minorities Commission chairman Anwar Maniappady, who named several opposition leaders, including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and K Rahman Khan, in the alleged embezzlement of Waqf properties. "The proceedings of the Committee were conducted in a biased and partisan manner by the Chairperson Shri



Jagdambika Pal," opposition members Gaurav Gogoi, Syed Naseer Hussain, Imran Masood (all Congress), A Raja and M M Abdulla (both DMK), Asaduddin Owaisi (AIMIM) and Kalyan Banerjee (TMC) said in the letter. The Joint Committee on Waqf (Amendment) Bill had on Monday called Maniappady to hear his views on the draft legislation in the context of the Karnataka Waqf Scam Report of 2012. "The note contained no obser-

ations on the the Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2024. Instead, it was full of politically motivated allegations against leaders of the Karnataka Congress, including Shri Mallikarjun Kharge, Honble Leader of Opposition (Rajya Sabha)," the letter said. The members said despite vehement protests by several committee members that Kharge occupies a constitutional position of high dignity and is not present in the meeting, the witness was allowed to speak by the chairperson. The opposition members also said that Pal refused to provide adequate time to the committee members to lodge their protests. "We request your immediate intervention in the matter, and expect you to remind the Chairperson of the Committee of his duty to be bipartisan and uphold parliamentary norms," the opposition members said.

Urgent action needed to combat Pediatric TB: Report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Even as children under five account for over 10 per cent of all TB deaths globally, with India bearing a significant burden, a report has pointed out that only one of the 14 surveyed countries has fully aligned its tuberculosis (TB) policies with World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, and among those that have, only four possess the necessary resources for effective implementation. The situation is particularly grave for young children, who are not receiving adequate diagnostic and treatment measures, according to the report from Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF). The report pointed out that even among these nations, only four possess the necessary resources for effective imple-

mentation and emphasised the urgent need for countries to revise their national TB policies to improve care for affected children. Stijn Deborggraeve, Diagnostics Advisor at MSF's Access Campaign said, "TB is a curable disease, even in children. Yet we see a shocking delay in countries adopting effective solutions. Every moment of inaction leads to unnecessary child fatalities." As per the WHO data, 1.25 million children and adolescents contract TB annually, but a staggering half of them remain undiagnosed and untreated. The WHO's 2022 revised guidelines offer vital recommendations that could transform the landscape of pediatric TB care, including symptom-based diagnostic algorithms and shorter, more effective treatment regimens, as per the report.



Joseph Sesey, a Clinical Officer with MSF in Sierra Leone, highlighted the urgent impact of these guidelines, noting significant improvements in diagnosis and reduced mortality rates in children with TB. The

experts have called for immediate and decisive action on the part of governments, donors, and global health organizations to prevent further suffering and loss of life among the world's most vulnerable popu-

lation. "No child should endure the consequences of a preventable disease like TB," Sesey said. "We urge governments, donors, and global health organizations to act swiftly to ensure that no child suffers or dies from a preventable disease like TB," she said. The countries examined in the report include Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, India, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Republic of South Sudan, and Uganda. India's target for eliminating tuberculosis (TB) is 2025, which is five years ahead of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target of 2030. In March 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced India's commitment to eliminate the disease from India by 2025.

PM Modi announces national maritime heritage complex

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said his government's decision to build a national maritime heritage complex in Gujarat's Lothal, considered the world's oldest dockyard, is aimed at improving people's understanding of civilisational history. Lauding it as a remarkable development, he said in a post on LinkedIn titled 'Let's focus on tourism' that the new project will surely ignite enthusiasm among history buffs and tourists alike. Such an effort will boost the tourism economy, which, he said, he foresees as a major driver of growth in India. "When tourism rises, incomes across the board rise. I urge you all, leading and respected professionals, to explore new opportunities in the tourism sector and also share your ideas with me on the same.



This way, we will contribute to a stronger economy and at the same time, preserve our rich past for the coming generations. The complex will bring ancient Lothal back to life as a mini-replica of the dock city," the prime minister said. Modi noted that Lothal was once a vibrant melting pot of civilizations, ideas, and goods and that excavations have pointed to its role as an important maritime centre. He said that the docks, built thousands of years ago, highlight the "spirit of ingenuity our ancestors possessed." "Its advanced engineering and urban planning leave modern observers in awe, offering a

window into the brilliance of our past." In a swipe at previous governments, he added, "Regrettably, in the decades following independence, we allowed many aspects of our history and many of our historical sites to fall into neglect, with our rich past fading from memory. However, the last 10 years have seen a change in this trend." It is in this spirit that his government has decided to build a vibrant national maritime heritage complex, he said. "This will improve our understanding of civilizational history." "This new project will surely ignite enthusiasm among history buffs and tourists alike. The complex will bring ancient Lothal back to life as a mini-replica of the dock city. At the heart of this complex will stand an iconic lighthouse museum, soaring 77 metres high - set to be among the world's tallest of its kind.

Punjab gram panchayat elections: Polling concludes amid tight security arrangements

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHANDIGARH

Polling to elect gram panchayat members concluded amid tight security arrangements in Punjab on Tuesday, officials said. Two incidents of firing were reported, they added. Voting for the posts of "sarpanch" and "panch" through ballots started at 8 am and concluded at 4 pm, the officials said, adding that a voter turnout of more than 45 per cent was recorded. The polling percentage is likely to go up once the data is compiled, they said. After the polling, the votes will be counted at the polling stations, the officials said. A firing incident was reported outside a polling booth in Sohan Sain Bhagat village in Tarn Taran district, leaving a

man injured. Mandeep Singh was rushed to a hospital where his condition was stated to be out of danger. A police official said a scuffle took place between two groups, adding that the matter is being investigated. Another firing incident was reported from Khudda village in Patiala district, leaving one person injured. A police official said 20-25 unidentified people arrived at a polling booth, allegedly manhandled the polling staff and took away a ballot box. Subsequently, they left the ballot box behind in a nearby field, the official said. Congress MP Dharamvira Gandhi, who visited the spot, demanded strict action in the matter. In Ballagan village in Amritsar, two groups clashed and pelted stones at each



other at a polling booth. At a polling booth in Lohke Khurd village in Ferozepur's Zira, an unidentified person tried to throw ink on a ballot box. An

official said the incident has been brought to the notice of senior officials for further action. Sub-Inspector Lakha Singh

(53), who was posted on election duty at Dhilwan village in Barnala district, passed away, a police official said. After he felt uneasy, he was taken to a

hospital where he died, the official added. Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khudian, along with his son, cast his vote in Khudian village in Muktsar district while Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains exercised his franchise in Gambhirpur village in Anandpur Sahib. Talking to reporters, Bains appealed to people to turn out in large numbers to cast their votes in order to elect those who would work for the development of the villages. The State Election Commission cancelled the polling in Dalla and Pona villages in Ludhiana's Jagraon subdivision due to certain technical reasons. The next date of polling in these villages would be announced later, the officials said. A total of 19,110 polling booths, including 1,187 marked as

hyper-sensitive, were set up for the election. The state has 13,225 gram panchayats. Polling for the posts of "sarpanch" was held in 9,398 gram panchayats. A total of 3,798 candidates were already elected unopposed for the posts of "sarpanch". Elderly people, women and youngsters were seen standing in queues outside several polling booths in the morning. The polls were held without the symbols of political parties as a consequence of the Punjab Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2024 passed by the Assembly last month. A total of 1.33 crore people were eligible to vote. There were 25,588 candidates in the fray for the posts of "sarpanch" and 80,598 nominees contested the polls for the posts of "panch", the offi-

cial said. Around 96,000 personnel were deputed on election duty. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann appealed to people on Monday to exercise their franchise. The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Monday dismissed a bunch of petitions filed against the panchayat polls. The pleas were filed on several grounds, including challenging the ward demarcation, delimitation, regarding grievances about poll symbols, extension of time for nominations and rejection of nomination papers. The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to stay the panchayat polls on grounds of alleged irregularities in the nomination process, saying there will be "chaos" if courts start staying elections on polling day.

It is election fever in Kerala as EC announces by-poll schedule

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Stage is set in Kerala for a Shabbat royale between the CPI(M)-led LDF and the Congress-led UDF as two assembly constituencies and the Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency go to the by-elections on November 13. The assembly constituencies of Chelakkara and Palakkad fell vacant following the election of K Radhakrishnan (CPI-M) and Shaffi Parambil to Lok Sabha in the general election held in 2024 May. Both were members of the Kerala Legislature Assembly. Radhakrishnan was elected from Alathur Lok Sabha constituency defeating the sitting member Remya Haridas of the Indian National Congress by a margin of 20,111 votes. Shafi Parambil of the INC was elected to Lok Sabha from Vatakara Lok Sabha constituency trouncing K K Shailaja (CPI-M) by a huge margin of 1,14, 506 votes.



Rahul Gandhi was elected with a mammoth majority of more than 3.64 lakh votes (59.69 per cent) from Wayanad in the May 2024 Lok Sabha election. But he chose to retain the Rae Bareilly seat and resigned from Wayanad making the road clear for sister Priyanka Gandhi to contest the seat. Though the INC is yet to make any formal announce-

ment regarding the party candidate to be fielded from Wayanad, it is almost certain that Priyanka Gandhi would launch her electoral battle from the district atop the Western Ghats in Kerala. While the CPI-M is confident of retaining the Chelakkara assembly seat thanks to the good work done by Radhakrishnan, the Congress

is likely to field Remya Haridas, popularly known as the Malabar Princess from this reserved constituency. It is going to be a cakewalk for the Congress in Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency as the party is well placed than what it was during the General Election in May. The fact that a member of the Nehru-Gandhi family is the candidate

has boosted the morale of the Congress cadre as well as that of its allies. The LDF may have to find out a new candidate this time as Annie Raja of the CPI who challenged Rahul Gandhi last time ended up as an also ran forfeiting her security deposit. Though K Surendran, the BJP's state president, claimed immediately after the dates of the by-poll was announced, that the NDA would win both the assembly constituencies, party insiders tell that even the former knows it well that the Hindutva brigade would make no change in the electoral scenes in Kerala. "At the best, the party may be able to finish third in the race," said a senior BJP leader. The suicide of Naveen Babu on Monday night, allegedly following public humiliation meted out to him by the District Panchayat President P P Divya of the CPI(M) is likely to derail the party's dreams of winning from Chelakkara,

Will contest Jharkhand Assembly polls in alliance with JMM: Congress

PNS ■ RANCHI

Congress on Tuesday said it will contest the Jharkhand assembly elections in alliance with the JMM, with a final decision on seat sharing expected soon. "We will contest elections with our alliance partners in the state. A final decision on the seat sharing will be done soon. We are confident of winning elections on the back of development works done by us," Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee president Keshav Mahto said. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) also expressed confidence that its alliance would be voted back to power. However, it raised concerns on how Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma knew that the election dates would be announced on Tuesday. "We are ready to contest elec-



tions, though the announcement was made a bit early. However, we would like to know how Sarma was aware that elections would be announced on Tuesday. This is a grave threat to democracy," JMM spokesperson Manoj Pandey said. Sarma, who is BJP's co-in-charge of assembly elections in Jharkhand, had said on Monday that the election dates would be announced on Tuesday. Reacting to the

JMM's allegations, the BJP claimed that the JMM was afraid of defeat in the upcoming elections. The BJP also mentioned that the seat-sharing arrangement among NDA partners for the assembly elections was "almost final," with the first list of candidates to be announced within 48 hours of the polls being declared. Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren said the JMM-led alliance will contest all 81 seats.

By-polls in Uttar Pradesh: Political test for BJP amid internal discord

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

The upcoming by-elections in Uttar Pradesh have garnered significant attention, especially considering the BJP's underwhelming performance in the recent general elections. Adding to the political intrigue are reports of internal discord within the state BJP unit, further intensifying the stakes of these by-polls. The by-polls will be held on nine seats against the vacant 10 seats as the election in the Milkipur assembly constituency in Ayodhya has been deferred due to impending court case. The by-elections will take place in Karhal, Katehari, Kundarki, Ghaziabad, Khair, Meerapur, Phulpur, Majhawan, and Sisamau. Of these ten seats, four are currently held by the Samajwadi Party (SP), while the RLD and Nishad Party each hold one seat, and the BJP controls the remaining three.

Polling in all these constituencies will be held on November 13 and results would be declared on November 23. In a bid to ensure a strong showing, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has deployed 16 senior ministers from his government to oversee the BJP's campaign efforts in these constituencies. "For the BJP, these by-elections present a crucial opportunity to consolidate its position in Uttar Pradesh, but they also pose challenges in maintaining smooth relations within the alliance, particularly with the Nishad Party. Negotiations over seat-sharing remain a point of contention, adding further pressure on the ruling coalition," political analyst Manoj Bhadra said. **Opposition strategy:** The Samajwadi Party, led by Akhilesh Yadav, has teamed up with the Congress for the by-elections. The SP has so far announced candidates in five constituencies, with specula-

tion suggesting that it may allocate two seats to Congress as part of their alliance. The Congress had asked for 5 seats. Despite discord over seat sharing the partnership between SP=Congress is seen as a strategic counterbalance to the BJP-led coalition. According to the SP's candidate list, Tej Pratap Yadav will contest from Karhal, a seat vacated by SP President Akhilesh Yadav after his Lok Sabha election victory from Kannauj. Naseem Solanki, wife of jailed SP leader Irfan Solanki, will contest from Sisamau in Kanpur. Other candidates include Mustafa Siddiqui from Phulpur (Prayagraj), Shobhavati Verma from Katehari, and Jyoti Bind from Majhwan. Shobhavati Verma, wife of SP MP Lalji Verma, was previously SP's MLA from Katehari. Ajit Prasad, the son of Faizabad (Ayodhya) MP Awadhesh Prasad, will contest from Milkipur. Jyoti Bind is the daughter of SP leader Ramesh Bind, who ran in the



2024 Lok Sabha elections from Mirzapur. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) has also announced its candidates for most of the constituencies, adding another dimension to the contest. With multiple parties vying for influence over key regions, the by-elections are emerging as a critical test of the evolving political dynamics in Uttar Pradesh. **Key Constituencies in Focus Karhal (Mainpuri):** The Karhal seat, situated in Mainpuri district, became

vacant after Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav resigned following his victory in the Lok Sabha elections from Kannauj. Historically, this constituency is considered a stronghold of the SP. Tej Pratap Singh Yadav, a member of the influential Yadav family, is will contest on SP's ticket. **Katehari (Ambedkar Nagar)** The Katehari seat was vacated by Lalji Verma after his victory in the Ambedkar Nagar Lok Sabha elections. The BJP faces a tough chal-

lenge here as the NDA needs to strengthen its standing with Nishad voters. Swatantra Deo Singh, Daya Shankar Mishra, and Sanjay Nishad are working on BJP's campaign in this region. Shobhavati Verma, wife of SP MP Lalji Verma, is SP candidate. **Majhawan (Mirzapur):** Majhawan's MLA, Vinod Kumar Bind, vacated his seat after winning the Bhadohi Lok Sabha election. The Nishad Party, led by Sanjay Nishad, is lobbying to contest this seat in the bypolls. The BJP has assigned ministers Anil Rajbhar, Ashish Patel, Ravindra Jaiswal, and Ramkesh Nishad to prepare the party's strategy in this constituency. Jyoti Bind is SP candidate from this constituency. **Phulpur (Prayagraj)** Praveen Singh Patel vacated Phulpur after his successful run for the Phulpur Lok Sabha seat. The Yogi government has tasked ministers Rakesh Sachan and Daya Shankar Singh with ensuring

a strong BJP performance in this seat. Mustafa Siddiqui is SP candidate from this constituency. BSP has given ticket to Shibran Paasi. **Kundarki (Moradabad):** Zia-Ur-Rahman Barq's resignation after winning the Sambhal Lok Sabha seat has left Kundarki open for contest. The BJP has deployed ministers Dharmpal Singh, JPS Rathore, Jaswant Saini, and Gulab Devi to lead their campaign in the area. **Khair (Aligarh)** Anoop Singh vacated the Khair seat to contest the Hathras Lok Sabha seat. With the RLD now part of the NDA, the BJP hopes to leverage the significant presence of Jat voters in this constituency. Lakshmi Narayan Choudhari and Sandeep Singh are leading the BJP's campaign efforts here. **Merrapur (Muzaffarnagar):** Chandan Chauhan of the RLD resigned from Merrapur to run in the Bijnor Lok Sabha seat, which he won. The BJP, which lost to

Chauhan in the 2022 Assembly elections, is keen to make gains here, with ministers Anil Kumar, Somendra Tomar, and K P Mallik tasked with preparations. BSP has fielded Shah Nazim from this seat. **Ghaziabad (Ghaziabad):** Atul Garg resigned from the Ghaziabad Assembly seat after being nominated for the Ghaziabad Lok Sabha seat. Ministers Sunil Sharma, Brijesh Singh, and Kapildev Agrawal have been entrusted with keeping voter engagement high for the BJP in this urban constituency. SP may give this seat to Congress. **Sisamau (Kanpur Nagar):** This seat was vacated after the disqualification of SP leader Hazi Irfan Solanki, following his sentencing in a legal case. BJP is looking to make inroads in this SP stronghold with local ministers overseeing preparations. Naseem Solanki, wife of jailed SP leader Irfan Solanki, will contest from Sisamau in Kanpur

SC bans civic police from hospitals, schools, police stations

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Supreme Court on Tuesday banned civic volunteers from the hospitals, schools and police stations and directed the Bengal Government to submit before it the details of recruitment process of civic volunteers, one of which is the prime accused in the August 9 rape and murder of an on duty lady doctor inside the seminar room of the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. After acquiring a verbal data of the civic volunteers thus applied by the State Government the bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra which has been suo motu hearing the RG Kar case --- associated with its wider implications --- directed the Government to present through an affidavit the recruitment process of civic volunteers. "It is a nice process of conferring political patronage on unverified persons," the Supreme Court said seeking affidavit in 3 weeks after hearing that over 1,500

civic volunteers were working under its "Rattirer Sathi" scheme to secure the medical colleges and similar other facilities. The Court wondered whether the prime accused in the RGKMCH case too was a civic volunteer or not. The Court directed the Central Bureau of Investigation to file additional status report in the next hearing after going through the one filed on Tuesday. The CBI apprised the Court about the chargesheet filed against Sanjoy Roy the prime accused in the Sealadh Court. Much in line with the Apex Court's order on the deployment of civic volunteers, the Election Commission of India too had shown its distrust for the "blue police" as they often are called in the State banning them from electoral process in the 2024 general elections. Incidentally the Bengal political opposition too had for long been complaining against the manner in which the civic volunteers are appointed and the way they are used by the Government to man security system, more so in vil-

lages and other remote areas. "These civic volunteers that had been introduced by the Left Front Government as Green Police to assist the traffic police is today used to perpetrate all kinds of crime including electoral rigging in the panchayat elections, extortion similar things," a senior BJP leader said. Meanwhile, the junior doctors once again attacked the State Government for telling lies before the Supreme Court on the implementation of the security infrastructure in medical colleges. "They told the Court that about 95% to 98 percent of the planned infrastructure and security upgrades across government hospitals in Bengal have been completed, excluding the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital but it is not true at all ... come to our colleges and we will show you what has been done ... let alone 95 percent they have not been able to complete 59 percent even ... they are all lying," said a junior doctor from Rampurhat Medical College.

Doctors' Droh Carnival contrasts Didi's Durga Carnival

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Bengal Government suffered yet another judicial discomfiture with the Calcutta High on Tuesday throwing out an administrative order issued by the Kolkata Police prohibiting a public fête --- christened Droh Carnival organized by the senior doctors and a section of the civil society. The Droh Carnival or Carnival of Revolt --- coinciding with the much touted Durga Puja Carnival a pet scheme of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee involving a parade of Durga idols down the historic Red Road --- was called in support of a 10-point demand including the demand for justice for the victim of Kolkata doctor rape and murder case. "The Bench of Justice Ravi Kapoor has thrown out the imposition of Section 163 of the BNSS --- formerly Section 144 of CrPC --- saying the prohibitive order is incongruous with the constitutional right to freedom ... the right to take out peaceful rallies and celebrations cannot



be abridged, the Court has iterated ... this order breaks and dissolves all the arrogance of this Government ... and if still they are not taking any lesson out of this and continue to act in an undemocratic manner then this means they are on their way out," said senior advocate and Rajya Sabha MP Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya. "The police had imposed Section 163 in anticipation of some mischief in the Durga Puja Carnival which is an yearly event attended among others by foreign dig-

nitaries ... this Carnival adds flavor to the Durga Pujas (which has been included in the world heritage list of the UNESCO ... if the High Court has in its wisdom thought that both the programmes can go side by side then so be it ... the Government will definitely abide by that," said senior TMC leader Kunal Ghosh. The Bengal government has been holding the Durga Puja Carnival since 2016 --- much in line of the Independence Day Parade in Delhi --- to mark the culmination of the

State's biggest festival with about 100 Durga Puja committees participating in the fete parading down the Red Road Durga idols along with their respective themes. Earlier apprehending disturbance Kolkata Police Commissioner Manoj Verma in exercise of his magisterial powers issued an order that read "there is a strong possibility of people not being able to attend the Durga Puja Carnival. In view of this, Section 163 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) (Power to issue order in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger) has been implemented for one day in the areas around Red Road." Moments after the High Court order thousands of people including doctors and the members of civil society playing drums and shells and blowing conch flutes, ululating and raising slogans of justice spilled on to the Rani Rashmoni Avenue barely two hundred meters away from the Durga Puja Carnival. "We have never heard of similar protest in history of India post Independence ... perhaps it is first major such protest after the one in 1905-06 against the Partition of Bengal," said Dr Subarna Goswami one of the senior doctors leading the movement. Meanwhile, the indefinite fast held by the junior doctors at the Rani Rashmoni Avenue entered its 11th day on Tuesday with two more doctors joining the fast. "There is no need of imposing prohibitive orders and other such paraphernalia ... instead of that the Government should concede to the 10 point demand that includes foolproof security measures, removal of the Health Secretary, installation of CCTV cameras, restrooms for on duty doctors, centralized referral system with real time monitoring and last but not list giving a specific date for college elections so that the syndicate and mafia raj in the medical colleges which is the main source of all anomalies including the incidents of sexual harassment, rape etc," said Debashis Halder a junior doctor.



www.dailypioneer.com

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

PAPER WITH PASSION

souring relations

New Delhi dismisses the Canadian claims of Indian involvement in the Nijjar case as politically driven

The already tense relations between India and Canada have hit a new low, with both countries expelling each other's diplomats. New Delhi expelled six Canadian diplomats, including Acting High Commissioner Stewart Ross Wheeler after Ottawa's expulsion of 'targeted' Indian diplomats. These diplomats were allegedly involved in 'violent criminal activity in Canada.'



Trudeau announced the expulsion of six Indian diplomats from Canadian soil, citing their involvement in a 'targeted campaign' against Canadian citizens.

The root cause of the conflict lies in the ongoing issue of Sikh separatism and Canada's handling of the Khalistan movement. Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent Khalistan supporter, was a Canadian citizen who had long advocated for an independent Sikh state.

India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has responded with forceful rebuttal, describing the allegations as 'preposterous imputations.' The MEA criticised Canada's decision to expel the Indian diplomats, dismissing the accusations as politically motivated and linked to the Trudeau government's domestic challenges.

PICTALK



An oriental pied hornbill at Ponitora Wild Life Sanctuary, in Morigaon

The untold story of Captain Rameshwar Thapa's heroics



ASHOK K MEHTA

Capt Rameshwar Thapa, Nepal's first civilian pilot to command a Russian Mi17 helicopter, played a pivotal role during the country's Maoist insurgency

When you think of rotary wing aircraft in Nepal, some names will crop up: Tula Bahadur Thapa, Narain Singh Pun, Madan KC, all Army Colonels, but among civilians a pioneer is Capt Rameshwar Thapa, the first Russian Mi17 helicopter pilot who trained the then Royal Nepal Army on Mi17 and was later requisitioned by Security Forces during the Maoist People's War.



The humanitarian angle of saving lives and security posts at great personal risk. RT turns out to be a cat with nine lives having taken numerous hits and a life-threatening crash landing near Everest Base Camp.

King Gyanendra who had usurped power first in 2002 and done a coup in 2005, did not allow the RNA to aid or assist the police which suffered on account of it. He did not even allow PM GP Koirala to use it to break the siege of the Holleri post when 76 policemen were taken hostage.

Major encounters revive memories of fighting, their horror, ferocity and barbarity. Villages and towns have not forgotten



RT HAS NARRATED SEVERAL HUMAN INTEREST STORIES LIKE ONCE EVACUATING A FEMALE MAOIST WHO LATER BECAME A MINISTER AND MARRIED A FELLOW MAOIST MINISTER

the atrocities committed by both sides. RT has narrated several human interest stories like once evacuating a female Maoist who later became a minister and married a fellow Maoist minister.

His underground life at Oasis Hotel in Nepalgunj is cloak-and-dagger stuff. RT has not shied away from writing about RNA's November 2004 Pandaun, Kailali 'propaganda' attack under the lyricist Divisional Commander, Gen Rajendra Thapa.

daily titled 'Maobadi Paradise: Nirmal Nivas', which was Prince Gyanendra's residence. Having been as 'busy as a bee' in the People's War, as a 24X7 helicopter pilot, his life changed after violence ceased.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RTI POWER FADES

Madam — It is really unfortunate that the RTI Act, which came into effect in 2005, promising a new era in transparency in government functioning, has almost died its own death, with the executive not showing any keenness to infuse a fresh life into it.

The proposed amendments were dropped due to widespread public defiance. In the administration and functioning of a democratic government, the right to access and seek information is a sine qua non for transparency, openness and accountability.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

RAILWAY SAFETY NEGLECTED

Madam — Gone are the days when a Railway minister used to apologise for a train accident and even tender his resignation for it. Now, it is too much to expect even an explanation for the snail's pace at which the Train Collision Avoidance System is being installed.

started for Kavach in 2016. But it has been installed only in less than 1,500 km of tracks out of the total 70,000 km covered by the Indian Railways across the country.

Peacekeepers under attack



Just a week ago, Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz announced that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has been banned from entering Israel, accusing him of "supporting" Hamas, Hezbollah,

law and order in the state which is certainly going to be used as ammunition against the government in the electoral campaigning. There is no doubt this issue will resonate with the people of the state.

Sujit De | Kolkata

LAW AND ORDER CRISIS

Madam — The shooting of Baba Siddiqui could not have come at a worse time for the Mahayuti government in Maharashtra, as elections to the assembly are just around the corner.

Houthis and Iran. Now a new order has been issued from Tel Aviv, which says that all UN peacekeepers should be removed from Lebanon.

On the contrary, Israel has been continuously attacking the peacekeepers since last week. Dozens of peacekeepers have been injured so far. UNIFIL, a mission of about 9,500 soldiers of various nationalities, was created after Israel invaded Lebanon in 1978.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

With the right connections, jails seem to have become a holiday resort with all facilities available, like cell phones and wi-fi. The assailants are said to be in the ages of 19-21, and another one is supposedly said to be a minor.

Those in charge of the states must find ways and means to stop the young people from entering the world of crime.

Anthony Henriques | Mumbai

The invisible battle for mental health in India

Mental health remains an afterthought in our healthcare narrative. The true healing encompasses both body and mind



KAVITA KABIRA

As a psychologist, I've seen how health in India isn't just a battle of the body—it's a struggle of the mind. Behind every disease is a person dealing with fear, frustration and, at times, loneliness.

In rural India, patients face challenges that go beyond medical diagnoses. I remember a man from a small village battling tuberculosis, but what weighed on him most wasn't just his illness—it was the isolation. He felt forgotten and cut off from the world because healthcare facilities were far away, and his family didn't know how to support him.



found. I think of Anjali, a young woman overwhelmed by anxiety. To the outside world, she seemed to have it all—a great job, a busy social life, and a bright future. But inside, she was spiralling. She hesitated for months before seeking help, afraid that admitting to her struggles would make her appear weak.

We focus on physical symptoms—treating heart disease, diabetes, and other

conditions—but the emotional weight people carry is often ignored. I've seen people suffer for years in silence, feeling their emotional pain isn't valid because it can't be measured like a physical illness. There's an urgent need for change. India's healthcare system mirrors this divide. In cities, private care offers options, but mental health services are still limited and expensive.

In rural areas, mental health is rarely even discussed. Socioeconomic barriers, especially for women, make it even harder to access mental health care. Women often put their health—both emotional and physical—on the back burner,

prioritising their families' needs over their own. One of my patients, a mother of two, delayed seeking help for her anxiety for years. She was exhausted, overwhelmed, and losing her sense of self.

This is a common story—too many women in India silently endure mental health struggles, dismissing their needs as unimportant, further isolating themselves in the process.

We need to change this narrative. Mental health is not a luxury or a sign of weakness. It is an integral part of overall well-being. We must make mental health care as important as physical health in our conversations and our healthcare system.

(The writer is Psychologist and founder - Kavita Kabira wellness clinic; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

CLEANLINESS AND SPIRITUALITY

The connection between a clean space and a peaceful mind is undeniable



RAVI VALLURI

When I recall our college days, particularly the hostel rooms, it takes me on a nostalgic trip. The days were full of fun and frolic, books scattered around, beer and rum bottles lying randomly, with cigarette butts strewn rather carelessly. The rooms were full of stench.

Most of the guys would ogle, there was no Google back then, at the girls. Posters of Pink Floyd, the Beatles, and Led Zeppelin populated the grubby and unwashed walls of the rooms. The politically inclined would paste large printed pictures of Che Guevara, Marx and Lenin among others, professing their ideological baggage unequivocally.

Some rooms were relatively cleaner and tidily kept. In our hail-fellow-well-met attitude we ended up ostracising such students. But they were our Gurus during examination times, much to their chagrin. A close friend had put up a poster which read: "Cleanliness is the sign of a sick mind." His room was particularly unclean and stained.

Cleanliness is both the abstract state of being clean and free from dirt, and the process of achieving and maintaining that state. However, to my mind cleanliness and spirituality are intertwined like Siamese twins. The human mind normally slips into a state of meditation and involuntarily has a spiritual experience at places which are relatively clean. Cleanliness is positively next to godliness.

India has of late embarked upon a major cleanliness drive where villages, bijou towns, cities, rivers, among others, places of historical importance and important religious places are being refurbished. This is indeed a positive statement made by the government. A gurdwara is the place of worship for Sikhs. People from all faiths and those who do not pro-



fess any faith too, are welcomed in Sikh gurdwaras. To me gurdwaras are among the cleanest spots in the country and it is a lesson in humility to observe how the devout keep it absolutely spick and span. The mind gravitates to the pristine spirit and listens to the soulful and mellifluous Gurubani being sung. The human mind, which is normally cannonaded by innumerable thoughts, gradually settles down and is at rest and peace.

It would be interesting to mention that Sri Harmandir Sahib and Sri Darbar Sahib are informally referred to as the Golden Temple. Guru Ram Das constructed the Golden Temple in 1577. He was the fourth Guru in the pantheon of Sikh Gurus. A Sikh friend mentioned that a gurdwara is a community asset and serviced by unpaid and committed volunteers, those who perform seva from the kitchen to the shoe rack.

Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of peace and non-violence, championed the cause of truth only as he could. His autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, like his life, documents every aspect where he does not dissemble anything. During my days of quotidian drinking, I drank heavily and remained inebriated. In that state of arrogance and hubris, I walked into the holy precincts of the Golden Temple carrying a packet of Wills Navy Cut. The act was certainly sacrilegious. For perpetrating this sinful act, I could have been trolled on social media. Today, I regret the mistake committed and apologise sincerely from the depths of my heart. I am sober today because of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and have given up drinking, smoking and eating non-vegetarian fare. The twisted personality in me is making amends and I hope those afflicted with these vices seek the grace of a Guru to extricate themselves from this cesspool of negativity and embark upon the voyage to discover the quintessential quality of cleanliness and spirituality.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Migration issue polarises Canada ahead of 2025 election

Canada is struggling to reconcile the benefits of foreign influx with stagnant wages, strained services and a housing crisis; analysis by AMAL CHANDRA and AJAY P KARUVALLY

Canada has recently cut down on international student permits and tightened eligibility for work permits in a bid to cut down on the number of temporary residents. As the federal election approaches in October 2025, immigration remains the most contentious issue in Canadian politics. "Immigration is an advantage for our economy — but when bad actors abuse the system and take advantage of students, we crack down." Said Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, in a post on X. However, things are a little more complicated. Canada presents a unique case of population dynamics, with rapid growth despite record-low birth rates. Between 2023 and 2024, Canada's population surged by 3.2 per cent, outpacing even some African nations known for their high population growth. While the population is increasing rapidly, the total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.33 children per woman in 2022 was the lowest in Canadian history. Canada's population growth, despite a very low TFR, is a testament to the power of immigration. In 2023, 97.6 per cent of the growth in the Canadian population came through immigration.

This reliance on immigrants is a long-standing strategy to offset the country's ageing population. While the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily slowed population growth to just 0.4 per cent in 2021, immigration quickly rebounded, fuelling a rapid recovery in population growth. A significant portion of Canada's immigrants come from India, making up 10.8 per cent of all immigrants in 2023. The proportion of Indians among all the immigrant groups entering the country has increased from 9.6 per cent between 1991 and 2000, to 18.6 per cent between 2016 and 2021. Projections for the period between 2022 and 2026 suggest this trend will continue to accelerate.

Canada's Immigration Dilemma: Canada's immigration system comprises four main programs: economic, family, refugee, and temporary work. The first three lead to permanent residency, while temporary workers must follow specific pathways with quotas and criteria to attain permanent residency. The preferred route for international students is the Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP), which is issued to foreign students who have completed a diploma or degree at a Canadian institution. This permit allows them to qualify for permanent residency programs. While all immigration programs have grown, the 127 per cent surge in international student permits issued in 2023 compared to 2006 is particularly remarkable. A 2015 study showed that between 20 per cent and 27 per cent of international students transitioned to permanent residency within ten years of receiving their first study permit. This conversion rate is likely even higher in more recent years, reflecting the growing appeal of Canada as a destination for long-term settlement through the student migration route.

Economic Growth or Illusion? The influx of immigrants and their economic activity has fuelled Canada's GDP growth (1.8 per cent average from 2000 to 2023), but population growth is masking underlying economic challenges. The GDP per capita rate for the same period from 2000 to 2023 is only



CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM COMPRISES FOUR MAIN PROGRAMS: ECONOMIC, FAMILY, REFUGEE, AND TEMPORARY WORK. THE FIRST THREE LEAD TO PERMANENT RESIDENCY, WHILE TEMPORARY WORKERS MUST FOLLOW SPECIFIC PATHWAYS WITH QUOTAS AND CRITERIA TO ATTAIN PERMANENT RESIDENCY

0.7 per cent, among the lowest in the G7. The Canadian economy and the living standards of its population have largely stagnated over the last decade.

While immigrants are contributing to economic growth, the GDP per capita rates are declining. Many new immigrants earn less than the national average, and there are doubts about their ability to achieve upward mobility as rapidly as past generations of immigrants, especially given that the majority are temporary residents.

The Government's Immigration Gamble: To course-correct a stagnating economy and compensate for poor growth rates, Canadian policymakers have made a bet on immigration. By letting in massive numbers of permanent and temporary residents, Canada has prioritised short-term growth, in hopes this can translate to a sustainable long-term growth strategy through the upward mobility of the recently introduced immigrant cohorts. While it may be too early to say this is not working, Canadian public opinion against immigration is at an all-time low. Many Canadians feel the rapid influx of immigrants is exacerbating critical issues like the housing shortage and the strain on social services, including healthcare and emergency response. Despite placing their hopes on immigration, the government has failed to make parallel investments in infrastructure to support both immigrants and the existing population.

Wages in Canada have struggled to keep pace with inflation and there is rising concern among Canadians that immigrants are

suppressing wages. Although evidence suggests that immigrants have little to no impact on the average wages of native workers, the perception of such effects tends to fuel stronger anti-immigration sentiments. Corporations, however, have capitalised on this dynamic, employing temporary workers, including international students, in low-wage, precarious jobs. The promise of permanent residency keeps them in the system, even when working conditions are poor.

For corporations, this represents a windfall of cheap labour. Coincidentally, working these low-paying jobs means the immigrants are unlikely to undergo the upward social mobility the government is hoping they would. Rising Hostility and Public Sentiment As frustrations over the government's immigration policies mount, this frustration is being increasingly manifested as resentment toward immigrants themselves. Public sentiment has noticeably shifted in recent years, with more Canadians expressing negative views toward international students and other immigrants. While this is hard to quantify and prove, public sentiment analysis using machine learning models on social media platforms like Reddit provides a useful indication.

We analysed all the comments under posts containing the word "international students" in the r/Canada subreddit (community) from 2010 to 2022. While the r/Canada subreddit is not in any way a reflection of Canadian society, it could be a fair representation of a microcosm of Canadian centrist views on immi-

gration. Till 2015, there was minimal discussion or negative sentiments related to international students (see figure below). Starting from around 2015, the number of negative comments saw a sharp rise. This trend peaks significantly after 2020, indicating a growing negative discourse, especially in recent years. The number of positive comments seems to plateaued after 2017. Although positive sentiment persists, sentiment analysis reveals a shift in public discourse toward increasingly negative views on the broader issue of international students in recent years.

Conclusion: A Broken System For many international students and temporary immigrants, these growing negative sentiments could lead to increased hostility and more barriers to integration. Instances of food bank usage, cultural misunderstandings, and economic struggles may further inflame these tensions. Canada's immigration system, which lacks a strategic vision, seems to benefit neither Canadian citizens nor immigrants.

Without meaningful reforms, only corporations exploiting cheap labour will see long-term gains, while social unrest and economic stagnation will continue to grow. The future of Canada's immigration policy hinges on the ability of the government and its citizens to address the current challenges and find a path forward that benefits all residents.

(Chandra is an author, policy analyst and columnist and Ajay P Karuvally is a Research Fellow at The International Institute of Migration and Development; views are personal)

The divisive legacy of British colonialism: A persistent threat to India's unity

Politicians continue to exploit social divisions for electoral gains, while foreign forces seek to undermine India's unity

The legacy of British colonialism in India remains a contentious issue, with far-reaching consequences that continue to impact the country's social fabric. In the contemporary context, this can be seen in the practice of politics by the opposition parties, particularly the Indian National Congress (INC).

The colonial era strategically exploited India's inherent social and cultural diversities, creating fault lines that persist today. These divisions, crafted to serve the interests of the British Empire, have become entrenched in India's societal landscape, posing a significant challenge to national unity. Post-1857, British authorities, scholars, and missionaries collaborated to divide Dalits, tribals and Muslims



SHIV PRAKASH

from the Hindu community. This agenda leveraged scholars and missionaries to separate Dalits and tribals through conversion and social manipulation, as detailed in Arun Shourie's seminal work, "Missionaries in India." By creating artificial distinctions and fueling social conflict, the British successfully fostered alliances and divisions that endured long after

independence. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently highlighted Congress's departure from its founding principles, embracing leftist ideologies instead. Modi cited Congress's original stance on issues like Swadeshi, Swavalamban, and Panchayat Raj, and Mahatma Gandhi's opposition to religious conversion and cow slaughter.

Gandhi's post-1920 emphasis on eradicating untouchability, casteism, alcoholism, and women's oppression, and promoting national unity, has given way to divisive rhetoric. Congress's current leadership, exemplified by Rahul Gandhi, has strayed from these ideals. Gandhi's recent US visit sparked controversy, as he claimed Sikhs face identity crises in India, despite no evi-

dence. His comments fueled separatist sentiments among Khalistani supporters, echoing the tactics employed by British colonialists.

Meanwhile, in Sikh communities, Max Arthur Macauliffe sowed seeds of separation, as detailed in Khushwant Singh's "The Sikh Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors." These foreign interventions fabricated logic, distorted literature, and spread misinformation to execute their divide-and-rule policy.

Gandhi's stance resonates with the British-era concept that India is not a nation but a union of states. This contradicts the ancient Indian ethos, affirming India's nationhood. The Vedas proclaim, "Vayam Rashtra Jagryam Purahitah" (We are the guardians of the

nation). Even former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's wish to have his ashes immersed in the Ganges reflects his devotion to Mother India. The British exploited these divisions, nurturing enduring fault lines evident in the Direct Action orchestrated by the Muslim League, resulting in the brutal massacre of 16,000 Hindus in Calcutta alone.

Notable figures like Jaipal Singh Munda and Jogendra Nath Mandal eventually broke away from the Muslim League, recognising the sinister intentions. Mandal resigned from the Pakistan government and returned to India, highlighting the atrocities faced by Dalits and tribals.

Today, India must recognise and learn from this history,

acknowledging the artificial divisions created by British colonialism and guarding against similar tactics employed by contemporary forces seeking to exploit these fault lines for political gain. Citizens and political parties must remain vigilant, prioritising national unity over sectarian interests.

The 1946 Jharkhand, Chota Nagpur Pakistan Conference and Jogendra Nath Mandal's alliance with the Muslim League exemplified this strategy. British authorities fueled fears among Dalits and tribals, claiming the "Hindu Raj" would oppress them. This manipulation ignored the historical social cohesion and shared struggles of India's diverse communities.

Mahatma Gandhi's vision for

a unified India contrasts sharply with the divisive agenda of some contemporary politicians, who seek to resurrect the British-era fault lines. Gandhi's emphasis on eradicating social evils and promoting national unity has given way to identity politics and vote bank manipulation.

India's democratic fabric demands that citizens and leaders recognise and resist these divisive forces, promoting national unity and social cohesion. The country must acknowledge its complex history and address the lingering consequences of colonialism. By doing so, India can overcome the artificial divisions imposed upon it and forge a path toward true unity and progress.

Despite progress, India faces

significant challenges in overcoming the legacy of colonialism. Politicians continue to exploit social divisions for electoral gains, while foreign forces seek to undermine India's unity. The rise of social media has amplified divisive rhetoric, making it easier to spread misinformation and fuel tensions. The divisive legacy of British colonialism remains a pressing concern for India. By acknowledging this history and resisting divisive forces, India can build a more unified future. Citizens must prioritise national interests over sectarian agendas, and leaders must work toward inclusive governance.

(The writer is National Joint General Secretary, Organisation BJP; views are personal)

UN Security Council voices 'strong concern' for UN peacekeepers after Israeli attacks

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS
The UN Security Council expressed "strong concern" Monday as Israel has fired on and wounded UN peacekeepers in southern Lebanon during intensified fighting, reiterating its support for their role in supporting security in the region.

Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl, the council's current president, it urges all parties "to respect the safety and security of UNIFIL personnel and UN premises." The 15-member Security Council has been deeply divided over the war in Gaza, with the United States defending its ally Israel as support for the Palestinians has grown among members and casualties have escalated.

to drive the militant group away from the border so some 60,000 displaced Israelis can return to their homes. The Security Council statement called on all parties to abide by international humanitarian law, which requires the protection of civilians. Council members also called for the full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war "and recognized the need for further practical measures to achieve that outcome."

North Korea blows up inter-Korean roads as tensions with South soar

AP ■ SEOUL
South Korea said North Korea blew up the northern parts of inter-Korean roads no longer in use on Tuesday, as the rivals are locked in rising animosities over North Korea's claim that South Korea flew drones over its capital, Pyongyang.

The explosions came a day after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called a meeting with his top military and security officials. During the meeting, Kim described the alleged South Korean drone flights as the "enemy's serious provocation" and laid out unspecified tasks related to "immediate military action" and the operation of his "war deterrent" for defending the country's sovereignty, the North's state media reported earlier Tuesday.



North's decades-long objective to seek a peaceful Korean unification. During the previous era of inter-Korean detente in the 2000s, the two Koreas reconnected two road routes and two rail tracks across their heavily fortified border. But their operations later were suspended one by one as the Koreas wrangled over North Korea's nuclear programme and other issues.

Top leaders attend Iranian Revolutionary Guard general's funeral

AP ■ JERUSALEM
The funeral of an Iranian Revolutionary Guard general killed alongside Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah drew the largest crowd of top leaders in the paramilitary organisation together Tuesday for the first time since Tehran launched a ballistic missile attack on Israel.

over the status of the head of the Guard's expeditionary army, Gen. Esmail Qaani, but the Quds Force leader was seen in a black bomber jacket wiping away tears early Tuesday morning at the body repatriation at Tehran's Mehrabad International Airport. Meanwhile, Israeli strikes in the southern Gaza Strip killed at least 15 people overnight, including six children and two women, Palestinian medical officials said Tuesday.

and abducting another 250. Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not say how many were fighters but say women and children make up more than half of the fatalities. The war has destroyed large areas of Gaza and displaced about 90% of its population of 2.3 million people.

In solidarity with Hamas, Lebanese militant group Hezbollah has exchanged cross-border fire with Israel almost daily for the past year. Israel escalated its campaign against the group in recent weeks. Meanwhile, a general in Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard directly threatened the lives of Israelis during a funeral service in Tehran for a gen-

eral slain alongside Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. The comment from Gen. Ali Fadavi, a deputy commander in chief of the Guard, comes as Iran awaits a threatened retaliation by Israel over its October 1 ballistic missile attack. "That land is a small land. It's not even as big as one of Iran's small provinces," Fadavi said.

Imran's party calls off protest in Pak ahead of SCO summit

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD
Pakistan's main opposition PTI called off its protest on Tuesday as the 23rd meeting of the Council of the Heads of Government (CHG) of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation begins here under tight security.



The two-day meeting will discuss ongoing cooperation in fields of economy, trade, environment and socio-cultural linkages and review the performance of the Organisation. Pakistan assumed the rotating chair of the SCO CHG, the second highest forum within the SCO, for 2023-24 at the previous meeting, held in Bishkek in October 2023. The CHG meeting will be chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Belarus Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko, Kazakhstan Prime Minister Olzhas Bektenov, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, Tajik Prime Minister Kohir Rashadzoda, Uzbek Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov, Kyrgyzstan's Chairman of Ministers Cabinet Zhaparov Akyzbek, Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref, and Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar are participating.

SCO meeting. However, the issue was resolved late Monday night when the PTI accepted assurance by the government that a doctor would be allowed to see Khan on Tuesday. "After long consideration and negotiations that went back and forth..., we decided to call off the protest," Khan's international spokesman Zulfiqar Bukhari said in a WhatsApp voice message. He also said that the PTI was also urged by its political allies and friendly embassies to postpone the protest. He, however, defended the right to protest on the occasion of an international event which he said was an international norm as all over the world protests are held on such occasions. Earlier, the government had warned to deal with any kind of protest with an iron hand. Elaborate security measures have been taken and about 10,000 police personnel deployed who have the support of paramilitary rangers and regular army troops. The government announced three-day official leave in the capital and neighbouring Rawalpindi to avoid unnecessary hassle during the conference. Section 144 has also been imposed in the twin cities to outlaw all gatherings.

Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited. Registered Office: Unit No. 601, 6th Floor Piramal Amiti Building, Piramal Agastya Corporate Park, Yamini Junction, Opp. Fire Station, LBS Marg, Kurli (West), Mumbai - 400 070. Demand Notice table with columns: Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s), Demand Notice Date and Amount with NPA date, Property address.

PUBLIC NOTICE. Residential Plot No. A-547, area measuring 63 sq. yds., i.e. 52,674 sq.mtr., falling in Kh. No. 300, Situated at Gali No. 16, Harsh Vihar, Phase-II, Village Grahampur alias Bhupura, Pargana Loni Tensi & Distt. Ghaziabad (UP). (Hereinafter referred to as the "said Property").

Public Notice. This is to inform the general public that Beinita Bedi is the owner of Upper Ground Floor without roof rights built on Plot No. 238, area measuring 100 sq. yards, i.e. 20' x 45', out of Kh. No. 76/5 situated in the area of village Kamalpur Majra, Burari, abadi known as C-Block, Main Road, Ashok Vihar, Delhi-110084. The said Plot is dated 15.10.2024 as doc. No. 2024/19/1/2205 executed by Pratima Bedi and Rekha Bedi in favour of Beinita Bedi W/Omr. Anmol Bedin (respondent).

Form No. INC-26 [Pursuant to rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014] BEFORE THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, NORTHERN REGION, DELHI. IN THE MATTER OF SUB-SECTION (4) OF SECTION 13 OF COMPANIES ACT, 2013 AND CLAUSE (A) OF SUB-RULE (5) OF RULE 30 OF THE COMPANIES (INCORPORATION) RULES, 2014 AND IN THE MATTER OF XPRESS MINDS EDUTAINMENT PRIVATE LIMITED HAVING ITS REGISTERED OFFICE AT C-208 YAMUNA APARTMENTS, ALAKNANDA, DELHI, INDIA, 110019, PETITIONER.

Public Notice. This is to inform the general public that Beinita Bedi is the owner of Upper Ground Floor without roof rights built on Plot No. 238, area measuring 100 sq. yards, i.e. 20' x 45', out of Kh. No. 76/5 situated in the area of village Kamalpur Majra, Burari, abadi known as C-Block, Main Road, Ashok Vihar, Delhi-110084. The said Plot is dated 15.10.2024 as doc. No. 2024/19/1/2205 executed by Pratima Bedi and Rekha Bedi in favour of Beinita Bedi W/Omr. Anmol Bedin (respondent).

Public Notice. This is to inform the general public that Beinita Bedi is the owner of Upper Ground Floor without roof rights built on Plot No. 238, area measuring 100 sq. yards, i.e. 20' x 45', out of Kh. No. 76/5 situated in the area of village Kamalpur Majra, Burari, abadi known as C-Block, Main Road, Ashok Vihar, Delhi-110084. The said Plot is dated 15.10.2024 as doc. No. 2024/19/1/2205 executed by Pratima Bedi and Rekha Bedi in favour of Beinita Bedi W/Omr. Anmol Bedin (respondent).

Public Notice. This is to inform the general public that Beinita Bedi is the owner of Upper Ground Floor without roof rights built on Plot No. 238, area measuring 100 sq. yards, i.e. 20' x 45', out of Kh. No. 76/5 situated in the area of village Kamalpur Majra, Burari, abadi known as C-Block, Main Road, Ashok Vihar, Delhi-110084. The said Plot is dated 15.10.2024 as doc. No. 2024/19/1/2205 executed by Pratima Bedi and Rekha Bedi in favour of Beinita Bedi W/Omr. Anmol Bedin (respondent).

Public Notice. This is to inform the general public that Beinita Bedi is the owner of Upper Ground Floor without roof rights built on Plot No. 238, area measuring 100 sq. yards, i.e. 20' x 45', out of Kh. No. 76/5 situated in the area of village Kamalpur Majra, Burari, abadi known as C-Block, Main Road, Ashok Vihar, Delhi-110084. The said Plot is dated 15.10.2024 as doc. No. 2024/19/1/2205 executed by Pratima Bedi and Rekha Bedi in favour of Beinita Bedi W/Omr. Anmol Bedin (respondent).

Public Notice. This is to inform the general public that Beinita Bedi is the owner of Upper Ground Floor without roof rights built on Plot No. 238, area measuring 100 sq. yards, i.e. 20' x 45', out of Kh. No. 76/5 situated in the area of village Kamalpur Majra, Burari, abadi known as C-Block, Main Road, Ashok Vihar, Delhi-110084. The said Plot is dated 15.10.2024 as doc. No. 2024/19/1/2205 executed by Pratima Bedi and Rekha Bedi in favour of Beinita Bedi W/Omr. Anmol Bedin (respondent).

PUBLIC NOTICE. Known to all that my client known to all that my client NAVRAJ SINGH RIVATI owner of the FIRST FLOOR PROPERTY NO.WZ-9A, PLOT NO. 10, AREA 113 SQ. YDS. KHASRA NO-24/10, KRISHAN NAGAR ALIAS KRISHNA NAGAR, VILLAGE KESHPUR DEHI and NAVRAJ SINGH RIVATI don't have original 1st Survivor Member Certificate of L. Harbans Kaur. And it is informed that any deal with said documents by any person except my solicitor and said institution regarding said property shall be deemed as null and void if any person having any claim/right in said property then he may contact and handover the same and propose his claim to undersigned within 8 days of this publication.

PUBLIC NOTICE. I, Ajay Khandelwal, Research Analyst am going to surrender my SEBI registration certificate as a Research Analyst with SEBI registration number INH100009983 and BSE RA Enlistment Number 5597. If anyone has any grievances, they can lodge the grievances at scores.gov.in

PUBLIC NOTICE. To be known to all that I, Yogita Sabharwal D/o Late Shri Brij Mohan Sabharwal s/o. H.No. A-148, UGF, Ashok Vihar, Phase-2, New Delhi, Mob. 9899429342, Email: yogitiasabharwal11@gmail.com. The owner of MIG Flat No. 8, 3rd Floor, Pocket-D-10, Sector-7 Rohini. The original papers i.e. Demand cum allotment letter, Possession letter, Site Possession Slip, NOC for Water and Electricity etc. executed by DDA of abovesaid property has been lost. A.F.R. to this effect has been lodged to police station dt. 15/10/2024. Any person(s) claiming any right, having any objection or found in possession of original document may write/contact with above named person at above address within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice & can personally contact - Deputy Director (MIG Housing), D-Block, 3rd Floor, DDA Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi.

PUBLIC NOTICE. My client Sh. Vidya Sagar Jha s/o Sh. Jagdishwar Jha owner of Built up Plot Bearing No. 1-B, area measuring 64.38 sq. mtrs. out of Kh. No. 1264, Situated in Unincorporated Colony Saran Nagar East W.V. 2 Block, PTL in the area of Village Kadi Pur, abadi known as Swaroop Nagar, East Village Libaspur, Delhi-110042. I through Registered Conveyance Deed Dated 06.01.2024 executed by DDA-PM-UDM/CELL in favour of Late Ram Bir Singh who was the owner by virtue of No. 1 at SR-VIE DELHI the above-mentioned property is going to be mortgaged with Fed Bank Financial Services Limited. If any person/bank/financial institution having any claim/right, lien, any objection whatsoever in regard to the above property, should notified to the undersigned/Adv. Vishal Mehant-713, Karakoram Court, Delhi-110032 along with documentary evidence under address through registered within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived. Adv. Vishal Mehant, E-713, Karakoram Court, Delhi-110032, Mobile No. 9811215181.

PUBLIC NOTICE. My client Sh. Vidya Sagar Jha s/o Sh. Jagdishwar Jha owner of Built up Plot Bearing No. 1-B, area measuring 64.38 sq. mtrs. out of Kh. No. 1264, Situated in Unincorporated Colony Saran Nagar East W.V. 2 Block, PTL in the area of Village Kadi Pur, abadi known as Swaroop Nagar, East Village Libaspur, Delhi-110042. I through Registered Conveyance Deed Dated 06.01.2024 executed by DDA-PM-UDM/CELL in favour of Late Ram Bir Singh who was the owner by virtue of No. 1 at SR-VIE DELHI the above-mentioned property is going to be mortgaged with Fed Bank Financial Services Limited. If any person/bank/financial institution having any claim/right, lien, any objection whatsoever in regard to the above property, should notified to the undersigned/Adv. Vishal Mehant-713, Karakoram Court, Delhi-110032 along with documentary evidence under address through registered within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived. Adv. Vishal Mehant, E-713, Karakoram Court, Delhi-110032, Mobile No. 9811215181.

PUBLIC NOTICE. To be known to all that Shriharj Pandey S/o P. S. Pandey has H/O. H. No. 351, Gal No.5, D Block Sangam Vihar, Delhi-110062 applied for issuance of certified copy of Demand cum allotment letter in respect of EWS Flat No. 711, Block No. 5, Shivaji Marg, Delhi-110015 allotted vide file no. E/488(626)/2018/ODDA/14/S.M. (Demand letter No. 125/104, on dated-31/12/2018, 20/05/2019, & 24/11/2022). The original document i.e. Demand cum allotment letter of the said property is being held by me. If any person(s) claiming any right in respect of the said property, should notified to the undersigned/Adv. Vishal Mehant-713, Karakoram Court, Delhi-110032, along with documentary evidence under address through registered within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived. Adv. Vishal Mehant, E-713, Karakoram Court, Delhi-110032, Mobile No. 9811215181.

China reacts to arrest of its nationals for cyber fraud in Sri Lanka

PTI ■ COLOMBO
The Chinese Embassy on Tuesday said it is closely following the arrest of several of its nationals in Sri Lanka for allegedly being involved in online fraud and process for their repatriation is underway. Sri Lankan police said over 230 Chinese nationals between the ages of 22 and 49 have been arrested from different parts of the island in the last fortnight. The Chinese nationals were arrested for allegedly overstaying their visit visas and being party to online scams conducted from Sri Lanka. The Chinese Embassy in a statement said it is closely following the recent reports that Sri Lankan police arrested several foreign suspects of online fraud, including Chinese nationals.

"Due to Sri Lanka's advantages in telecommunications infrastructure, geographical location and friendly relations with China, as well as the public lack of awareness on online fraud, some electronic fraud criminal gangs have moved to Sri Lanka and continue to engage in fraud activities targeting Chinese citizens at home and abroad," the embassy said. The Chinese government has taken note of this and promotes cooperation in the anti-online fraud law enforcement between the two countries, the statement added. "In order to effectively crack down on telecom fraud and create a strong deterrent, the Ministry of Public Security of China sent a working group in September to jointly carry out a special operation with the Sri Lankan police.

PM Modi advocates ethical global digital framework

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday made a fervent pitch for framing of a global digital framework, with clear-cut dos and don'ts for ethical use of technology. Speaking at the inauguration of the International Telecommunication Union - WTSA and India Mobile Congress here, he said just like the aviation sector, where the global community has framed a comprehensive framework, the digital world too needs rules and regulations. Global institutions, he said,



should come together to work out dos and don'ts. He went on to emphasise on ethical use of AI with security, dignity, equity being at the centre. Talking of India's experience, he said after the expeditious

roll out, 5G telecom services are now available in most places across the country and work on 6G has already begun. Giving out statistics, the Prime Minister said India has in the last decade become an exporter of mobile phones

from being an importer, and has laid an optic fibre network that is eight-time more than the distance between earth and the moon. India's digital vision that was unveiled in 2014 rests on four pillars making devices cheaper, connectivity reaching all concerns, affordable data and digital-first, he said. "We have made digital connectivity an effective tool for last-mile delivery," he said. Modi said India is willing to share its experience of successful building of digital public infrastructure with the rest of the world.

India poised to lead global 6G: Scindia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is resolved to lead the world in 6G, communications minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Tuesday, terming the telecom sector of the country as 'aggressive' and 'ambitious'. Scindia, speaking at the inauguration of India Mobile Congress and World Telecommunication Standardization (WTSA) 2024, said with the Bharat 6G Alliance, India hopes to contribute at least 10 per cent patents to 6G standardisation. "It is our belief and our commitment India followed the world in 4G, we marched with the world in 5G, but we shall lead the world in 6G," the minister asserted. With the fastest 5G rollout in India wherein 98 per cent of districts and 90 per cent of all villages were covered in a



span of just 21 months, Scindia said it is the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's effort of not just embracing, but bracing the country to become the first-mover in 6G technology. "It is noteworthy that the Indian Mobile Congress and the International 6G Symposium demonstrates both local and global advancements in 6G, and also design principles that will shape the future of telecom," he further said.

The recent changes to the Telecommunications Act 2023 have been designed in such a way so as to modernise India's telecom framework, drawing light upon hitherto unaddressed areas such as the high potential sector of satellite communications, addressing the challenges of the digital era, the most important being cyber security, Scindia said. "The telecom sector, much like other growth-critical sectors in India, is aggressive,

is ambitious, and its outlook in our journey from Amrit Kaal to Shatabdi Kaal is to lead the world," he said. India Mobile Congress (IMC) is an annual event organized by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI). IMC 2024 will see participation from over 400 exhibitors, nearly 900 startups, and participation from 120+ countries. About 3,200 delegates from over 160 countries are part of the WTSA assembly. "We are confident that this (WTSA), along with the Indian Mobile Congress in its 8th edition. Will serve as a breeding ground for innovation, but also showcase India's impending but inevitable emergence as a global hub for telecommunications across the world," Scindia said.

Government planning development beyond elections: Vaishnav

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government is laying the process of development which is 'beyond the cycle of elections' for India to be able to grow six to seven times the current level to become a developed nation by 2047, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said on Tuesday. Addressing a symposium by the Indian Foundation for Quality Management (IFQM), the Minister for Railways, Information and Broadcasting, and Electronics & IT, said one of the key elements of the government's goal of a developed nation is having "a very inclusive and harmonious society". For India to become a developed nation by 2047, the target for measurable parameters is "USD 18,000 per capita income



and USD 30 trillion nominal GDP", he said. "Today, we are just shy of USD 4 trillion nominal (GDP), just shy of about USD 3,000 nominal per capita.

It means we have a path where we need to grow about '6x-7x' in the next 25 years," Vaishnav asserted. Sharing the government's approach to meet the

target, the minister said, "It needs a very strong foundation, a very carefully thought through strategy, meticulous execution, and laying the process of development, which is beyond the cycle of elections." He further said that the intent of the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is to build further on the foundation laid in the past ten years. "What we are going to do in these five years of Prime Minister Modi, his third term, will be beyond the cycle of elections will be beyond the cycle of business cycles," Vaishnav said. Taking a dig at the Opposition without naming anyone, he added it will be beyond "people who can, who have a lot of destructive mindsets. It's beyond the capability

of such destructive mindsets. That's the thought process." Elaborating on what the government meant by becoming a developed nation, the minister said, "First is a very inclusive and harmonious society. First and foremost is a very inclusive and harmonious society, a society which cares for everybody, a society which considers every section of the society as equally important and gives opportunities for everybody to come up." He further said, "The second big element of being a Viksit Bharat is to have the social, physical and digital infra place in place." The third, he said is meeting the measurable parameters of per capita income and GDP to meet the set targets.

Samsung workers call off strike, to return to work: TN govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Over a month-long indefinite strike by the employees of Samsung India Electronics Ltd at its plant near here was called off on Tuesday and the workers have decided to resume work, the Tamil Nadu government said. The state government in a statement said the strike at the factory of the Korean electronics giant in Sriperumbudur has come to an end and all the workers would get back to work. Pressing for various demands, about 1,100 workers of the total 1,750 employees of Samsung India have been on strike since September 9, which includes wage revision, better work conditions, registration of the newly formed Samsung India Workers Union backed by



CITU by the labour department. The decision to call off the strike was taken at the conciliatory meeting which was held at the office of the Department of Labour Welfare here on Tuesday in which representatives from the Samsung India and the

striking workers took part. "All the striking workers will call off the agitation and return to work immediately. On returning to work the management will not victimise the workers for having participated in the protest," an official release said.

Coal India digitises fuel supply agreements process

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Coal India Ltd (CIL) on Tuesday said that it has started the online process of signing fuel supply pacts with its various clients including those in the power sector to ensure ease of business. With this move, CIL has discontinued with the earlier practice of physical submission of official papers, while bank guarantees and other required documents can be submitted through digital mode. "Coal India Ltd, in a first ever, introduced online signing of fuel supply agreements (FSA) for power as well as non-regulated sector customers participating under linkage based auctions," the company said in a statement. To ensure ease of business, CIL said, it has also cut down

the number of documents that were required to be submitted. "The online signing of FSAs for linkage auctions...Evades the cumbersome process of voluminous documents. It ushers in greater customer ease as they can conduct the entire process from their place of work without having to visit the coal companies," a senior executive of the company said. Previously, in case of any discrepancy in documents, customers had to visit the company to get them rectified. Now, this can be done online. CIL signs hundreds of FSAs annually necessitating maintenance of bulky documents. The electronic arrangement makes the upkeep much easier.



Since the documents are stored digitally, tracking the status of progress also gets simplified at supplier and customer ends. Among non-regulated sectors so far, nearly 700 FSAs have been formalised online for a total of about 19 million tonnes of coal supply. In case of power sector 262 FSAs have been signed digitally till now for a total quantity of around 24 MT. Coal India accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal output.

Corporate India to maintain 9.5 per cent salary increase in 2025: WTW survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Corporate India is expected to offer a salary hike of 9.5 per cent in 2025, similar to the 2024 actual salary increase, as companies are balancing optimism with caution, a report said on Tuesday. According to WTW's latest Salary Budget Planning Report, the median salary increase in India is forecasted to rise by 9.5 per cent in 2025, similar to the 2024 actual salary increase of 9.5 per cent. Salary increases in India continue to be the highest across the region. Markets such as Vietnam (7.6 per cent), Indonesia (6.5 per cent), the Philippines (5.6 per cent), China (5 per cent) and Thailand (5 per cent) are also projected to maintain a strong salary increase for next year. The Salary Budget Planning Report is compiled by WTW's Rewards Data Intelligence practice. The

survey was conducted in April and June 2024. Approximately 32,000 responses were received from companies across 168 countries worldwide. The survey had 709 participants from India. "While companies in India are optimistic about growth, they are balancing optimism with caution. The era of 'Great resignation' is behind us, both employers and employees are now seeking stability and the market sentiment is notably steadier," Rajul Mathur, Consulting Leader, Work and Rewards, WTW India said. In 2025, salary increases across industries such as the Pharmaceuticals (10 per cent), Manufacturing (9.9 per cent), Insurance (9.7 per cent), Captives and SSO sectors (9.7 per cent) and Retail (9.6 per cent) are likely to be above the general industry salary median, whereas software and



Business Services at 9 per cent are projected below the general industry median of 9.5 per cent. "India's captive sector is thriving, with a forecasted jump from around 1,500 captives in 2023 to 2,000 by 2025. As the home to nearly half of the world's global capability centres, the country's rich pool of skilled talent is driving innovation and boosting projected salary increases", Mathur added. In 2025, variable payouts are projected to remain consistent at 12.5 per cent, following 2024's 12.6 per cent. As organisations prioritise performance, they are assigning larger portions

of their variable pay budgets to top and above-average performers, ensuring talent is recognised and suitably rewarded. "Organisations are placing a stronger emphasis on performance-based pay differentiation. This trend sees top performers potentially earning salary increments three times that of average performers, while above-average performers are expected to receive about 1.2 times the increment of an average performer," Mathur said. In terms of hiring, almost 28 per cent of companies plan to add headcount in the next 12 months, while 68 per cent

companies plan to maintain their headcount in 2025 as compared to the previous year. With higher growth rates anticipated, India's voluntary attrition rate continues to be one of the highest in the region. However, it is observed that the voluntary attrition rates in India have reduced slightly from 11 per cent in 2023 to 10.8 per cent in 2024. In addition, around 46 per cent of companies in India expect that their salary increase budgets for 2025 will be similar to 2024, while 28 per cent said that the budgets are likely to be lower than projected. Concerns related to cost management, inflationary pressures, anticipated recession. A tighter labour market are the major factors influencing budget projections for 2025, the report said.

Government to verify air purifier claims amid pollution

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday announced plans to conduct market surveillance to verify claims made by air purifier manufacturers, amid rising concerns about pollution in Delhi and other major cities. This move comes in response to Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Monday accusing some companies of making false assertions about their products. Consumer Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare, addressing a media briefing on Tuesday, stated, "We will try to see through market surveillance and check if the claims are correct or not." Khare also mentioned that the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has taken note of the issue and will examine compliance with existing quality control orders on air filters. The announcement follows Joshi's remarks at a World Standards Day event, where



he expressed concern over misleading marketing tactics. "Air purifiers make such false claims. We see air purifiers and so much is written but nothing is there in it. There is just a fan in it, yet claims are still made," Joshi had said, highlighting the need for increased consumer awareness. The minister advocated for a collaborative approach involving the BIS, the consumer affairs ministry, and consumers to address the issue. This initiative comes at a time when rising pollution levels in Indian cities have led to increased public interest in air purifiers.

Soybean output reaches 126 lakh tonnes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Soybean production in the country has increased by about 6 per cent to nearly 126 lakh tonnes in the current kharif season due to favourable weather conditions, an organisation of the crop processors said on Tuesday. Its acreage remained almost the same as last season, the trade body said. During the last kharif season, the average productivity of soybean per hectare in the country was 1,002 kg, while this time it has increased to 1,063 kg. Soybean Processors Association of India (SOPA) Executive Director D N Pathak told PTI. "This time the distribution of monsoon rains in the major soybean producing areas of the country was good, which boosted the crop yield. The adoption of advanced methods of farming by cultivators and increased the crop yield," he said. After the sowing of soybean during the kharif season of 2023, there was a severe lack of moisture in the fields due to lack of rain for three weeks in the major soybean producing areas in August, as a result the crop productivity



fell, Pathak said. As per the SOPA's estimate, during the kharif season in the country this time, soybean was sown in 118.32 lakh hectares and its yield was 125.82 lakh tonnes. During the kharif season of 2023, soybean was sown in a total of 118.55 lakh hectares in the country and the yield of this oilseed crop was around 118.74 lakh tonnes, as per the association's data. This time in Madhya Pradesh, which is the largest soybean producer in the country, the crop was sown in about 52 lakh hectares and its production stood at the level of 55.40 lakh tonnes, according to the SOPA. In the current kharif season, soybean production is estimated to be 50.17 lakh

tonnes from 45 lakh hectares of area in Maharashtra, while the crop was sown in 11.13 lakh hectares in Rajasthan and its yield was around 10.53 lakh tonnes, as per the organisation. India imports about 60 per cent of its edible oil requirements. In such a situation, experts feel that to achieve the ambitious target of self-sufficiency in the production of edible oils, there is a need to increase the production of major oilseed crops like soybean in the country. The central government has increased the minimum support price (MSP) of soybean for the marketing season 2024-25 to Rs 4,892 per quintal from Rs 4,600 per quintal in the last season.

ASSOCHAM, Savlon lead handwashing drive in NDMC schools

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking to inculcate the importance of healthy habits among students and encourage widespread behaviour change in hygiene practices through handwashing, ASSOCHAM Foundation for Corporate Social Responsibility (AFCSR), the social arm of ASSOCHAM, organised an awareness drive across New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) schools here on the occasion of 'Global Handwashing Day'. Supported by hygiene brand Savlon and covering nearly 28,000 students across 43 NDMC schools, AFCSR conducted the programme in a hub and spoke model in which a mega activity was organised at Atal Aadarsh Bengali Balika Vidyalaya, Gole Market and parallel activities were carried out in other NDMC schools. Speaking about the initiative, Anil Rajput, Chairperson, ASSOCHAM National CSR Council, said, "There is an old saying that good habits formed at a young age make



all the difference. I believe that on this global handwashing day, the youth have to understand, incorporate and disseminate information on the importance of handwashing. Every year about 1.8 million children under the age of 5 die from diarrheal diseases and pneumonia that are attributed to poor hand hygiene, and therefore, it is my firm conviction that the incorporation of this habit in our daily routine will go a long way in leading a healthy and productive life at an individual level, along with creating a high performing society that will increasingly

contribute towards nation building." Pramod Kumar, Academic Consultant, New Delhi Municipal Council, (NDMC), said, "Awareness and behaviour formation from an early age has a multiplying effect on the potential benefits and impact on human lives. Today's event not only highlights the importance of handwashing, it also delivers valuable lessons on the impact of personal hygiene on public health and betterment. Initiatives such as this will surely have a positive impact on the future of the children and also of the society in general."

Lakshya, Malvika make first-round exits at Denmark Open

PTI ■ ODENSE
India's Lakshya Sen battled hard against China's Lu Guang Zu but ultimately lost in three games to make an early exit from the Denmark Open Super 750 badminton tournament here on Tuesday. Lakshya, a 2021 World championship bronze medallist, squandered an opening game advantage, losing 21-12 19-21 14-21 to Lu in a men's singles opening round match which lasted 70 minutes.

Malvika Bansod, who had reached the quarterfinals at China Open, also couldn't cross the opening hurdle, going down to Vietnam's Nguyen Thuy Linh 13-21 12-21 in women's singles. Panda sisters Rutaparna and Swetaparna also made a first-round exit after losing 18-21 22-24 against Chinese Taipei's Chang Ching Hui and Yang Ching Tun in women's doubles. Lakshya, competing in his second event since the Olympics, kept pace with his Chinese rival before pulling ahead at 8-8 to take an 11-9 advantage at the break. The Indian kept his nose ahead after resumption and jumped to 20-11 with a



seven-point burst to comfortably pocket the opening game. After the change of sides, Lakshya surged to 8-2 but Lu rallied to narrow the gap to 11-12. The Indian extended his lead to 16-11 but Lu's persistence paid off as he kept troubling Lakshya and reversed the situation, taking 19-18 lead. The Indian drew parity but Lu got the required two points to script a comeback. In the decider, Lu maintained his composure and pulled ahead to 14-9, while the Indian struggled to keep pace. In a jiffy, Lu seized six match points and sealed the victory when Lakshya went long.



Alex Ferguson to step down as club ambassador

AP ■ MANCHESTER (ENGLAND)

Manchester United great Alex Ferguson will step down from his role as club ambassador at the end of the season, a person with knowledge of the decision told The Associated Press on Tuesday. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the move has not been publicly announced. Ferguson will be 83 in December and the person said the ending of his ambassadorship was "amicable" and he would "always be welcome at Old Trafford." Ferguson won 13 Premier League titles with United and is widely regarded as one of the finest managers in the history of soccer. He is United's most successful manager, having won 28 major trophies. He has been a club ambassador since retiring after leading United to its last league title in 2013. His imminent departure comes at a time when the club is undergoing major change following the partial buyout by British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe in February. United has undergone an extensive restructuring program following Ratcliffe's investment of \$1.3 billion for a 27.7% stake and implemented cost-saving initiatives that it said included staff redundancies of around 250 roles. United reported losses of 113.2 million pounds (\$148 million) in its latest accounts. Ferguson was hired by United in 1986 at a time when the club had long-since lost its place as the pre-eminent force in English soccer. He ended its 26-year wait for the league title in 1993 and went on to dominate the Premier League era right up until his retirement when United was crowned champion with an 11-point lead over Abu Dhabi-backed Manchester City. He also won two Champions League titles and an unprecedented treble of trophies in 1999 when leading United to victory in the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup. He has been a regular spectator at United games since his retirement, watching the team home and away during a time when the club has been in obvious decline on the field. Ratcliffe assumed control of United's soccer operations as part of his minority investment. The sporting side had previously been under the control of the majority owning American Glazer family. A new CEO, Omar Berrada, and sporting director, Dan Ashworth, have been installed, while key figures at Ratcliffe's Ineos Sport, Dave Brailsford and Jean-Claude Blanc, have been appointed to the board.

Udita attracts highest bid in first half of HIL women's auction

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian defender Udita Duhan emerged as the costliest buy in the first half of the Hockey India League women's auction after she was acquired by Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers for Rs 32 lakh here on Tuesday. Dutch star drag-flicker Yibbi Janssen was the second most expensive player and was bought by Odisha Warriors for Rs 29 lakh. Indian players Lalremsiami (for Rs 25 lakh to Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers), Sunelita Toppo (for Rs 24 lakh to Delhi SG Pipers), and Sangita Kumari (for Rs 22 lakh to Delhi SG Pipers) attracted significant attention in the first half of the auction. Several overseas players, including Belgium's Charlotte Englebert (for Rs 16 lakh to Soorma Hockey Club), Germany's Charlotte Stapenhorst (for Rs 16 lakh to Soorma Hockey Club), and Australia's Jocelyn Bartram (for Rs 15 lakh to Odisha Warriors) were the notable buys. Veteran India striker Vandana Katariya fetched Rs 10.5 lakh from Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers.



India captain Salima Tete (Rs 20 lakh), Ishika Chaudhary (Rs 16 lakh) and Neha Goyal (Rs 10 lakh) were picked up by Odisha Warriors. Former India captain Savita (Rs 20 lakh), Sharmila Devi (Rs 10 lakh) and Nikki Pradhan (Rs 12 lakh) are some of the big Indian names bought by Soorma

I waited for many years for women's HIL: Rani Rampal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rani Rampal waited for the women's Hockey India League as a player for years but now that the league will finally see the light of the day, the former India captain will wear a different hat. Rani, who captained India to a historic fourth place finish at the Tokyo Olympics, will be the mentor and coach of Soorma Hockey Club of Punjab and Haryana in the women's HIL which will make its debut later this year. "Hockey is my passion and I played my entire career with that. It was always in my mind that I will definitely accept any opportunity to serve Indian hockey. Hockey was always on my mind," Rani said on the sidelines of the HIL women's auction here on Tuesday. "I tried a lot to make a comeback in the national team but could not do so before the Paris Olympics. I had waited for many years for this women's league and when it started, it felt very good to be a part of the coaching staff and not as a player," said the 30-year-old Padma Shri awardee, who has scored 134 goals in 212 matches for India. "Asked why she opted out of the



league as she had not officially announced her retirement yet, Rani said: "I am a female player and I have faced a lot of struggles. A player is always a player. The desire to play never ends. "But sometimes you have to make a difficult decision and I decided to join the coaching staff. "It is difficult to talk about retirement right now. Now I will face a new challenge in the league and after that I will take a final decision." Rani admitted that India's failure to qualify for the Paris Olympics was a setback for women's hockey in the country, but said there is no point in thinking about the

Bangladesh coach Hathurusingha suspended



Chandika Hathurusingha



Phil Simmons

PTI ■ DHAKA

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has suspended men's team head coach Chandika Hathurusingha due to inappropriate conduct by him during last year's ODI World Cup in India. Hathurusingha, the former Sri Lanka all-rounder under whom Bangladesh recently endured a forgettable tour of

India where they were whitewashed in both the Test and T20I series, will be sacked and replaced by former West Indies player Phil Simmons. "According to ESPNcricinfo, Simmons, who was also an all-rounder and opened the batting for the West Indies in the early and mid 1990s, will be in charge of the Bangladesh team until next year's ICC Champions

Trophy. "Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha has been suspended following allegations he slapped a player at last year's ODI World Cup. His contract will be terminated after 48 hours of suspension, with Phil Simmons to take over until next year's Champions Trophy," the website said. "The BCB investigated an

allegation from a player that the coach had slapped him during the World Cup last year. "The contract of the 56-year-old Hathurusingha, who rejoined the Bangladesh team in February last year for a second stint with the Asian side, was to expire after the 2025 Champions Trophy. "He will therefore not be present with the team for the upcoming two-match Test series at home against South Africa. "He took the team to India on the back of a historic Test series sweep in Pakistan only to suffer an embarrassing 0-2 defeat in the two-Test series against Rohit Sharma's side and a 0-3 loss in the T20I series. "His exit marks an underwhelming end to his brief stint as Bangladesh coach with debacles in the 2023 ODI World Cup and the 2024 T20 World Cup.

Arsenal Women coach Jonas Eidevall quits less than a month into the new season

AP ■ LONDON

Arsenal Women manager Jonas Eidevall quit on Tuesday, less than a month into the new season. The English team has won just one of its first four matches in the Women's Super League and lost its opening game in the Champions League group stage, 5-2 at Bayern Munich. Eidevall joined in June 2021 from FC Rosengard in his native Sweden and led Arsenal to two League Cup titles as well as the Champions League semifinals in the 2022-23 season. It was the first time in 10 years Arsenal reached that stage in Europe's top club competition. His last game in charge was a 2-1 home loss to Chelsea in the Super League on Saturday. Arsenal said Eidevall



resigned with immediate effect. "We have great respect for the dedication and commitment he showed to our women's first team," Arsenal sporting director Edu Gaspar said of Eidevall, "and recognize the role he has played in the growth and development of Arsenal Women." Assistant coach Renée Slegers will take charge of the team on an interim basis, starting with the home match against Valerenga in the Champions League on Wednesday.

Italy-Israel soccer match is held without incident despite security concerns

AP ■ UDINE

There were snipers on the roof of the stadium and a heavy police presence throughout the city of Udine for Italy's home match against Israel. In the end, both the game and an earlier pro-Palestine demonstration passed without incident as Italy beat Israel 4-1 in the Nations League. Udine was on high alert, with the game being played against the backdrop of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East which has spread to Lebanon after more than a year-long war in Gaza. It was the first match Israel has played outside neutral Hungary this year. After the Israel-Hamas war

started on Oct. 7 last year, the national soccer team played in Kosovo and Andorra last November. All Israel matches since then have been in Hungary, including last month's game against Belgium in the Nations League after the Belgian Football Association refused to host the game for security reasons. "We are going to play this match with the hope of convincing ever more people of the wrongness of war," Italy coach Luciano Spalletti said. "There are many Israelis who don't want it and we must convince ever more people that this is something that has to stop." When Spalletti's team played its "away" match against



Israel last month in Hungary, a group of about 50 Italy fans clad in all black turned their backs in apparent protest during Israel's national anthem. There were boos from some fans in Udine when the Israeli anthem was played on Monday but the rest of the stadium tried to drown that out with loud applause - just as they had done when the Israel team was read out. At least one Palestinian flag was held up. There was a highly visible group of around a dozen Israel fans and they loudly chanted their support. Fewer than 12,000 tickets were sold for Monday's match - less than half the capacity of the 25,000-seater Stadio Friuli - amid stringent

security measures, that also included armed military personnel on the roof of the stadium. Areas around the stadium were blocked off 48 hours before kickoff and declared a "red zone," and only fans with tickets could pass through the tall metal barriers. Supporters were strongly advised to arrive early because of rigorous checks. Hundreds of extra police officers were called up from surrounding areas. Around 1,000 people took part in a pro-Palestine demonstration earlier in the city center. Among the placards, there were several posters calling on soccer's governing bodies to ban Israel.

1ST TEST: GILL, JAISWAL CONTINUE GOOD FORM; KOHLI, ROHIT EYE CONSISTENT RUN

PTI ■ BENGALURU
Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill, the torchbearers of India's transition phase, will have to be the team's driving force in its quest to lord over an unsettled New Zealand when the two sides square off in a three-Test series, beginning here on Wednesday. The baton has not been completely passed, but Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma are certainly running their last lap and these two young superstars will have to show that they can carry forward the legacy of the titans. Since a productive series against England earlier this year, Gill is now more familiar and comfortable with the rigours of Test cricket. His last 10 innings contain three hundreds and two fifties, while Jaiswal's last eight outings in Test cricket feature a 214 and five fifties. Those numbers are not to be scoffed at. But at the same time, it is important for them to build on the foundation through this series, a precursor to the much tougher journey to Australia next month. Gill seems to have sorted his issues with the in-coming

deliveries from pacers, but a trace of the old failing still remains. In Chennai, Bangladesh pacer Hasan Mahmud troubled him with nip-backers before eventually grabbing his wicket. Similarly, Jaiswal has a penchant to go for expansive shots against pace bowlers to get dismissed, evidenced by his three dismissals recently against Bangladesh quicks. In all, the left-hander has fallen to pacers 12 times in 20 innings, and he would want a better record before facing a clutch of top-class Australian pacers. While these concerns are not deeply rooted, they serve as cautionary points against a New Zealand attack that has capable hands in pacers Matt Henry, William O'Rourke and the experienced Tim Southee, if he gets to play here after a sharp decline in his form. There is another angle to the emergence of Jaiswal and Gill as the pillars of the Indian line-up, as Kohli and Rohit have not precisely set the field ablaze. Rohit, who has played 15 innings this year, has made two hundreds but managed only one fifty in the remaining 13, totaling 497



runs in eight Tests at just over 35. Kohli, 53 runs shy of 9000 Test runs, has not made even a fifty in six innings this year, and while Rohit often perishes in his attempt to grab the momentum, his colleague offers a much more curious case. The 35-year-old Kohli has not been able to convert the two starts he got this year, ending up with 46 (vs SA) and 47 (vs Bangladesh), stirring the uncomfortable memories of that great slump between 2019 and 2023. The master batter will also have to keep an eye on New Zealand left-arm spinners -

Ajaz Patel and Rachin Ravindra - the tribe which has been a thorn in his flesh in the past. It has been a while since these two stalwarts embossed their mark across a full series, and a nervy New Zealand could be their golden chance to do so. India has only minor concerns, but New Zealand's troubles across batting and bowling departments are more pronounced. Their batsmen struggled copiously against Sri Lankan spinners recently while losing an away series 0-2, and here they will have to negate two modern-day greats in Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja. They took 20 wickets together against Bangladesh and with the Chinnaswamy Stadium pitch expected to give some assistance to spinners, the veterans might be itching to have a bowl here. Besides the duo, the Kiwis will have to contend with the genius of Jasprit Bumrah, who rattled Bangladesh by picking up 11 wickets across two Tests. If they persist with the combination from the last series, Akash Deep will be the third pacer behind Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj. The weather here is expected to be gloomy over the course of the Test match, and there could be some delayed starts and truncated sessions. The management will take into account the fact that New Zealand, who have already lost Kane Williamson to an injury, were put through the wringer by Lankan spinners recently. In another blow, right-arm pacer Ben Sears has been ruled out of the series due to a knee injury. An uncapped Jacob Duffy, who has played six ODIs and 14 T20Is, has been brought into the squad. Teams (from): India: Rohit Sharma (c), Jasprit Bumrah (vc), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, KL Rahul, Sarfaraz Khan, Rishabh Pant (wk), Dhruv Jurel (wk), Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Akash Deep. New Zealand: Tom Latham (captain), Devon Conway, Kane Williamson, Mark Chapman, Will Young, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Michael Bracewell, Mitchell Santner, Rachin Ravindra, Tom Blundell (wk), Ajaz Patel, Matt Henry, Tim Southee, William O'Rourke, Jacob Duffy.

Don't want to take undercooked Shami to Australia: Rohit

PTI ■ BENGALURU
India skipper Rohit Sharma has virtually ruled out Mohammed Shami from the upcoming Test tour of Australia, saying that the pacer's recovery from an ankle surgery has been hampered by swelling in knees and it would not be right to take an "undercooked" version of him for the marquee showdown. Shami last played for India during the ODI World Cup final last year and has been recuperating from an ankle surgery after that. "To be honest, right now, it's pretty difficult for us to make a call on him, whether he'll be fit for this series or Australia series. He recently had swelling on his knee, which was quite unusual," Rohit told



reporters here on the eve of the first Test against New Zealand. "He was in the process of getting fit, getting close to 100 per cent, he had swelling in his knee, that put him back a little bit in his recovery. So, he had to start again. Right now, he's at NCA, he's working with the physios and the doctors at NCA," he added. Rohit said the team management wants Shami to regain full fitness before returning to top-flight cricket. "We are keeping our fingers crossed, we want him to be 100 per cent fit. We don't want to bring an undercooked Shami to Australia, that is not going to be the right decision for us. It is quite tough for a fast bowler, having missed so much of cricket, and then suddenly to come out and be at his best, it is not ideal," he noted. Rohit said the National Cricket Academy staff will continue to assess Shami's fitness and he might play a couple of internal matches in that process. "We want to give him enough time to recover and be 100 per cent fit. The physios, the trainers, the doctors have set a roadmap for him. He is supposed to play a couple of (practice) games before he plays international cricket," he added. Shami has played 64 Tests for India, taking 229 wickets at an impressive average of 27.71. India will play five Tests in Australia starting November 22.



New Zealand pacer Ben Sears ruled out of India tour due to knee injury

PTI ■ BENGALURU
New Zealand right-arm pacer Ben Sears has been ruled out of the upcoming three-Test series against India due to a knee injury. The opening Test begins here on Tuesday. Sears' departure to India was delayed after he experienced pain in his left knee during New Zealand's recent tour of Sri Lanka. Scans back home revealed a tear to his meniscus, prompting medical consultations in hopes he could be cleared to play. "However, following the medical advice, the decision was made to rule him out of the series. A plan on the best course of treatment and rehabilitation for the injury will be advised in due course," New Zealand Cricket said. Jacob Duffy has been called in as his replacement and the uncapped 30-year-old right-arm fast bowler will leave for India on Wednesday. Duffy has so far played six ODIs and 14 T20Is for the Kiwis and in 102 First-Class outings he has claimed 299 wickets. "We're obviously disappointed for Ben who made a strong start to his Test career during the home summer and offers a genuine pace option," New Zealand head coach Gary Stead said in a statement. "It remains to be seen how long we'll be without him for, but we're hopeful his road to a full recovery will be a short one. It's an exciting opportunity for Jacob who has been around Test the squad before. With three Tests ahead of us he has every chance of making his Test debut." Stead hoped Duffy's experience in County Championship would be beneficial for the player. "Jacob's recent experience playing for Nottinghamshire in the County Championship certainly pushed his place. His performances in white-ball cricket for the Blackcaps have always been impressive and we're confident he'll be able to contribute if called upon," he said.

Keeping Jasprit Bumrah quiet will go a long way in winning against India: Pat Cummins

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Australia will have to find a way to keep Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah quiet if they are to win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, reckoned captain Pat Cummins on Tuesday as they draw comfort from success in last two ICC finals against their fierce rivals. The world's top two Test teams will clash in a five-match affair starting on November 22 in Perth and India will enter the contest having held the trophy for nearly a decade, which includes winning two consecutive series Down Under. "I'm a big fan of Bumrah. I think he's a fantastic bowler. Hopefully, if we can keep him quiet, that is going to go a long way to winning the series," Cummins said on the

Star Sports Press Room. "Alongside him, he has got some other guys who haven't played a lot over here in Australia (that) we haven't seen a lot of. We'll see how it goes," he added. Cummins said Australia will lean on happy memories of winning the last two ICC finals -- World Test Championship and ODI World Cup -- against Rohit Sharma's India. "The last two series were a long time ago. We have got over it," he said. "I've never played alongside him (Rohit Sharma), so I don't know him super well. But it has looked like they (Indian team) are pretty organised, pretty well-planned. Fortunately, over the last few years, we've had some success in the World Test Championship final and (in



a different format for the ODI World Cup. We'll be trying to lean on those memories. As I'm sure they're trying to remember some of the previous series over here as well," he said. Pujara's absence will give a 'different feel' Cummins said playing against Cheteshwar Pujara, whose stoic resistance with the bat laid the foundation of India's away wins in 2018-19 and 2020-21, was 'real Test cricket'. "It was always great playing (against) Pujara. He was one of those guys who never really felt like he was getting away from you. But then he would (just) bat, bat, bat and bat," he said. "I really enjoyed the contest against him. Some days he won, other days I won. It's going to have a bit of a different feel without him. Pujara is a great player." "(I) had lots of battles against

him over the years. I quite enjoyed them, to be honest. It was real Test cricket. He might score runs, but you always feel like you're in for a chance." Cummins said playing against India's former No 3 batter was a battle of outlasting each other. "It comes down to almost who wants to outlast each other, which I quite like that aspect of Test cricket. It's going to be a shame that he is not there, but I'm sure they'll pick someone else who's in a similar kind of style," he said. Cummins said the India-Australia rivalry will now be "mirroring" the Ashes given that there will be five Tests hereon. "I do think it is," said Cummins when asked if India-Australia rivalry matched that of the Ashes. "Particularly, after the Indian team won the last couple of series at (our) home. We've had more success against England over the past decade. I think it's right up there," he said. "You know when you play against India, you've got a few Indian fans that are watching. It's a slightly different rivalry to England-Australia rivalry. But again, now having a five-Test match series, it does mirror the Ashes series very closely," he said. Cummins said India's reputation has been consolidated by winning away from home. "Winning (in) Test cricket away from home is as tough as it gets in our sport and India have done that around the world. They are really, really good at home but also, one of the better teams to travel as well that's their reputation," he said.

Latham looking forward to challenge of beating "well-rounded" India

PTI ■ BENGALURU
New Zealand captain Tom Latham on Tuesday conceded that beating a "well-rounded" India would be an enormous task but said his team is ready to face the challenge over the course of a three-match Test series, beginning here from Wednesday. The presence of a host of experienced batters and bowlers, Latham said, makes India a formidable opponent. "You obviously look at the spinners when you come over these conditions. But they've got an equally good seam attack in Bumrah, Siraj, Akash Deep, who's played the last couple of Tests against Bangladesh. So just a well-rounded side," Latham

said in the pre-match press meet here on Tuesday. "From a batting point of view. You have a lot of match winners who can take a game away from you pretty quickly. We're looking forward to the challenge. Hopefully, we can lean back on the experiences that we've had here the last couple of times that we've toured," he added. In that context, Latham said the Kiwis will miss the presence of former captain Kane Williamson, who has been ruled out of the early part of this tour owing to a groin injury. "It's disappointing not to have Kane here. Fingers crossed he'll be ready as soon as possible. I think



Youngie (Will Young) will play. He'll bat at three. He's batted all over the order. I guess it's his opportunity to put his hand up. "Yeah, obviously, disappointing when you miss a senior guy like Kane, but it gives opportunities for other guys to put their hand up," he said. However, Ben Sears getting ruled out because of a knee injury has opened up a chance for out of form veteran Tim Southee to get a place in the eleven. "Absolutely, I think last time they played a Test here, Tim took 7 for 60. Obviously, Ben Sears has been ruled out, so I guess if we do end up going with the three seamers, then obviously Tim will come right into the equation." Latham admitted that the build-up to this series was not ideal after a 0-2 series defeat against Sri Lanka, but hoped to carry over the learning from that contest. "Obviously, results weren't ideal in Sri Lanka. I think that first Test was a reasonably small margin in terms of the defeat. But we actually did a lot of good stuff in that tour. "And, yeah, I guess you come here to India, it's slightly different conditions. That wicket at Galle didn't offer a lot from a bowling point of view," he noted. Latham is no stranger to captaincy but being in the hot seat on a permanent basis from the three-match series against India excites the Canterbury man.