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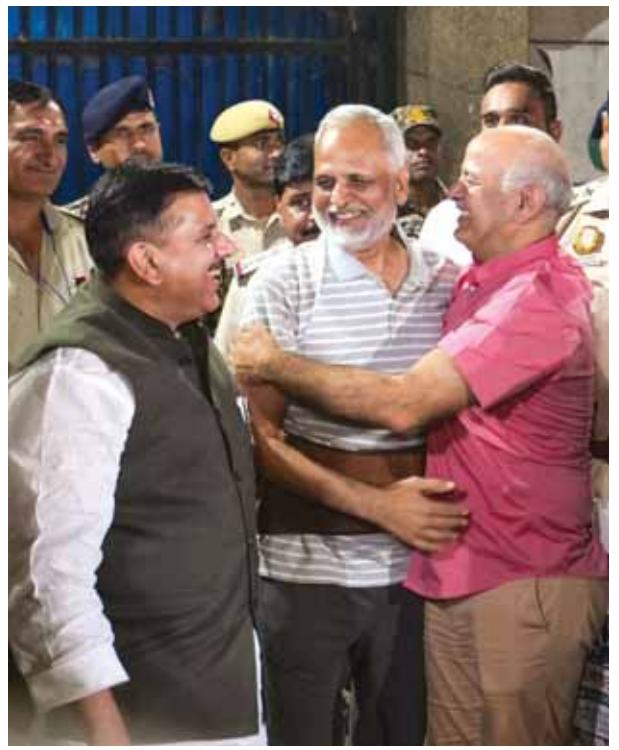


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## Final countdown for AAP

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a booster dose to Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), a city court on Friday granted bail to Delhi's former health minister Satyendar Jain in the Rs 4.81 crore money laundering case, after 18 months in jail. Jain is the fourth senior AAP leader to come out of prison in the last five months. The party's national convener Arvind Kejriwal, and senior Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh had secured bail in the last few months. The AAP leadership is expected to campaign extensively for the Delhi Assembly elections due early next year, to retain the AAP government. The turmoil within the party arising out of the 'liquor gate' scandal forced Kejriwal to hand over the Chief Minister baton to Atishi. Jain and Sisodia were Ministers at the time of going to jail. Jain's bail comes at a time when the entire AAP leadership is trying to regain the public perceptions about their politics ahead of the assembly polls in Maharashtra and Jharkhand after massive defeats in two states-Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir. After debacle in the Lok Sabha polls in May and assembly polls in Haryana, the AAP performance was pathetic and all the candidates forfeited the deposit. Granting bail to Jain, Special Judge Vishal Gogne of Rouse Avenue Court said: "Considering the delay in trial and long incarceration of 18 months, and the fact that trial will take long to start, let alone conclude, the accused is favourably suited for the relief." The judge granted the relief on a bail bond Rs 50,000 with two sureties of like amount.



AAP leader and former Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain being greeted by party leaders Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh PTI

The court also relied on the August 9 Supreme Court judgement that granted bail to former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia in cases linked to the alleged excise policy scam. Jain was the first AAP leader and Health minister in the Kejriwal government till he was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on May 30, 2022, on the charge of laundering money through four companies allegedly linked to him. He was granted an interim bail a year later, in May 2023, by the Supreme Court on medical grounds. Jain returned behind the bars in March this year, after the

Supreme Court turned down his request for a regular bail. All senior AAP leaders who were jailed on corruption charges, are out on bail. Last month, Kejriwal was granted bail by the Supreme Court in a CBI case linked to the alleged liquor scam. Sisodia was granted bail by the top court in August this year, after spending 17 months in Tihar jail in cases related to the Delhi excise policy case. In April this year, the SC had granted bail to AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh after ED didn't oppose his plea in the Delhi excise policy case. The moment the judge pronounced the order, Jain's

wife Poonam and daughter Shreya, who were present in the courtroom, broke down. Shreya spoke to media persons later and said Diwali had arrived early for the family. The CBI had initially registered a case under Sections 13(2) (criminal misconduct by public servant) read with 13(e) (disproportionate assets) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 against Jain. The case was registered on the allegation that Jain had acquired movable properties in the name of various persons between 2015 and 2017 which he could not satisfactorily account for. Later, the ED also registered a case and alleged several companies beneficially owned and controlled by him received accommodation entries amounting to Rs 4.81 crore from shell companies against cash transferred to Kolkata-based entry operators through a hawala route. According to ED, Jain transferred money to Kolkata through the hawala channel and got it back from dummy companies in the form of accommodation entries, even though he could not show the source of the money received. He was earlier granted bail by the trial court in the case registered by CBI in September 2019. He was then granted interim bail by the SC on May 26 last year, which ended on March 18 this year, after the Supreme Court rejected his plea for regular bail. In March, the Supreme Court had observed that Satyendar Jain, along with his aides Anshu Jain and Vaibhav Jain, were prima facie guilty of the alleged offences of money laundering.

## Supreme Court steps in against Child Marriage



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday said the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) cannot be stunted by traditions under any personal law and observed marriages involving children violate the free will to choose a life partner. A Bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra further issued a slew of guidelines for the effective implementation of the law on prevention of child marriages in the country. The Bench, however, noted the issue of whether the PCMA would prevail over personal laws was pending with the Parliament for consideration. The Centre had urged the apex court to hold the PCMA to prevail over personal laws. The CJI highlighted that a "very extensive" sociological analysis was made in the judgement. "While the PCMA seeks to prohibit child marriages. It does not stipulate big social malaise of marriages fixed in the minority of a child which also have the effect of violating the rights to choice...It takes away from them, their choice of partner and life paths before they mature and form the ability to assert their agency..." the CJI said.

The court noted that child marriages require an intersectional approach that acknowledges the overlapping vulnerabilities experienced by children, especially girls, from marginalised communities. "Intersectionality involves considering factors like gender, caste, socio-economic status and geography, which often increase the risks of early marriage" the CJI said. Preventive strategies should be tailored to the unique needs of various communities besides focusing on addressing the root causes of child marriage, such as poverty, gender, inequality, lack of education, the judgement said. "The PCMA as a social legislation will only succeed through the collective efforts of all stakeholders to address the issue within a broader social framework, which emphasises the need for multi sectoral coordination," it added. According to the SC, the scenario necessitated the enhancement of reporting mechanisms, expansion of public awareness campaigns and investment in the training and capacity building of law enforcement. "The implementation of these guidelines is to prioritise prevention before protection and protection before penalisation. We are cognisant of the impact that criminalisation has on families and communities. To ensure effective use of the penal provisions in the PCMA, it is imperative that there is widespread awareness and education about child marriage and the legal consequences of its commission," it said. The SC, however, clarified that it should not be understood that prosecution of those who commit illegal acts is discouraged. Further, it opined the law enforcement machinery ought to make best efforts to prevent and prohibit child marriage and not solely focus on prosecution. The judgement came on a PIL filed by Society for Enlightenment and Voluntary Action seeking effective implementation of the law to prevent child marriages.



## SC recalls 2022 verdict on benami law provisions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant development, the Supreme Court on Friday recalled its 2022 verdict that had declared as unconstitutional two provisions of the law on prohibition of benami property transactions that restrains such deals and acquisition of properties by authorities. Allowing the Centre's review of the August 23, 2022 verdict, a Bench Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud, Justices P S Narasimha and Manoj Misra recalled the judgement delivered by a three-judge Bench headed by former CJI N V Ramana. In its August 2022 verdict, the top court had then held that Sections 3(2) and 5 of the Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act, 1988 being "manifestly arbitrary" were unconstitutional. While Section 3 of the Act deals with prohibition of benami (a property held by a person through proxies) transactions, Section 5 pertains to property of benami liable to acquisition. On Friday, the top court agreed with the submissions of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who appeared for the Centre, that the validity of these two provisions were not under challenge before the erstwhile Bench. "In this view of the matter, the review would have to be allowed. It is trite law that challenge to the constitutional validity of a statutory provision can't be adjudicated upon in the absence of a live lis and contest between the parties," said the Bench. The top court consequently allowed the review petition. It said the civil appeal, on which the August 2022 verdict was delivered, will stand restored to the file for a fresh adjudication before a Bench nominated by the chief justice on the administrative side. In its August 2022 verdict, the apex court had held that the benami law did not have a retrospective application and the authorities couldn't initiate or continue criminal prosecution or confiscation proceedings for transactions entered into prior to when the legislation came into force. The top court was dealing with a legal question -- whether the 1988 Act, as amended by the Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act, 2016 had a prospective effect. The 2022 verdict was delivered on an appeal of the Centre challenging a Calcutta High Court judgement, which held that the amendment made in the 1988 Act in 2016 would be applicable prospectively. The Centre had contended that the 2016 Act would be applicable retrospectively. The benami law was enacted to prohibit such transactions and enforce the right to recover properties held to be "benami". The law punishes a violator with a three-year jail term or fine or both.

## Salman Khan gets another death threat



T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Bollywood actor Salman Khan received a extortion-cum-death threat from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang on Friday, even as a Panvel court in Navi Mumbai on Friday remanded Sukha alias Sukhbir Balbir Singh, the key accused in the case involving the conspiracy to kill the super star, in police custody for four days. In view of the fresh threat received by Salman Khan, the police have beefed up security in and around his residence at

Bandra and farm house at Panvel. The police have also deployed armed personnel outside the studios where Salman Khan is shooting for 'Bigg Boss 18'. On a day when the Worli police registered a case in connection with a Rs 5 crore extortion threat received by the Mumbai traffic police, Sukha -- who was picked up from Panipat in Haryana by a visiting team of Panvel police--was produced before a court at Panvel in Navi Mumbai. The court remanded him to police custody till October 21. Apart from the conspiracy to kill Salman, Sukha will also be questioned in connection with the murder of politician-businessman Baba Siddique. Siddique was a close friend of Salman Khan and several other film personalities. In the threat message received by the Mumbai traffic police, a gangster close to Lawrence Bishnoi demanded Rs 5 crore from Khan as extortion money. Among other things, the gangster asked the actor to end his long-standing rivalry with incarcerated gangster Lawrence Bishnoi.

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## Delhi's winter woes begin

Poison in the air

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid rising air pollution in the National Capital, around 13 'hotspots' including Narela, Bawana, Mundka, Wazirpur, Rohini, R K Puram, Okhla, Jahangirpuri, Anand Vihar, Punjabi Bagh, Mayapuri, and Dwarka Sector-8 have been identified as areas where the Air Quality Index (AQI) crossed 300 on Friday. According to the Delhi government, the major factor contributing to high levels of pollution is dust. The data available by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) reveals that the average AQI of the city stood at 292 in the 'poor' category at 4 pm on Friday. As per the AQICN, Anand Vihar recorded an AQI of 219, Wazirpur and Jahangirpuri recorded 157, Rohini and R K Puram recorded 154, Narela and Punjabi Bagh recorded 152, Okhla recorded 124, Mundka recorded 114 and



Dwarka Sector-8 recorded 109.



Regions adjoining the national Capital also reported AQI in 'poor' category with Noida recording an average AQI of 242, Greater Noida recording 264, Ghaziabad recording 258, Faridabad recording 242 and Gurugram recording 242 according to the CPCB at 4 pm. At 8 pm, Faridabad Sector 11 recorded an AQI of 359, Greater Noida Knowledge Park-V recorded 491, Ghaziabad's Vasundhara area recorded 215 and Gurugram's Sector 51 recorded 251.

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It continues to grapple with pollution year after year. A political blame game also began with the Delhi BJP alleging that the AAP government in Delhi does not want to tackle pollution. At Kalindi Kunj, the Yamuna river presents a grim sight as toxic foam blankets its surface on October 18. The frothy layer not only mars the river's beauty but is also a serious health risk, with ammonia and phosphate pollutants contributing to the foam.

## Yamuna froths in despair

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a double whammy for the National Capital Region already grappling with poor air to breathe, pollutants led to toxic foams floating in the river Yamuna. Multiple videos circulating on social media showed vast sections of the river frothing on the surface, the foam gradually dissipated later in the day. Environmental experts expressed concern about the harmful health effects of pollution and highlighted the city's deteriorating ecosystem as

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## Commuters grope in the dark at Chirag Delhi

Heavy traffic congestion, turns peak hours into a nightmare

BY SAUMYA SHUKLA

The bustling areas around Chirag Delhi and Mehrauli-Badarpur (MB) road in south Delhi are notorious for perennial heavy traffic congestion, often turning peak hours into a nightmare for commuters. In response to these ongoing challenges, the Delhi Traffic Police has revealed that both immediate and long-term solutions are in the works to alleviate the situation at these key traffic junctions. At Chirag Delhi intersection, two major carriageways including J B Tito Marg and Lal Bahadur Shastri Marg merge. This road starts from Moolchand flyover and ends under Chirag Delhi while Lal Bahadur Shastri Marg starts from Khanpur T Point and ends under Chirag Delhi flyover. To provide relief to the commuters, the traffic department has written a letter to Public Works Department (PWD) for widening the JB Tito

Marg near Chirag Delhi flyover to get more space for traffic intending to turn on Outer Ring road towards Nehru Place side. "It will help to decongest the traffic. PWD staff has done ground inspection and they will do this work soon," Gupta stated. For a more permanent solution, the construction of an underpass beneath the Chirag Delhi flyover is under consideration, with the project currently pending approval by the PWD. Another pain point in the city remains Mehrauli Badarpur road, which is 3.5 KM stretch from Karni Singh Shooting range T point up to Khanpur T point and falls under the jurisdiction of Sangam Vihar circle, which witnesses frequent traffic congestion. Additional Commissioner of Police of Traffic Zone 2 Dinesh Gupta told The Pioneer that during peak hours, manual regulation of signals is carried out to manage the traffic flow as efficiently as possible.



Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

However, this intervention often falls short of providing lasting relief to commuters. "During peak hours staff regulate traffic by operating signals manually and clear the traffic as per available space ahead,"

he said. Presence of heavy vehicles also makes the situation worse. "The frequency of DTC buses is very high since the Ambedkar Nagar bus terminal is also situated at MB

Road near Khanpur and the entry and exit of buses also creates congestion on this road," Gupta said, elaborating on the reasons behind the traffic. An office-goer, who frequently

faces jams while going to work, urged the traffic department to solve the issue and said, "Please address the heavy morning traffic jams from Moolchand towards Chirag Delhi and Pushpa Bhawan. It's causing significant delays for employees heading to work. I get late for work even though I leave on time from my home. Immediate action on traffic management would be highly appreciated!" Although the stretch between 'W' Point and Chirag Delhi is signal-free, there's only a single pedestrian signal at the Sadiq Nagar cut, which does little to manage the heavy flow of vehicles. The traffic coming from the W Point side accumulates at Chirag Delhi intersection during evening peak hours and creates congestion. The situation will likely be the same since the expected time of completion of this metro work is December 2026. "Ever since the construction of the metro began, the area has become

chaotic. Moreover, you will also see people living on the side of the streets making the situation worse. For a local living near the area, the situation is unimaginable," a resident of Sainik Farms said. Traffic bottlenecks are further compounded by the bus stand on Lal Bahadur Shastri Marg, where the narrower road width than JB Tito Marg causes significant slowdowns when buses stop, creating a ripple effect of congestion. Buses, pedestrians, cars all jostle to get into a narrow road resulting in crawling of traffic and bumper-to-bumper jams on the roads, as the construction work of Delhi Metro has left only one lane available at some stretches for the movement of traffic, causing major inconvenience to the public. This road is also surrounded by densely populated localities including Sangam Vihar, Tigri, Devali, Khanpur, Dakshin puri, Ambedkar Nagar and Madangir.



# Satyendar Jain gets bail, walks out of Tihar jail

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Senior AAP leader and former Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain on Friday evening walked out of the Tihar Jail hours after a city court granted him bail in an excise policy linked to money laundering scam.



The leader met his party colleagues including Delhi Chief Minister Atishi and senior Aam Aadmi Party leaders, including Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh, who received him with a hug as soon as he stepped out of the jail premises.

after his release. He charged that his arrest was part of an attempt to defame Kejriwal who is working hard to ensure the government works for common man and not for a few chosen ones. Sisodia, while welcoming his party colleague, called Jain a hero and said, "Our hero has returned. Satyendar Jain, who used to think about Delhi hospital and mohalla clinics day and night, has returned." The release also brought Diwali early for his family. "It's like Diwali has come early for us," his daughter said, reflecting the relief and happiness at the end of her father's legal battle, at least for now. His wife expressed joy over the release and said that she has been waiting for this moment for a long time. "Satyender is not a politician, he is a social worker, and he will continue to contribute to society," Jain's wife said. "It has been tough for us, but I knew Satyender had done nothing wrong. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who stood by us in this difficult time," she added. Meanwhile, the Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva called the celebration by AAP "regrettable." "It is regrettable that despite the Supreme Court's observations, the AAP celebrates every leader's bail as a victory," he said. He called bail a part of the judicial process and not a guarantee of acquittal. "This is evident in the cases of former

# HC seeks Government's stand on stray dogs and monkeys attacking PWDs

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday sought the stand of the Centre and the Delhi government on a plea raising the issue of stray dogs and monkeys attacking persons with disabilities, saying society has the duty to take care of its vulnerable population. A bench headed by Chief Justice Manmohan asked the chief secretary of Delhi to virtually join the proceedings on October 25, as it issued notice on the public interest litigation (PIL) filed by a non-profit, Dhanaanjay Sanjogta Foundation. "Issues that you have raised are very very important. We will direct the chief secretary to join us online. I think it is an important aspect that you have raised and we will consider it," the bench, also comprising Justice Tushar Rao Gedela, told the petitioner. The counsel for the petitioner, advocate Rahul Bajaj, who is visually impaired, said besides the attacks, the plea also highlighted the lack of an enabling framework for the use of therapy or service animals by persons with disabilities. Bajaj submitted that Animal Birth Control Rules are in violation of the Rights of Persons

with Disabilities Act as they fail to address the issue of stray animal attacks on the disabled, who are incapable of defending themselves. The white cane used by the visually impaired resembles a stick which the animals perceive as a threat and therefore attack, he added. "I think society owes a duty to take care of persons with disabilities. We can't treat them like this. We must rectify this system. Nowhere in the world will you find dogs and monkey strays roaming around," the bench said. "Keeping in view the important issue raised in the present petition, issue notice. List on October 25... The chief secretary is directed to join the proceeding on the said date of hearing by way of video conference," the court ordered. The court said the matter would be heard along with other petitions on the growing attacks and menace of stray dogs and monkeys here. In these matters, the court had earlier asked the civic agencies to carry out an awareness campaign against feeding monkeys in public spaces. It has also directed the authorities to prepare and implement a programme to deal with the monkey menace.

# Food Safety Department conducts raid at Khoya Mandi, seizes 430 kg of adulterated food stuff

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Delhi's Food Safety Department conducted a raid at Mori Gate's Khoya Mandi here on Friday and seized 430 kilograms of adulterated khoyaa ahead of Diwali. "Ten samples of khoyaa were collected and 430 kilograms of, which was found unadulterated and emitting foul odour was seized and later destroyed," said an official statement from the department. The seized khoya -- a dry milk product used for making sweets -- was deemed perishable and potentially unsafe for consumers, the statement

read. Demand for khoya sharply increases during Diwali, leading to rise in adulteration, it read, adding that the raid was conducted to ensure consumer safety. According to the statement, all collected samples have been sent to a laboratory for analysis under the Food Safety and Standards Act of 2006. A group of five special teams comprising 15 Food Safety officers conducted the raid, it read. It said that the Food Safety Department has planned more raids in the upcoming days to ensure the quality of khoya sold in the Khoya Mandi.

# Metro urges people to chose public transportation

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi metro on Friday urged the public to choose public transport in light of the increasing levels of pollution, stating that it will be running additional train trips during special occasions and during the GRAP Stage-II and III implementation by the authorities.



and during the GRAP Stage-II and III implementation by the authorities, to accommodate the expected higher demand." Officials said that whenever GRAP Stage-II stage comes into force, DMRC will run 40 additional metro trips on weekdays across all the Lines. "Furthermore, when GRAP Stage III or higher is enforced, 20 extra trips will be added, resulting into a total of 60 additional trips on weekdays.

This initiative will enable public to travel long distances without exposure to air pollution," it stated. Ahead of the festive season, Delhi Metro urged public to embrace public transport to alleviate road congestion as well as to minimize air pollution. "With increased travel during festivals, using public transport can significantly contribute to a cleaner environment besides being cost effective, convenient and stress free," Dayal stated. He added that the festive season often sees a spike in traffic, leading to crowded roads and extended travel times. "By opting for public transport, people can help reduce the number of vehicles on the roads, easing congestion and creating a smoother journey for everyone," he said.

# Kejriwal announces resumption of Jai Bhim Yojana, Farishtey Yojana

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Friday announced the resumption of Jai Bhim Yojana and Farishtey Yojana and accused the BJP of deliberately stalling these initiatives after his imprisonment. While the BJP criticized the Kejriwal saying he is trying to mislead the people. Addressing a press conference, Kejriwal said the Jai Bhim Yojana was one of his government's major efforts to ensure equal education opportunities for underprivileged children. The scheme provides for financial assistance to students from SC, ST, OBC, and economically weaker sections for coaching in IITs and civil services exams. "Coaching for IIT and civil services is very expensive.



Our responsibility is to provide equal opportunity for poor children, and this scheme was started to fulfil that purpose. However, after I went to jail, it was deliberately stalled. Today, we are restarting the scheme," Kejriwal said. Terming it an another attempt to mislead the people, BJP leader and south Delhi MP, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri criticized the Kejriwal saying super Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Dummy Chief Minister Atishi have again put a bundle of lies in front of the public by announcing the reimplementation of this scheme. Bidhuri said that Kejriwal's statement that this scheme could not be implemented due to Corona and his

arrest is completely untrue. He said that the Delhi government had announced to implement this scheme in 2018, but in 2022 this scheme collapsed because the government did not pay the 46 private institutions with which it had signed an agreement. The government had contracted with these institutes to provide coaching to poor students. Kejriwal said the scheme will continue to offer a Rs 2,500 stipend to each student and there will be no cap on the number of beneficiaries. "We believe the government's money should be spent on education, and we do not put limits on this spending," Farishtey, the other scheme reinstated, provides for free treatment to road accident victims in any hospital, including private ones. According to Kejriwal, the scheme saved 26,000 lives before it was stalled. "We saved many lives through this scheme, and we will ensure it continues to serve Delhi's citizens," he said. Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, who was present at the press conference, hailed the party leader and the two schemes. "The Chief Minister Jai Bhim Yojana was stalled by hatching a conspiracy to send Arvind Kejriwal to jail. But all these conspiracies failed in front of Arvind Kejriwal's vision of uplifting the children of poor and deprived classes through education," she wrote in a social media post later. The AAP chief shared that they (BJP) put him in jail and deliberately stopped work that was meant to benefit Delhi, subjecting Delhiites to hardship and oppression.

# MCD will exceed capacity of daily processing 11,000 tonnes of solid waste: SC told

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court was on Friday informed by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), which said by 2026 it will exceed its capacity of processing 11,000 tonnes of solid waste generated daily in the national capital. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih was informed by senior advocate Menaka Guruswamy, appearing for the MCD that in compliance of the court's order, the civic body was able to clear all the bottlenecks and had started the bidding process for hiring contractors for the management of municipal solid waste. "By 2026, we will not only be able to meet the new waste generated on a daily basis but also be ahead of it by 3,000 tonnes a day. We have started the tender process and in the next two



weeks, we will be able to finalise the bids for the purpose," she submitted. Guruswamy further said that due to the July 26 order of the apex court, the MCD was able to get all necessary clearances and the work had now started. "The Delhi government has set the limit under which the municipal commissioner can

execute the contracts for solid waste management. The proposal was cleared from the office of Delhi Lieutenant Governor and the process has begun. It is a big achievement for the national capital, as the proposal was stuck for decades," she submitted. The top court asked Guruswamy to file an affidavit enlisting the steps the civic body took following its July 26 order and scheduled the next hearing on November 25. On July 26, the top court expressed its concern over the poor implementation of the Solid Waste Management Rules in the national capital, observing over 3,000 tonnes of untreated solid waste per day in Delhi could lead to a "public health emergency". The Supreme Court slammed the MCD over the "sorry state of affairs" and said that the national capital generated over 11,000 tonnes of solid waste per day whereas the daily capacity of processing plants was only 8,073 tonnes. Referring to MCD's affidavit, the top court noted there was not even a possibility of creating treatment facilities till 2027 to deal with the 11,000 tonnes of waste generated daily. The Court had directed the

secretary of the Union Environment Ministry to convene a meeting of officials of the MCD and the Delhi government for working out an immediate solution to the issue. It had asked the secretary to submit a report about immediate measures that could be taken to ensure non-compliance with the 2016 Rules did not create a serious emergency in Delhi. The top court had noted the MCD approached the Delhi government to delegate financial power to the corporation to approve the rates and agency contracts beyond Rs 5 crore relating to solid waste management projects. It had thereafter directed the Delhi government to immediately consider the July 10 proposal, which is limited to solid waste management projects, and take appropriate decisions within three weeks.

# Active member of Thak-Thak Gang held for robbing ₹54 lakh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a 24-year-old for allegedly robbing a Meerut-based businessman of Rs 54 lakh. According to the police on Friday, the accused was identified as Abhinav alias Abhimanyu, who is a resident of Madangir. "On October 15, at about 03:00 pm, complainant and Jeweler Sanjay Kaushik going from Meerut to Chandni Chowk for buying the jewelry along with his partner Kailash by his Grey colour Tata Altroz Car, he kept two bag containing Rs 54,00,000 at the rear seat of the car," a senior police officer said. When the victim reached near the Yamuna bridge, two bike-borne people informed him of an oil leakage from his car. As he went to check it, the two men took his



money-filled bags and fled. A case under sections 309 (4) (robbery) and 3 (5) of BNS was registered at Sunlight Colony police station. Based on his complaint, an FIR was registered against the two men, of which Abhimanyu has been arrested. "During interrogation, accused disclosed that he along with his associates robbed two bag of Rs 54,00,000 from a Tata Altroz car in Sarai Kale Khan on October 15. Legal action was initiated against accused and he was arrested," he said. The police said that the accused belongs to a poor family. "He is the active member of Thak-Thak Gang. The accused person is found previously involved in more than 15 cases of theft and robbery. He along with his associates commits crime to earn easy money to fulfill his illegal needs," another official said.

# Shahdara fire: Narrow lanes, anarchic parking system led to delay in firefighting operation and death of two people

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Narrow lanes and an anarchic parking situation led to the delay in firefighting operation and the death of two people from a family in Shahdara area according to the locals. Following a fire breaking out at a house in the east Delhi locality's Bholanath Nagar early Friday, a 16-year-old boy and her mother died while four of their family members got injured. Public blamed the delayed arrival of fire engines for the deaths albeit the cause of coming late was attributed to narrow lanes and haphazard parking by the firefighter. Manish Kumar, the father of the two children who were rescued, said, "The fire vehicles came late due to which

two persons lost their lives." Another neighbour, Shobhit Gupta, said the fire brigades came late because of the vehicles parked in the narrow lanes of Bholanath Nagar. "The fire vehicles reached here after 1.5 hours. By then both the floors were engulfed in fire," he said. The cause of the fire is suspected to be the short circuit but the police are probing the matter. A firefighter said that Delhi Fire Service received an emergency call at 5.24 am and within minutes, six fire tenders were sent to the location. Vehicles were significantly delayed due to narrow lanes and haphazard parking, he admitted. "The delay was a key factor in the loss of life of my family members," said Hariom Gupta, a relative of Kailash Gupta, one of the several of a family injured in the fire. Hariom said even though the fire trucks were very close to the house, they could not get through because cars were parked all along the narrow lanes. "Big fire engines were sent back and smaller ones took more than 20 minutes to reach the location," he said. A 42-year-old woman and her 16-year-old son were killed in the blaze that, according to prima facie reports, erupted due to a short circuit in an AC. DCP Shahdara Prashant Gautam said that on checking inside the flat, bodies of the mother and her son were recovered. "The charred bodies of 42-year-old Shilpi Gupta and her son Pranav Gupta were recovered from the house," a police officer said. The injured, including the



owner Kailash, his wife 70 year old Bhagwati Gupta, their son 45 years old Manish Gupta and Manish's son 19 years old Parth, are undergoing treatment in the Guru Tegh Bahadur (GTB) hospital. "Two minor siblings who were rescued during the firefighting operations were discharged after the treatment," Gautam said, adding that Shilpi and Pranav were Manish's wife and son. Currently, Manish is in a critical condition. The police revealed that the reason behind the death of the woman and her son is asphyxia. The forensic team was also called at the spot. Moreover, a fire also broke out in a building in Southwest Delhi's Sagarpur in the early hours of Friday. "There is a building situated at Sagarpur's

Kailash Puri Extension belongs to one Manoj Singh. At around 11.17 pm information received regarding fire broke out in the building. The police team immediately reached the spot and evacuated the surrounding buildings," a senior police officer said. He added that a total of 25 fire tenders reached the spot and at around 3 am the fire was completely controlled. "No casualty happened. Although, all the material stored in the building burnt. There was some damage in the building situated just opposite the alleged building. The fire department has not provided a reason for the fire yet. A legal action will be taken against the owner of the building accordingly," another officer said. Additionally, a fire broke also out at a three-storey paper and ink godown in Dwarka's Kailashpuri area. No one was injured in the incident but the godown was gutted in fire, a police officer said, adding that the blaze also spread to a adjacent to it. A DFS official said a call regarding the incident was received at 11.10 pm on Thursday and 21 fire tenders were pressed into service. It took around three hours to control over the blaze. Locals told police that lot of chemicals were kept in several drums inside the godown which was being used to keep paper and ink. Due to this the blaze spread all over the building rapidly. Police said the fire is suspected to be caused due to a short circuit but further probe is underway.

# Global community failing Hindus facing human rights abuses: VP Dhankhar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday slammed the global community for failing to raise human rights violations against Hindus in India's neighbourhood and questioned its silence of ignoring their suffering, saying being "too tolerant" against such transgressions was not appropriate.

Calling them, "so-called moral preachers and custodians of human rights," who stand exposed, he said "they are mercenaries of something which is totally antithetical to human rights." However, he did not name any country. Addressing the foundation day celebrations of the National Human Rights Commission on Friday, he said we are "too tolerant" and being too tolerant to such transgressions is not appropriate. "Think if you were one of those," he said asking the people to reflect. "Look at the kind of barbarity, torture, traumatised experience of boys, girls, and women," he said, adding look



at our religious places being subjected to sacrilege. The vice president also cautioned that some pernicious forces were trying to show India in a "bad colour" and called for a "counter-attack" to neutralise such attempts. He also said that India does not like to be sermonised or lectured on human rights. He described Partition, imposition of Emergency and the 1984 anti-Sikh riots as traumatising events which "stand as a sombre reminder

of fragility of liberty". Dhankhar said there are "pernicious forces, that in a structured manner, seek to unfairly seek to taint us" and these forces have a "sinister design" to use international fora to question our human rights record. He also hit out at the hunger index which ranked India poorly, saying during the Covid pandemic, the government supported over 80 crore people with free ration regardless of their caste and creed.

The Vice President said the "sinister forces" are driven by an agenda which is "fiscally fuelled" by people who seek to make a name for themselves. "Time to shame them. They try to create havoc with the economic system of the country". Underlining the safety of minorities in India, he said the country is way ahead of others when it comes to preserving human rights, particularly those of minorities, the marginalised and vulnerable sections of the society. He also noted that at the domestic front, some were trying to use human rights to further their political agenda. In the course of his address, Dhankhar said, "Evidence in episode after episode" is piling up that the "deep state" is engaging in efforts against rising powers. Human rights, Dhankhar underlined, cannot and should not be used as a tool of foreign policy to exert power and influence over others. "Look at our school system- we don't have the kind of shootings that some countries claiming to be very developed

have on a regular basis. Think of those nations that turn Nelson's eye to such horrendous transgressions of human rights," he said. Dhankhar was of the view that rights of other non-Hindu refugees are repeatedly invoked, "surprisingly, also in the name of human rights, when cases are filed in the Supreme Court." History is testimony that nations have completely lost their identity by not addressing this issue. It has global repercussions from the perspective of human rights, he warned. NHRC's acting Chairperson Vijaya Bharathi Sayani talked about the case of alleged sexual harassment of women at Sandeshkhali in West Bengal, as she recalled some of the strong words the rights panel used in its scathing report after its on-spot inquiry into the matter. "NHRC has addressed a broad spectrum of human rights violations, including custodial deaths, bonded labour, exploitation of marginalised groups and denial of medical care," Sayani said.

# PM Modi to launch 'karmayogi saptah'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the 'Karmayogi Saptah'-- National Learning Week-- on Saturday, with the exercise seeking to impart fresh impetus towards individual and organisational capacity development for civil servants, his office said.

It noted that the 'Mission Karmayogi' was launched in September 2020, and it has made substantial progress since then. It envisions a future-ready civil service rooted in Indian ethos, with a global perspective, it added. The National Learning Week (NLW) will be the largest event of its kind providing fresh impetus towards individual and organisational capacity development for civil servants. This initiative will stimulate a renewed commitment to learning and development. The NLW aims to create a "One Government" message, align everyone with national



goals and promote lifelong learning, the statement said. The NLW will be dedicated to learning through various forms of engagement by individual participants and ministries, departments and organisations. During NLW, each "karmayogi" will commit to achieving a target of at least four hours of competency-linked learning. The participants may complete the targeted hours through a mix of individual role-based modules on



iGOT, webinars (public lectures/policy master classes) by eminent persons. During the week, eminent speakers will deliver talks on their areas of prominence and help them work towards citizen-centric delivery in a much more effective manner, the statement said. During the week, the ministries, departments and organisations will also organise seminars and workshops to enhance domain specific competencies, it added.

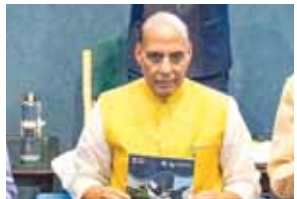
# Defence Minister stresses need for unconventional ideas in modern warfare

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday said technology has "transformed" the conventional warfare into an unconventional one, and adoption of "unconventional ideas", not yet known to the world, is the only way to progress while navigating this change.

In his address at the 'DRDO-Industry Workshop on Defence Technology Acceleration' held at the DRDO Bhawan here, he also called upon the private sector to move forward from the state of 'participation' to 'taking lead' in the defence sector. Today, technology has "transformed" conventional warfare into unconventional warfare, the defence minister said. "New dimensions have been added to modern-day warfare, such as drones, cyber warfare, bio-weapons and space defence. In this transformative phase, research and development in defence will definitely make the defence sector stronger," Rajnath said.

It is heartening to witness Indian scientists, industrialists, academia, start-ups, MSMEs and young entrepreneurs working together in this endeavour, he said. The defence minister asserted that "it is time for the private sector to take lead as it has the ability to absorb rapid changes and create new innovations". Rajnath, in his address, described the adoption of "unconventional ideas, not yet known to the world, as the only way to progress in



unconventional warfare". Acknowledging it as a tough task, he stated that the government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will "continue providing all necessary support" to the youth, scientists, industrialists and MSMEs in this endeavour. The defence minister reiterated the government's commitment to make the defence sector more innovative and technology-oriented. He also launched 'Dare to Dream 5.0' to encourage next generation of innovators and start-ups to come forward with transformative ideas for defence applications. The fifth edition of DRDO's innovation contest aims to generate cutting-edge solutions for India to progress further in its pursuit to achieve 'aatmanirbharta' in defence technologies, the statement said. Rajnath also felicitated the winners of 'Dare to Dream 4.0', recognising individual innovators, start-ups and MSMEs for disruptive solutions and innovations in the fields of countermeasures for drones and swarm of drones; advanced acoustic system to locate gunfire, directed energy technologies, cognitive listening device, target seeking, among others. He described the challenges as

a testament to the commitment of the industrial ecosystem of the country to protect the future of the defence sector. "Like our brave soldiers, scientists, industry leaders, academia, start-ups, MSMEs and entrepreneurs too are the warriors of the country, prepared to complete every assigned task," he said. The defence minister laid emphasis on the need to achieve advancements in both incremental and disruptive technologies within the defence sector. The solutions to challenges obtained through initiatives such as 'Dare to Dream' bridge the critical gap between the two types of technologies, he said. The defence minister called upon the scientists, start-ups and young entrepreneurs to think out-of-the-box and come out with the latest innovations as if it were their habit to accept and overcome challenges. He exhorted the private sector to move in line with the "unprecedented speed" with which the technological changes are taking place across the globe. He urged them to ensure, through timely assessment, that a technology does not become outdated when it is rolled out. The defence minister also called for development of projects, under TDF (Technology Development Fund), based on cutting-edge technology, and "devising a system of comprehensive scan within the scheme to avoid duplication of technologies", the statement said.

# PM Modi to attend 16th BRICS summit



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Russia from October 22-23 at the invitation of President Vladimir Putin to attend the 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia. The Prime Minister will also attend the South Africa (BRICS) Summit in Kazan, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday. During his visit, the prime minister is also expected to hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts from BRICS member countries and invited leaders in Kazan, MEA said in a statement. The theme of this year's summit is "Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security". It will provide an important platform for leaders to discuss key global issues, it said. "The summit will offer a valuable opportunity to assess the progress of initiatives launched by BRICS and to identify potential areas for future collaboration," the ministry said. In September, President Putin extended an invitation

to Prime Minister Modi, proposing a bilateral meeting on October 22, on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan. Putin had described Modi as a "good friend" while extending the invitation. This will be Modi's second visit to Russia this year. He had travelled to Moscow for an informal meet with the Russian President. His trip to Moscow was also his first since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In August, the Prime Minister dialled the Russian President and urged an early resolution of the Ukraine conflict. The conversation took place days after Modi visited Kyiv and met Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. He has visited Russia six times since taking over as the Prime Minister of the country. He visited Russia twice in 2015, with one of them being to participate in the 7th BRICS summit. During his visit to Russia earlier this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded Russia's highest civilian honour, the Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle.

# IIT's fee concession, relaxation at lower cutoff

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) across the country are offering fee concessions and relaxation in already lower cut-off to students from reserved categories to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all, according to officials. "In the JEE-based admissions, fee remissions and fee waivers are provided right from the application stage.

At the application stage, students belonging to the SC, ST, PwD (persons with disability) need to pay only half the examination fee. Further, cut-offs are relaxed to support a greater number of admissions in the SC, ST, PwD and OBC categories," said IIT Madras Director V Kamakoti. IIT Madras conducted the Joint Entrance Exam (JEE)-Advanced, the entrance exam for IITs, this year. "There are 23 IITs currently and as per Ministry of Education's focus on providing support to students from the disadvantaged sections of society, several initiatives have been taken. Besides these, some IITs take additional measures individually as well," he said. "To further enable a greater number of students to benefit from the high quality of education that the IITs have to offer, SC, ST students who secure marks



lower than the relaxed selection cut-off, are given special training through a preparatory course, which enables them to directly join the IITs after completion of the preparatory course," he added. Starting this year, JEE (Advanced) 2024 team enabled "Citizen Service Centres" across the country to help candidates, specifically from rural places, to fill out the choices and pay the fees through the online portal. "A multi-lingual call centre was also set up to answer queries from candidates. A reconciliation day after the fee-payment deadline date was introduced this year to handle cases (who made at least one payment attempt) that had last-minute technical glitches," Kamakoti said. During the admission process, all eligible candidates pay a seat acceptance fee to ensure seriousness in applying for the seat. The SC, ST and PwD students pay only 50

per cent of the acceptance fee of regular candidates. Kamakoti said that in the absence of the seat acceptance fees, it was observed in the past that the candidates blocked the seat but did not turn up on when the classes started, leading to many seats lying vacant. "Since in the seat allocation process, the seats reserved for SC and ST can be allocated only to them, a vacant SC or ST seat results in the denial of a precious IIT seat to another deserving reserved category candidate," he said. "If a student's parental income is less than Rs 1 lakh, irrespective of which category, the full tuition fee is waived by all the 23 IITs. Further, full tuition waiver is also provided for students from the SC, ST and PwD candidates," he said. Students from the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) with parental income between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 5 lakh have two-thirds of their tuition fee waived, he added.

# Global warming significant catalyst for migration

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Migration, often driven by economic opportunities or conflicts, is increasingly influenced by climate-induced factors, particularly prolonged droughts, according to a new study. This finding is particularly pertinent to India, where nearly two-thirds of the landscape experienced drought conditions from 2020 to 2022.

Analysing trends across 72 countries over the past 50 years, researchers found that global warming is a significant catalyst for migration, reshaping both rural and urban landscapes as communities adapt to harsh conditions. "We find that increased drought and aridity have a significant impact on internal migration, particularly in the hyper-arid and arid areas of Southern Europe, South Asia, Africa and the Middle East and South America," the authors said in the study published in the journal Nature Climate Change.



As droughts intensify, people are more likely to migrate to urban areas, which, despite their challenges, are perceived as more stable, said Marco Perocco, Director of the GREEN Research Center at Bocconi University. He emphasised that for many, migration is seen as the "least bad option" in the face of environmental pressures. The authors used census data from 1960 to 2016. Rural communities reliant on agriculture are hit hardest, as dwindling water supplies and drying soils

lead to lost livelihoods, said the study. The shift to cities is not just a survival strategy; it also strains urban infrastructure as cities become magnets for those fleeing rural hardships. The authors stressed on the importance of a holistic approach to tackle climate-induced migration, advocating for improved support systems in urban areas and policies that help rural communities adapt. Rural areas, especially those dependent on agriculture, were found to be the hardest hit because of climate change. The communities in

these regions are most likely to experience the effects of worsening droughts, the researchers said. In areas where farming is the primary income source, drying soils and diminishing water supplies lead directly to lost livelihoods, prompting migration to urban centers. Further exploring these challenges in India, a report titled "Climate and Health: Evidence for Current Practices in Resilience & Adaptation," prepared by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), highlighted that extreme weather events, such as flooding and drought, also complicate food distribution. Damaged or inaccessible roads and waterways hinder the transport of food supplies, exacerbating food security issues. To address these challenges, the report, which was released recently, emphasises the need for proactive measures to ensure food safety, maintain nutritional quality, and secure reliable distribution networks amid climate change.

# NBCFDS to launch 'Visvas' scheme aiming SC, OBC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC) is set to disburse loans under the newly launched "Visvas" scheme from next month, with an aim to help 15 lakh people belonging to the SC, OBC, and safai karamchari communities, a senior official said on Friday. The Vanchit Ikai Samoh aur Vargon ki Aarthik Sahayata (Visvas) scheme offers an interest subvention of up to five per cent per annum on loans and cash credit limits to the eligible individuals and self-help groups (SHGs). Speaking during a media interaction, NBCFDC Managing Director Rajan Sehgal emphasised the inclusive nature of the scheme, which offers financial support to the marginalised communities, with no income ceiling for safai karamcharis.



"The disbursement of loans will begin from next month," Sehgal said, adding that this year alone, the scheme aims to reach seven lakh beneficiaries, with the remaining eight lakh to be covered by next year. According to Sehgal, the beneficiaries will receive subsidies directly into their accounts through the direct benefit transfer (DBT) system, ensuring a smooth and transparent process. Announced in the Union Budget this year, the Visvas scheme offers concessional

financial assistance for income-generating activities, focusing on empowering the marginalised groups by improving access to affordable credit. Individuals from Schedule Caste (SC) and Other Backward Class (OBC) communities with an annual family income of up to Rs 3 lakh will be eligible to apply for the scheme, while safai karamcharis are exempt from any income cap. The scheme will be implemented through the

financial development corporations (FDCs) and lending institutions, the official said. Sharing further details, Sehgal said the loans will carry a 5 per cent interest rate with a minimum duration of five years. He also highlighted the scheme's convergence with other national programmes, including MUDRA loans and the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), to provide a holistic financial support system for the underprivileged communities. The NBCFDC is also rolling out the National Fellowship for OBC (NFOBC) students, which will provide financial assistance for higher education. "The fellowship will support students in obtaining Ph.D degrees by providing Rs 37,000 per month for the first two years and Rs 42,000 per month for the remaining tenure," Sehgal said.

# INDIA alliance loses sheen in UP as SP offers just 2 seats to Congress for By-Elections

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

The uncertainty surrounding seat-sharing between Congress and the Samajwadi Party (SP), two key partners of the I.N.D.I.A. alliance in Uttar Pradesh, was finally resolved after a meeting between Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav on October 16 in Srinagar. Set against the tranquil backdrop of Jammu and Kashmir's capital, the discussions provided clarity on the alliance's electoral strategy for the upcoming by-elections in Uttar Pradesh. As per the agreement reached during the meeting, Congress will contest two seats, while SP will field candidates in the remaining eight. The Election Commission has announced

the by-election schedule for nine seats, with the exception of Milkipur, where an ongoing legal petition has delayed the announcement. Voting for the nine seats is set for November 13. Congress is expected to contest two key seats—Ghaziabad and Khair—both traditionally dominated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Initially, the Congress sought five seats from the SP, including Ghaziabad, Khair, Meerapur, Majhawan, and Phulpur. However, after discussions between Akhilesh Yadav and Rahul Gandhi during National Conference leader Omar Abdullah's swearing-in ceremony, it was decided that Congress would focus on Ghaziabad and Khair. A senior SP leader privy to

the discussions confirmed, "In this meeting, Congress was given the green light to field its candidates on the Ghaziabad and Khair seats." Political analyst Manoj Bhadra observed that after the elections in Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana, the Congress experienced a decline in its bargaining power, making it clear that it could not secure the five seats initially requested for the UP by-elections. Strategically, Akhilesh Yadav allocated the Khair and Ghaziabad seats—long-time BJP bastions—to Congress, preserving the SP's electoral stronghold. "By offering these seats to Congress, the SP not only retains its electoral advantage but also keeps the I.N.D.I.A. alliance intact in Uttar



Pradesh," said Bhadra. Following the seat-sharing agreement, SP moved forward with its campaign by announcing Sumbul Rana as the candidate for the Meerapur seat in Muzaffarnagar. Sumbul is the daughter of BSP coordinator Munqad Ali and the daughter-in-law of former SP MP Qadir Rana, marking her

entry into electoral politics. The SP's announcement of candidates came amid indications that at least two seats would be left for Congress, although the Congress has expressed concerns over the timing of the announcement. "The party will soon declare a candidate for the Kundarki seat as well," a senior SP leader stated. SP spokesperson Fakhru Hasan Chand reiterated the party's commitment to alliance norms, stating, "The Samajwadi Party is declaring candidates as the bypolls have been announced. The Congress party will also be given seats as per the ongoing talks between the SP and Congress leadership. Our national president has already said that we will abide by our

"Gathbandhan Dharm." Meanwhile, the Congress awaits official confirmation of the arrangement. All India Congress Committee general secretary (in charge of U.P.) Avinash Pandey emphasized the need for coordination, saying, "We will contest the election in alliance with the Samajwadi Party, and both parties may reach a seat-sharing understanding soon. We hope the SP will give us a respectable number of seats." The Samajwadi Party has also announced other candidates, including Tej Pratap Yadav, cousin of Akhilesh Yadav, for the Karhal assembly seat, and Naseem Siddiqui, wife of disqualified SP MLA Irfan Solanki, for the Sisamau seat. Ajeet Prasad, son of Faizabad MP Awadhesh Prasad, has

been named for the Milkipur seat in Ayodhya, while Shobhawati Verma, wife of SP's Ambedkarnagar MP Lalji Verma, will contest from the Katehri assembly seat. The SP has also fielded Mustafa Siddiqui for Phulpur (Prayagraj) and Jyoti Bind for Majhawan (Mirzapur). This seat-sharing agreement is particularly significant as the Ghaziabad and Khair seats have long been BJP strongholds, making these by-elections a crucial test for the I.N.D.I.A. alliance. With the results of the Haryana assembly elections imminent, the alliance's arrangement could greatly influence the political dynamics in Uttar Pradesh and shape the future of their national campaign against the BJP.

## Five men sent to judicial custody in connection with Bahraich case

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

A local court in Bahraich on Friday sent five men to 14 days of judicial custody in connection with the murder of a youth during a Durga idol procession in Maharajganj. The five accused—Sarfaraz, Mohd Talim, Abdul Hameed, Faheem, and Mohd Afzal—were presented before Chief Judicial Magistrate Pratibha Chaudhary.



The incident took place last Sunday, during a Hindu religious procession, leading to the fatal shooting of Ram Gopal Mishra, 22, amid a confrontation between Hindu and Muslim groups. Mishra, who was part of the procession, succumbed to a gunshot wound. The youth's death sparked a series of violent events, including arson and vandalism across the district, with mobs setting fire to houses, shops, showrooms, hospitals, and vehicles. Police have arrested 60 individuals so far in connection with the unrest. The five men sent to judicial custody on Friday were among those apprehended on Thursday after a gunfight with the Uttar Pradesh Police. The confrontation occurred in the Hada Basehari area under the Nanpara Police Station, near the Nepal border. During the

exchange of fire, two of the accused suffered bullet wounds, according to officials. Police allege that the men were attempting to escape to Nepal at the time of their arrest. Hada Basehari is located approximately 15 kilometers from Rupaidiha, a key transit point between India and Nepal. Due to the tense situation in Maharajganj, the hearing was held at the residence of the Chief Judicial Magistrate for security reasons. Nearly a week after the initial violence, the district remains on high alert, with a heavy deployment of police, Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC), and Rapid Response Force (RRF) personnel. Drones and helicopters are being used for aerial surveillance, while ground forces continue to maintain strict vigil. Authorities have divided the district into nine sectors and

## India's development intertwined with environmental conservation: Jaishankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India's development journey is "deeply intertwined" with environmental conservation, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said and lauded tribal communities for their role in protecting biodiversity. He was speaking at an event here on Thursday to mark the inauguration of a tribal art exhibition. "Silent Conversation: From the Margins to the Centre" in Delhi. In his address, Jaishankar also praised the 'Project Tiger' that was started in 1973. "It is not an exaggeration, it is a shining example of success. And, for which the tribal communities deserve immense credit," the Union minister said. Jaishankar further said that this art does not just show creativity, it sends a "profound message, one that bridges the gap between nature and humanity. From tigers to tribals". This exhibition showcases that people can exist with nature in complete harmony. It weaves the story of how tribal community over millennia has forged an enduring bond with nature, he added. In his address, he spoke of the



philosophy of 'Antyodaya', which means to leave no one behind, and said "it is not just a policy, it is a soul and guiding principle of our government". "We are committed to ensuring Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Prayas, Sabka Vishwas, with a particular focus on uplifting marginalised communities, especially our tribal population. Through targeted policies, we are creating opportunities, bolstering education with sustainable livelihood for our tribal youth," the minister said. The Aspirational Blocks Programme has been instrumental in improving the ease of living of tribal community, who reside in these areas, he underlined. "India's development journey is very deeply intertwined with environmental conservation," the EAM said, and

highlighted that tigers have been depicted in arts, and also worshipped by some communities. There is an "emotional relationship" between tribals and the environment they inhabit and after seeing this exhibition, the feeling of Mother Earth comes to one's heart, he said. He added that as a foreign minister it will be a "source of pride for me" to present art works made by tribals as a gift to people abroad. Sankala Foundation, in collaboration with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, hosted the exhibition with the support of National Human Rights Commission and International Big Cat Alliance.

## RG Kar will not spoil TMC chances in November by-polls: TMC leader Ghosh

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress has expressed confidence that it will win all the six seats in the upcoming by-elections, notwithstanding the ongoing movement in the backdrop of Kolkata rape and murder case. By-elections are to be held for six Assembly seats of Sitai (SC), Madarihat (ST) --- in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts in North Bengal, Naihati and Haroa --- in North 24 Parganas, Medinipur in West Midnapore district, and Taldanga in Bankura district. These seats fell vacant as their MLAs contested and won seats in the Lok Sabha this year. When asked as to whether the doctors' agitation which has found overwhelming support among the women would have any impact on the by-elections, senior TMC leader Kunal Ghosh said that his party would win all the six seats. "We will win six out of six ... that is a challenge and guarantee and the CPI(M) which is trying to get back its political relevancy by instigating the junior doctors into joining an indefinite fast will come third in all these seats ... If they have courage then those senior doctors who have been fixed by the CPI(M) to play this dirty pol-



itics should personally contest the elections and show their acceptability in public," he said. Another TMC leader however said that though the TMC's image has suffered post RG Kar movement "there are instances when we have bounced back ... they tried to malign us in the name of Sharada, Narada and teachers' recruitment scams but every time the people have repented faith in the leadership of Mamata Banerjee ... this time also the people will choose the candidates fielded by her." Another TMC leader and a former MP said that his party should consider itself lucky that the by-elections were not taking place in and around Kolkata or what he called "hardcore urban centres." He said, "we have suffered image issues in the urban electorate but the rural electorate, particularly the Muslims are firmly with us ... which means we will win handsdown."

## BJP looking to contest 68 seats in alliance with AJSU, JD(U) and LJP (Ram Vilas) in Jharkhand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RANCHI

BJP on Friday said it will contest the upcoming assembly polls in Jharkhand in alliance with AJSU Party, JD(U) and LJP (Ram Vilas). Under the arrangement, the saffron party will contest 68 seats, AJSU Party 10, JD(U) 2 and LJP (Ram Vilas) 1, though a final decision will be made soon. Elections to the 81-member Jharkhand Assembly will be held in two phases, on November 13 and November 20, with the counting of votes scheduled for November 23. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, also the BJP's co-in-charge for Jharkhand Assembly elections, said National Democratic Alliance (NDA) constituents All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) Party will contest 10 seats, Janata Dal (United) two and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) one. Sarma said while the seat-sharing arrangement is nearly finalised, the BJP is adopting a "wait and watch" strategy as rival parties, including the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, are yet to disclose their plans. Sarma said, "NDA allies AJSU Party will contest 10 seats, JD(U) 2, and LJP (Ram Vilas) 1 in Jharkhand as per the seat-sharing arrangement, which is almost finalised." AJSU Party, JD(U) and LJP (Ram Vilas) are valuable partners of BJP, he said. AJSU Party will contest from Silli, Ramgarh, Gomia, Lohargarh, Mandu, Jugsalai, Dumri, Pakur, Ichardaga, and Manoharpur. JD(U) will field candidates in Jamshepur West and Tamar, while LJP (Ram Vilas) will contest from



Chatra, he said. Sarma made these remarks in the presence of Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and AJSU Party chief Sudesh Mahto. "We will fight the elections under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and on the agenda of development," Sarma said. Chouhan said the central leadership has decided the NDA will jointly contest the elections in the state to "save the identity of Jharkhand and to protect 'Mati, Beti, and Roti' (land, daughter, and bread)." He said the NDA aims to eliminate corruption in the state and ensure jobs for youth, as well as empower women. He expressed confidence that the INDIA bloc, which he blamed for the misrule in the state, will be ousted. "Discussions among NDA partners are almost finalised and we will soon come out with the list of candidates," Chouhan said. AJSU Party chief Sudesh Mahto claimed that corruption reached its peak during the JMM-led alliance's rule in Jharkhand, affecting all sections of society.

## Haggling must not be allowed to reach breaking point: Uddhav

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Amid an impasse over seat-sharing among Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) parties in Maharashtra, Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray on Friday cautioned that haggling among allies must not be allowed to reach a breaking point. Addressing a Press conference, Thackeray asserted the political scenario in Maharashtra has changed and people have decided to bring the opposition MVA, which consists of the Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP), to power in the November 20 assembly polls. "Haggling among allies must not be allowed to reach a breaking point," the former CM cautioned as talks among MVA parties for allocation of seats in the 288-member assembly dragged on. The Sena (UBT) leader maintained he has not heard from



his party leaders involved in seat-sharing talks that there was any major issue in clinching a deal. Seat-sharing talks among MVA partners were in final stages and a deal could be sealed by Saturday or in the next 2 to 3 days, Thackeray emphasised. The former CM's remarks came after his party colleague Sanjay Raut expressed disappointment over the delay in conclusion of seat-sharing talks and claimed Maharashtra Congress leaders were not capable of taking decisions.

## Mamata reviews hospital infrastructure

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Hours after the agitating junior doctors of Bengal accused the State of submitting false information in the Supreme Court regarding the progress of infrastructural facilities in the Government hospitals and medical colleges, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee directed the State officials to hasten up the infrastructural projects. "The Chief Minister has held a meeting with the senior officials including the Chief Secretary and enquired about the progress in installing the security infrastructure in the government hospitals and medical colleges," officials said adding Banerjee also told officials to ensure that the works were completed in time. The State Government earlier told the Supreme Court that barring RG Kar Medical College where an on-duty lady-doctor was brutally raped and murdered in the morning of August 9 --- triggering country-wide protests --- in most of the medical colleges and government hospitals about 95-98 percent of infrastructural work had been completed.



The Government had been asked to take adequate security measures including construction of on duty restrooms, washrooms for doctors, installation of CCTV camera apart from posting of security personnel etc in the State hospitals, following the RG Kar incident. The junior doctors --- some of whom were sitting on an indefinite fast in support of their demand --- earlier accused the State of submitting false information to the Supreme Court saying unlike what was submitted before the Apex Court about completion of 95-98 percent infrastructural work in many hospitals nothing had been done. "In many colleges restrooms or

washrooms are non-functional ... only a lip service has been done in the name of installing CCTV cameras ... in colleges like SSKM and other hospitals the cameras have been installed on a temporary basis as the contractors have been told fix their cameras for 45 days only," doctors said adding, "neither the CCTV cameras have adequate data storage capacity nor there is a monitoring system in place ... there has been a dozen cases of hospital staff including doctors getting attacked and beaten up by the public not only in the districts but also in Kolkata which is an adequate instance of how foolproof the security system is working."

## Haryana to provide free dialysis to chronic kidney patients: CM Saini fulfills first poll-promise

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Friday announced all government hospitals in Haryana will offer free dialysis to chronic kidney patients, fulfilling the ruling BJP's first poll promise. Addressing a Press conference after presiding over the first meeting of his cabinet, the chief minister said his government will also implement the Supreme Court's decision empowering states to make sub-classifications within the Scheduled Castes for granting reservation "today itself". Saini, who was sworn in as chief minister for a second time on Thursday, said the people of

Haryana defeated the Congress' narrative of lies and efforts to provoke farmers and the poor by bringing the BJP back to power for a third time. By giving a third mandate to the BJP, people put their stamp of approval on the policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said. The chief minister said all government hospitals in the state will start offering free dialysis to chronic kidney patients. "The first file that I signed (after assuming charge) was regarding the decision on kidney patients. We had also made this promise in the elections. The cost of dialysis is nearly Rs 20,000 to Rs 25,000 per month. Now, the Haryana government will bear the expenses," he

said. Saini said his cabinet has decided to implement the decision of the Supreme Court which held that states are constitutionally empowered to make sub-classifications within the Scheduled Castes for granting reservation. "In the first meeting, our cabinet has decided to implement the decision from today itself," he said. On August 1, the top court had held that states are constitutionally empowered to make sub-classifications within the Scheduled Castes, which form a socially heterogeneous class, for granting reservation for the upliftment of castes that are socially and educationally more backward. Asked about an agriculture department notification stating



that FIRs would be lodged against farmers found burning crop residue and that they would be restricted to selling their crops in mandis through the e-kharid portal for the next two seasons, Saini said, "There is no such thing."

"Even today I have said that if our farmers burn stubble, they should be made to understand (its impact on the environment). If any equipment or instrument is needed, we are giving subsidy on these," he said.

Farmers are being made aware of the harmful effects of stubble burning, he added. Stubble burning in Haryana and neighbouring Punjab contributes to air pollution in Delhi, especially during the post-harvest season in October and November. Paddy farmers set crop residue ablaze to clear their fields to sow wheat, a Rabi crop, as the window between harvesting and sowing is very short. During the cabinet meeting, Saini said, the ongoing paddy procurement in the state was also reviewed. "There was a detailed discussion on procurement. The BJP government is committed to procuring every single grain of our farmers at MSP," he said.

No value cut will be imposed for up to 17 per cent moisture content in paddy, he said. In the current season, more than 27.45 lakh metric tonnes of paddy arrived in mandis and more than 23 LMT had been procured at the minimum support price (MSP) till Thursday, the chief minister said. For the paddy procured, Rs 3,056 crore has been credited into farmers' accounts, he said. More than 3.44 LMT of bajra arrived in mandis so far this season. Of this, over 2.70 LMT has been procured and Rs 331 crore has been credited into farmers' accounts, he added. Saini warned criminals in the state to mend their ways. "I warn those involved in criminal activities that they should

either leave the state or mend their ways, otherwise we will mend them," he said. On the BJP returning to power in Haryana for a third time, Saini said the people of the state defeated the Congress' narrative of lies in the elections and gave a big mandate to the BJP. "I express my deep gratitude to the people of Haryana that they put their stamp of approval on the policies of the prime minister," he said. During the elections, the Congress tried to build a narrative that the BJP government did not do anything and was on its way out. The opposition party also tried to provoke farmers and other sections, including the youth, Saini said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Balancing act

SC upholds Section 6A of Citizenship Act, balancing humanitarian concerns with indigenous rights of Assamese people

In a landmark judgement the Supreme Court of India has upheld the constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955. In a 4:1 majority verdict, the bench led by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud endorsed the provisions that grant citizenship to people who migrated from Bangladesh between January 1, 1966, and March 25, 1971. The decision comes amidst long-standing debates over immigration in Assam. Section 6A was introduced in 1985 as part of the Assam Accord, an agreement between the Indian government and Assam's agitating groups to address the issues arising from illegal immigration. Those who arrived after March 25, 1971, are not eligible for citizenship and are considered illegal immigrants under Indian law. The Assam Accord aimed to balance the humanitarian concerns of migrants with the socio-economic and cultural interests of the indigenous Assamese population. The cut-off date of March 25, 1971, corresponds to the beginning of 'Operation Searchlight,'



a military crackdown by the Pakistani Army in then-East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), which triggered a significant influx of refugees into India. In the majority ruling, Chief Justice Chandrachud noted that Section 6A does not violate the fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 6 and 7 of the Constitution, which pertain to the conferring of citizenship to migrants from East and West Pakistan at the commencement of the Constitution on January 26, 1950. The court held that the legislation sought to address specific historical and demographic realities in Assam, making the separate cut-off date for the state reasonable and justifiable. However, While upholding the constitutional validity of Section 6A, the Supreme Court expressed concerns over the inadequate implementation of immigration laws in Assam. Indeed the porous borders and incomplete fencing have allowed a continuous influx of migrants, which exacerbates demographic challenges. Besides, existing mechanisms, including the Foreigners' Tribunals, are insufficient for effectively identifying and deporting illegal immigrants. The Supreme Court's decision has far-reaching implications for the socio-political landscape in Assam. The ruling, while affirming the validity of Section 6A, also recognises the concerns of petitioners who argued that cultural and demographic tapestry of Assam has changed by mandating better enforcement of immigration laws. If the directives for stricter border controls and timely identification of illegal immigrants are implemented effectively, it could help address long-standing grievances regarding demographic changes in Assam. On the other hand, striking down Section 6A would have rendered many residents, who have lived in Assam for decades, effectively stateless, leading to potential humanitarian crises. The court's ruling ensures that such individuals retain their citizenship rights, thus preventing large-scale displacements and unrest.

ing the constitutional validity of Section 6A, the Supreme Court expressed concerns over the inadequate implementation of immigration laws in Assam. Indeed the porous borders and incomplete fencing have allowed a continuous influx of migrants, which exacerbates demographic challenges. Besides, existing mechanisms, including the Foreigners' Tribunals, are insufficient for effectively identifying and deporting illegal immigrants. The Supreme Court's decision has far-reaching implications for the socio-political landscape in Assam. The ruling, while affirming the validity of Section 6A, also recognises the concerns of petitioners who argued that cultural and demographic tapestry of Assam has changed by mandating better enforcement of immigration laws. If the directives for stricter border controls and timely identification of illegal immigrants are implemented effectively, it could help address long-standing grievances regarding demographic changes in Assam. On the other hand, striking down Section 6A would have rendered many residents, who have lived in Assam for decades, effectively stateless, leading to potential humanitarian crises. The court's ruling ensures that such individuals retain their citizenship rights, thus preventing large-scale displacements and unrest.

### PICTALK



Women make 'rangoli' on the occasion of Lakshmi Puja, in Nadia

PTI

## A call to secure a lead-free future for children

As the world marks the twelfth International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, the spotlight is on eliminating lead from paints

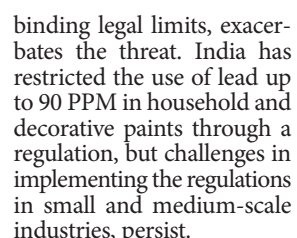
The world is observing the twelfth International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (ILPPW) from October 20-26, 2024. This year's theme, "Bright Futures Begin Lead-Free", echoes the grave danger that the presence of lead in paints has on the environment and human health, and more specifically on children.

Lead, a potent neurotoxin, has long been recognised as a serious public health threat, particularly to children, and pregnant and lactating women. Exposure to lead can cause irreversible damage to the brain and nervous system, leading to cognitive impairment, learning disabilities and developmental delays. It negatively affects children's intellectual ability, attention span and academic performance. Further lead exposure can have a huge bearing on the economy of the nation. According to a study, childhood lead exposure in low- and middle-income countries resulted in economic losses amounting to \$977 billion annually, representing 1.2 per cent of the global GDP



in 2011. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), there is no known safe level of lead exposure in the human body. The UN agency has classified lead as one of the top ten chemicals of primary public health concern. Efforts are being made globally and nationally to phase out lead from different sources, as it directly and indirectly, harms human health. The phase-out of lead from gasoline has been a remarkable success, but lead in paints remains a key source of lead poisoning, and more so in developing and the least developed countries. Nevertheless, lead-based paint

is a common source of lead poisoning in children. They ingest and inhale lead particles even when they are in the safe confines of their homes. Lead paints are more harmful when they deteriorate, releasing dust and flakes that contaminate indoor environments and pose a direct risk to human health, particularly to children. Many countries have introduced regulations to control or ban the use of lead in paints, but it is still a problem in low- and middle-income countries where such regulations are either absent or poorly enforced. The continued sale and use of lead paint in over 100 countries without



PIYUSH MOHAPATRA

binding legal limits, exacerbates the threat. India has restricted the use of lead up to 90 PPM in household and decorative paints through a regulation, but challenges in implementing the regulations in small and medium-scale industries, persist. The Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint, formed by WHO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2009, aims to phase out lead from paints worldwide by 2025. However, considering the current pace of developments, that seems far from being achieved if the movement is not accelerated. This year's theme "Bright future begins lead-free", can perhaps be catalysed as an action-oriented approach to eliminate lead from paints. There is only a year to go, so all stakeholders including government, industries, and civil society must join hands in this global effort to eliminate lead from paints and keep the future generation safe.

The author is a Senior Programme Coordinator (Chemical and Health) with Toxics Link; views are personal

## Unveiling Canada's hidden history of injustice

A contradiction in Canada's identity—championing human rights and multiculturalism while perpetuating deep injustices against its most vulnerable



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

Chanie Wenjack was a 12-year-old Anishinaabe boy who attended the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in Kenora, Ontario, in the 1960s. Like many Indigenous children, he was forcibly removed from his family and placed in the school, where the goal was to assimilate him into Canadian culture. Chanie was lonely, abused, and homesick. In 1966, he ran away from the school, trying to find his way home—over 600 kilometres away. Chanie set out on foot, without proper clothing or food, and tried to follow a set of railway tracks that he believed would lead him back to his family. After days of walking in the freezing October weather, Chanie died from exposure and hunger. His body was found on October 22, 1966, curled up beside the tracks. He was clutching matches and a frozen lump of sugar in his pocket. He was just a child, lost in a hostile world that had torn him from his family.

This tragic narrative, among hundreds of thousands of similar cases swept under the carpet of history, encapsulates a fundamental contradiction within Canada's national identity—a nation that presents itself as a bastion of multiculturalism, tolerance, and human rights while simultaneously perpetrating profound injustices against its Indigenous peoples. From the brutal implementation of the residential school system to contemporary systemic racism, Canada's historical contradictions are glaring and demand serious examination. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) reported that many children experienced physical, emotional, and sexual abuse while at these schools—a grim testament to a system that was, in its essence, a form of cultural genocide. This system did not simply end with the closing of these schools; the effects are still felt today, manifesting in intergenerational trauma and systemic discrimination against Indigenous communities.

As the well-known Canadian writer John Ralston Saul aptly notes, "Canada's story is one of



contradiction; we celebrate diversity while practising exclusion and denying the full citizenship of Indigenous peoples," adding, "the unconscious civilisation is the one in which we have lost our sense of the individual, in which the individual has become a statistic."

While Indigenous peoples face systemic discrimination, the Canadian government has also engaged in doublespeak regarding human rights. Canada often positions itself as a global leader in advocating for human rights, yet its track record reveals a different reality. For instance, Canada's participation in international human rights agreements contrasts starkly with its treatment of Indigenous populations. The United Nations has repeatedly criticised Canada for its failure to uphold the rights of Indigenous peoples, pointing to issues such as the lack of access to clean water, adequate housing, and education. The disparity between Canada's self-image and the lived experiences of marginalised communities highlights a persistent hypocrisy. Systemic discrimination in Canada impacts not only Indigenous communities but also various racialised groups, who encounter significant barriers in employment, education, and healthcare. This inequitable access reinforces cycles of poverty and marginalisation. The recent rise in anti-Asian



SYSTEMIC DISCRIMINATION IN CANADA IMPACTS NOT ONLY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES BUT ALSO VARIOUS RACIALIZED GROUPS, WHO ENCOUNTER SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE

sentiment has exposed the pervasive nature of racism in Canadian society, with hate crimes against Asian Canadians increasing sharply. This alarming trend highlights the fragility of Canada's multicultural narrative and reflects a broader pattern of scapegoating marginalised groups, revealing the inadequacies of government responses that often fail to deliver meaningful action. It is quite unfortunate to see how Canada has become a sanctuary for extremist movements, allowing groups like the Khalistani separatists and Tamil Tiger sympathisers to thrive within its borders. This situation raises alarming questions about the nation's complicity in international terrorism. Critics argue that the Canadian government's leniency towards violent nationalists and separatists not only enables these ideologies but also positions Canada as a breeding ground for extremism that threatens global security. The government's failure to confront these dangerous ideologies casts doubt on its commitment to combating terrorism and upholding human rights.

The Khalistani movement, which seeks a separate Sikh state in India, has erupted into violent clashes, giving rise to grave allegations of Canadian collusion in the turmoil. This week, the expulsion of six Indian diplomats over evidence of a "campaign of violence" against dissidents fur-

ther exposes the hypocrisy of a government that engages in doublespeak while attempting to deflect attention from its shortcomings. While Canada positions itself as a supporter of human rights and development, its actions frequently tell a different story. For example, Canadian mining companies operating in Africa have been criticised for their exploitative practices and the environmental degradation they cause.

The extraction of resources often comes at the expense of local communities, whose rights and livelihoods are compromised in the name of profit. This contradiction is starkly illustrated in countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where Canadian companies have faced allegations of human rights abuses and complicity in violence against local populations.

The quest for justice is not just a collective responsibility but a relentless commitment to truth and accountability. Only then can Canada build a future where dignity is not a privilege but a right for every citizen, thus challenging the very essence of what it means to be Canadian? As Gabor Maté, a well-known Canadian physician and author, states, "the question of who we are is deeply embedded in the culture we are raised in and the stories we tell ourselves."

(The writer is a journalist and author, views expressed are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### CONGRESS FACES SETBACKS

Madam — The article 'Haryana setback exposes cracks in INDIA Bloc' (October 17) has exposed chinks in the opposition armour. The tussle for the opposition face never settled even before Lok Sabha elections but after the Congress debacle in Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana elections, the severe infighting has surged on the ground. Rahul Gandhi has lost not just credibility in the opposition but even the Congress cadre has a trust deficit in him. All enthusiasm appears lost for the Jharkhand and Maharashtra Assembly elections and bypolls. The blame game on EVMs has already commenced even before poll campaigns.

The allies of the INDIA bloc are marginalising Congress on seat sharing. The Udhav Thakre-led Shiv Sena has completely sacrificed its Hindu ideology and its stand on Article 370 and Veer Savarkar, so Shiv Sena (UBT) relinquished its distinct identity and space in Maharashtra politics. The opposition in the INDIA bloc and other alliances are chasing minority votes as its vote bank leaving Hindus for the BJP. The entire opposition is numbed on terrorism-related killings, illegal waqf claims on government owned properties, temples and their lands, anti-India tirades abroad, insults heaped on Sanatan and our Gods and faiths, Bengal carnage and massacres of Hindus in Bangladesh. The National Conference boldly gave up Congress in his cabinet for better coordination with the Modi government, certainly for more empowerment of his governance. Haryana's verdict is a big blow to Congress for the fallacy of Rahul Gandhi's typical campaigning based on narratives, hypes and unsubstantiated allegations on the Modi government and the lack of good governance in Congress-ruled states.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

#### CRIME BEYOND BORDERS

Madam—In India, it is rarely heard that the business of the criminal gang here runs at the international level. It was revealed for the first time when Canadian Prime

#### Justice statue reflects change



The unveiling of the new lady statue of the justice by the delegates of the Apex Court of India is more about resemblance with the Indian Justice Vision. Despite India had been in so many years of independence now, the existence of colonial laws and justice icons presents a jeopardised picture. Often, Indian judiciary is

renowned for its delayed handling of cases, notoriously defamed as the 'Tarikh pe Tarikh' system.

The new lady icons, in their renowned appearance, will propel the audience to expect renowned justice mechanisms. The changing of sword with the Indian Constitution book, opening of her blindfold, and changing in cloth with a saree allow the same lady to visualise the renowned aspirations of the people from the Indian justice mechanism. We can expect that with indigenous statues and indigenous Samhita laws, India can pave the way for improved justice mechanisms with speedy justice delivery. We hope that this new version of the justice delivery system will enhance the trust and reliability of the Indians in these justice delivery bodies and will propel Indians to get rid of this Black coat syndrome and ineffective judiciary.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

Minister Justin Trudeau said that 'India's Bishnoi group is currently carrying out its exploits at the international level. This group has created a sensation in the whole country by shooting 66-year-old Baba Siddiqui, a well-known leader and former MLA of Mumbai, in broad daylight. Apart from this, this group has also threatened to kill Bollywood celebrity Salman Khan since 2018. Bishnoi is the prime accused in the sensational murder of Sidhu Moose Wala, who was shot dead near his village in October 2022. Police say his accomplice Goldy Brar, who is also a co-accused in the murder of Moose Wala, runs the gang from Canada via remote control. Bishnoi has more than 30 cases pending against him, 19 of which are currently being heard in court. A senior officer of Punjab's Anti-Gangster Task Force has admitted that "He runs his gang from jail without any coordination."

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

#### BLIND SUPPORT FOR CANADA

Madam — The US, UK, Australia and New Zealand blindly supporting their

partner Canada in the 'five eyes' group on the unsubstantiated allegation against the involvement of the Indian government in the killing of an Indian-origin Canadian who belongs to the 'Khalistani Indian Separatist group is deplorable. The allegation is based only on the basis of the intelligence reports from the Canadian Police without any evidence, as per Justin Trudeau himself. In diplomatic matters such as these one wonders how there can be an assertion of charge by Canada, and the friendly nations support the same 'blindly' just on here say. It is sad the 'five eyes' group, which has opened its eyes on Trudeau's call against India, has turned a blind eye to what is happening in West Asia, where its lead member, the US is bolstering the attack by the rogue nation Israel in Gaza, the West Bank, Syria, and Lebanon and now readying to attack Iran as a retaliation.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

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## FIRST COLUMN

### PM MODI'S ASEAN OUTREACH

This strong diplomatic push comes as India emphasises ASEAN centrality



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Lao PDR last week to attend the India-ASEAN summit was an important message for allies in the Indo-Pacific region regarding shared interests and common goals. PM Modi laid out a ten-point action agenda plan for upgrading relations with the ASEAN member countries, covering technology cooperation, trade, people-to-people ties, education, health, green energy and a focus on the global south bunch of nations. This comes at a time when External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited Pakistan (a first-in-line visit by any Indian External Affairs minister in the past 9 years) to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit. PM Modi during his inaugural address at the ASEAN India summit mentioned "Ten years ago, I announced India's 'Act East' policy. Over the past decade, this initiative has revitalised the historical ties between India and ASEAN countries, infusing them with renewed energy, direction and momentum. Giving importance to ASEAN centrality, we launched the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative in 2019." Clear references were made regarding the Indo-Pacific's centrality for India's foreign policy interests. India has under the current government's foreign policy priorities, kept the Indo-Pacific as a centre-piece. It has joined one of the most significant multilateral platforms, QUAD with the US, Australia and Japan and also entered into an economic partnership framework with the US and several countries in Asia under IPEF (Indo-Pacific Economic Framework).

The QUAD even though not a security alliance is focussed on maintaining a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region. India managed to include several crucial pointers inserted in the Chairman HE Mr Sonexay Siphandone's, (also, the Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic) statement during the summit. The statement read "We reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety, and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea.



We reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation. We further reaffirmed the need to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. We emphasised the importance of self-restraint in the conduct of all activities by claimants and all other states, including those mentioned in the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) that could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the South China Sea.

We underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of the DOC in its entirety and committed to maintaining and promoting an environment conducive to the negotiations of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) that is in accordance with International Law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. "Meanwhile as expected India did not engage in any bilateral dialogue with the SCO host country, Pakistan. Relations with Pakistan have been on the edge, for nearly a decade now, with an escalation, when India removed Article 370, regarding a special status for Kashmir. A couple of Pakistan-based terror attacks and India's surgical strike on terrorists on Pakistan soil ensured the relationship has been frosty. Meanwhile, Pakistan's national economy has plummeted in a post-Covid era. The guardian country for Pakistan in the region is India's other real problem, China. However, the binding economic packages China offers, are sure to make Pakistan a colony in the long run. While EAM's visit to Pakistan could be seen as a good goodwill gesture, in the long run, economic bilateral ties and the human bridge between the two nations, would be the only saviour for Pakistan.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

# Bangladesh reforms: Exaggerated importance



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

As scepticism mounts and electoral timelines remain vague, questions about the interim government's long-term ambitions are becoming harder to ignore

The latest buzzword in Bangladesh is reform. A report by Reuters, datelined August 16, 2024, and carried in the Dhaka Tribune under the heading, "Student protesters plan new party to cement their revolution," quoted Nahid Islam, a coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement and an advisor to the interim government, as saying, "The spirit of the movement was to create a new Bangladesh, one where no fascist or autocrat can return," and adding that to ensure that "we need structural reforms, which will definitely take some time." The government, he further said, was not considering calls from the Awami League and BNP to hold fresh polls as early as fall.

According to a report in The Daily Star, datelined August 18, 2024, and carried under the heading "No option but to succeed: Yunus," the interim government's chief advisor said, while addressing foreign diplomats during a "Meet and Greet" session at a hotel in Dhaka, that the interim government would hold a free, fair and participatory election as soon as it could complete its mandate to carry out vital reforms in the election commission, judiciary, civil administration, security forces and media. He added that the students wanted meaningful and deep reforms, which would turn Bangladesh into a "real and thriving democracy".

Things have been moving. In his address to the nation on September 11, 2024, Yunus announced the names of the heads of six commissions of reform along with the areas of governance they would address. Thus, Shahdeen Malik would lead the Constitutional Reform Commission; Justice Shah Abu Naim Mominur Rahman, the Judicial Reform Commission; Badiul Alam Majumdar, the Election System Reform Commission; Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, the Public Administration Reform Commission; Safar Raj Hossain, the Police Administration Reform Commission; and Iftekharuzzaman, the Anti-Corruption Reform Commission.

Yunus stated in his 32-minute speech that the commissions were expected to start their work from October 1 and finish within the next three months. Thereafter, the interim government would, on the basis of their report, organise discussions with major political parties and, in the final stage, hold comprehensive consultations, spread over three to seven days, with representatives of student bodies, civil society, political parties and the government. He added, "This discussion will finalise the outline of the reform plan and provide an idea on how it will be implemented."

There was, however, a stumble as early September 18, 2024, when it was announced that the Constitutional Reform Commission was to be headed by Ali Riaz, a Distinguished Professor at Illinois State University in the United States, and not Shahdeen Malik who, one learnt subsequently, had himself opted out, citing his own work load.

Even if the move does not make much of a difference in the commission's work, it indicates inefficiency and thoughtlessness. The interim government should have got Malik's consent before announcing his name as the head of the Constitution Reforms Commission. Besides, work has not been progressing fast enough. A



IF FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS COULD BE HELD EARLIER UNDER CARETAKER GOVERNMENTS, THESE CAN BE HELD AGAIN UNDER A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT WHOSE COMPOSITION IS SANCTIONED BY ALL OR A MAJORITY OF PARTIES IN BANGLADESH

report in the Dhaka Tribune, datelined October 14, 2024, and carried under the heading "Badiul Alam: Election Reform Commission reviewing laws, regulations," quotes Badiul Alam Majumdar, head of the Constitutional Reform Commission, as saying that laws, regulations, and rules were [being] reviewed as a part of the election review process, "to gain a clear understanding of electoral reforms." The implication is that the commission had yet to get a clear understanding of its task. At this rate, it is unlikely to finish its work within 90 days of starting it. Delay is almost certain to happen because the introduction of the proportional representation system is being considered. According to Riadul Karim in his piece, "Proportional system scheme in discussion," in Prothom Alo English (updated on October 15, 2024), the proceedings of a virtual discussion meeting showed that while the BNP opposed the decision and the Awami League's view was not known, both "eminent personalities" and the other political parties favoured it. Given the BNP's opposition, there is bound to be heated discussions and delays if the Constitutional Reform Commission considers proposing such a change. Given the difficult and contentious nature of the political and administrative terrains to be covered, progress in the other sectors of reform would also be slow unless the commissions have been told what to recom-

mend and the members have agreed. Hence, the urgency of the question, when would the elections be held? The urgent need for an answer is sharply underlined by the absence of the announcement of a timeframe, to say nothing of dates, for holding elections to the new Jatiya Sangsad or National Parliament. Continued silence on the matter is bound to raise the question: is the interim government planning to become permanent?

Some may regard this as an unwarranted question. The complete overhaul of the civil administration, foreign ministry, judiciary, police and military under way, is, however, significant in this context. The plea is that these have to be rid of those implicated in the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government's gross human rights violations. Given, however, the very large number of people shunted to sinecures, sacked or compulsorily retired before time, the question arises whether all of them were actually guilty, or the interim government is staffing the administration, judiciary, police and military with people who would support its bid to stay indefinitely in power.

The prospect must worry the BNP. With the Awami League being sought to be systematically crippled through murder and large-scale imprisonment, it has every chance of sweeping the parliamentary elections, which have become due following the dismissal of the former parliament on August 6, 2024. It might also

ask whether the reforms are so important as to make their completion a pre-requisite for holding elections.

The argument, articulated ad nauseum, that reforms are need for holding free and fair elections and preventing the return of an autocrat to power, is ridiculous. If free and fair elections could be held earlier under caretaker governments, these can be held again under a caretaker government whose composition is sanctioned by all or a majority of parties in Bangladesh.

The point needs to be made because the importance of reforms as a means of ensuring a "real and thriving democracy," is highly exaggerated. The impeccable democratic constitution of the Weimer Republic could not prevent Hitler's ascent to power through the electoral process. No constitutional safeguard can prevent a legally-elected leader becoming a tyrant, or a military coup, or a violent mass-movement forcing the ouster of an existing government, a telling example of which has recently been provided by Bangladesh itself!

The harsh reality is reflected in the sage words of late Justice Learned Hand of the United States who said, "Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can do even much to help."

(The writer is a consulting editor of The Pioneer; views are personal)

# The need for regulatory action on public conduct is imperative

The Delhi High Court's recent decision to suspend the counting of votes for the DUSU elections over public property defacement underscores civic responsibility

The High Court recently halted and deferred the counting of votes for the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) elections on the issue of public property defacement. Additionally, the court mandated that Delhi University recover costs incurred in repairing the public property from the candidates and reimburse the civic authorities including the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, government departments, and Delhi Metro. This landmark decision has brought two grave issues to the fore, viz., citizens' ignorant and irresponsible behaviour and the need for regulation by authorities in issues of national interest. The world economies are



KAJLEEN KAUR

working their way to a decarbonised Green Economy, which results in improved human well-being and social equity while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. India is envisioning to be a Global Leader @2047 and boasts of its G20 presidency which focussed on creating LiFE (Lifestyles

for Environment) and sustainable practices. However, careless behaviour, such as littering, pollution, or illegal deforestation, can harm ecosystems, reduce biodiversity, and contribute to environmental degradation. Such reckless acts question the credibility of the action plan and its implementation. Repairing and maintenance of public property require financial resources, often sourced from taxpayers. It causes an unnecessary burden on public funds, diverting money away from other vital areas such as education, healthcare, and social services. The responsible use of public property is a fundamental aspect of maintaining a thriving, equitable, and sus-

tainable society. It helps preserve resources for future generations, minimises economic burdens, fosters civic responsibility, promotes environmental sustainability, and ensures public safety and equality. The modern structure of economics favours a laissez-faire economy or a non-interventionist market structure. However, ensuring a sensible regulatory mechanism that respects the fundamental role of free-market competition and can also keep a check on unfair civic practices, oversupply or wastage of resources, can provide vital public benefits. There are umpteen visible examples in the economy and society such as the infringement of public prop-



erties, illegal encroachments of roads, the almost disappearing footpaths, and unadministered vendors, distribution of freebies for attracting vote banks to name a few, which call for an ardent need for an effective control mechanism. The outnumbering E-rickshaws in the name of giving employment

are a menace to the traffic system and road safety, requiring urgent action. Another important aspect that needs policy action is the small packaging of products, often called "overpackaging" or "excessive packaging". It often leads to increased waste, particularly in the form of non-recy-

clable materials. Manufacturing small packages requires more raw materials (plastic, paper, metals), resulting in a higher carbon footprint and increased consumption of finite resources. Regulating packaging can contribute to a circular economy, where materials are reused or recycled effectively, minimising environmental harm. To quote the famous economist Say's law of the market, "Supply creates its own demand", it is for the authorities to introduce regulations, limiting the use of small packaging, especially for non-essential or high-waste products. Policies could include taxes or restrictions on single-use plastics and encourage pro-

ducers to switch to larger or reusable packaging, which is cost-effective. Most importantly, educating consumers on the benefits of choosing products with minimal or sustainable packaging can influence purchasing decisions and drive demand for environmentally friendly options. Creating a conducive society and economic structure includes judicious demand, supply, usage and a regulatory framework to ensure the same. It is imperative for all the stakeholders to act more responsibly and to minimise wastage in all forms.

(The author is assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi; views are personal)

# Hamas confirms Sinwar's death, vows new phase in war with Israel

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Hamas confirmed Friday that its leader, Yahya Sinwar, was killed by Israeli forces in Gaza, and the militant group reiterated its stance that hostages taken from Israel a year ago will not be released until there is a cease-fire in Gaza and a withdrawal of Israeli troops.

"Those prisoners will not return to you before the end of the aggression on Gaza and the withdrawal from Gaza," said Khalil al-Hayya, who was Sinwar's Qatar-based deputy and headed up the group's cessation during several rounds of cease-fire negotiations mediated by the US, Qatar and Egypt.

In a statement, Hamas heralded Sinwar as a hero who "ascended as a heroic martyr, advancing and not retreating, brandishing his weapon, engaging and confronting the occupation army at the forefront of the ranks." The statement appeared to refer to a video the Israeli military circulated of Sinwar's apparent last moments in which a man sits on a

chair in severely damaged building, badly wounded and covered in dust. In the video, the man raises his hand and flings a stick at an approaching Israeli drone.

Sinwar's killing, in what appeared to be a chance front-line encounter with Israeli troops on Wednesday, could shift the dynamics of the Gaza war even as Israel presses its offensive against Hezbollah with ground troops in southern Lebanon and airstrikes in other areas of the country. Hezbollah has fired rockets into Israel nearly every day since the Israel-Hamas war began. Both Hamas and Hezbollah are backed by Iran, which hailed Sinwar as a martyr who can inspire others in challenging Israel.

Israel has pledged to destroy Hamas politically in Gaza, and killing Sinwar was a top military priority. Photos which were apparently taken by Israeli troops on the scene showed the body of a man who appeared to be him, half-buried in rubble and with a gaping wound in his head.

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu said in a speech announcing the killing Thursday night that "our war is not yet ended."

But many, from the governments of Israel's allies to exhausted residents of Gaza, expressed hope that Sinwar's death would pave the way for an end to the war.

In Israel, families of hostages still held in Gaza demanded the Israeli government use Sinwar's killing as a way to restart negotiations to bring home their loved ones. There are about 100 hostages remaining in Gaza, at least 30 of whom Israel says are dead.

"We are at an inflection point where the goals set for the war with Gaza have been achieved, all but the release of the hostages," Ronen Neutra, father of the Israeli-American hostage Omer Neutra, said in a video statement. "Sinwar, who was described as a major obstacle to a deal, is no longer alive."

Netanyahu was planning to convene a special meeting Friday to discuss hostage negotiations, an Israeli official with knowledge of the negoti-



ations said. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss confidential information.

Iran's mission to the United Nations issued a statement honoring Sinwar, emphasizing that he died on the battlefield and not in hiding, unlike the former enemy Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, who was hanged in 2006.

"When US forces dragged a

disheveled Saddam Hussein out of an underground hole, he begged them not to kill him despite being armed. Those who regarded Saddam as their model of resistance eventually collapsed," the statement said. "However when Muslims look up to martyr Sinwar standing on the battlefield — in combat attire and out in the open, not in a hideout, facing the enemy — the spirit of resistance will be strengthened."

More than 1 million people on both sides were killed during the brutal Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s that began when Hussein launched an invasion of Iraq.

In Lebanon, the militant Hezbollah group, which has been firing rockets into Israel since the war in Gaza erupted in October last year, issued a statement early Friday saying its fighters have used new types of precision-guided missiles and explosive drones against Israel for the first time in recent days.

Hezbollah's statement appeared to refer to an explosives-laden drone that evaded Israel's multilayered air-defense system and slammed

into a mess hall at a military training camp deep inside Israel last Sunday, killing four soldiers and wounding dozens.

The group also announced earlier this week that it fired a new type of missile called Qader 2 toward the suburbs of Tel Aviv.

The Israeli military said it would activate an additional reserve brigade to the north of its country to support troops battling in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah said its fighters were working according to "plans prepared in advance" to battle invading Israeli troops in several parts of south Lebanon. It also announced several missile and artillery attacks on Israeli forces operating in villages in southern Lebanon's border area overnight and Friday morning.

In one case, the group said it fired a heavy missile barrage at Israeli soldiers who were trying to evacuate those wounded in an earlier strike.

The group also said it had fired "large missile salvos" at a military barracks in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights and at the Zvulun

area north of Haifa.

Earlier this week, Hezbollah's acting leader Naim Kassem warned the group will continue to target wider areas of Israel, which it has attacked with rockets nearly every day since Hamas' deadly incursion last year.

As Israel fought militants in Lebanon and in Gaza, its military said Friday that its forces had killed two militants who crossed into Israeli territory south of the Dead Sea from neighboring Jordan.

Such infiltrations are relatively rare, especially as Israel has ramped up border security since the Hamas attack in October 2023.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas-led militants blew holes in Israel's security fence and stormed in, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not distinguish combatants from civilians. The war has destroyed vast swathes of Gaza and displaced about 90 per cent of its population of 2.3 million people.

## North sending troops to Russia's aid in Ukraine, says South Korea

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korean intelligence has found that North Korea has dispatched 12,000 troops including special operation forces to support Russia's war against Ukraine, news reports said Friday.

Yonhap news agency cited the National Intelligence Service as that the North Korean troops have already left the country. The NIS didn't immediately confirm the report, but South Korea's presidential office said in a statement that President Yoon Suk Yeol had presided over an emergency meeting earlier Friday to discuss North Korea's troop dispatch to Ukraine. The statement said

participants of the meeting agreed that North Korea's troop dispatch poses a grave security threat to South Korea and the international community. But the presidential office gave no further details like when and how many North Korean soldiers have been sent to Ukraine and what roles they are expected to play.

Ukrainian media reported earlier this month that six North Koreans were among those killed after a Ukrainian missile strike in the partially occupied eastern Donetsk region on Oct. 3. On Thursday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his government has intelligence that 10,000 troops from North Korea are

being prepared to join Russian forces fighting against his country, warning that a third nation wading into the hostilities could turn the conflict into a "world war."

"From our intelligence we've got information that North Korea sent tactical personnel and officers to Ukraine," Zelenskyy told reporters at NATO headquarters. "They are preparing on their land 10,000 soldiers, but they didn't move them already to Ukraine or to Russia."

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said the western alliance "have no evidence that North Korean soldiers are involved in the fight. But we do know that North Korea is supporting

Russia in many ways, weapons supplies, technological supplies, innovation, to support them in the war effort. And that is highly worrying."

The US, South Korea and their partners have accused North Korea of supplying Russia with artillery shells, missiles and other equipment to help fuel its war on Ukraine.

Outside officials and experts say North Korea in exchange possibly received badly needed food and economic aid and technology assistance aimed at upgrading Kim's nuclear-armed military. Both Moscow and Pyongyang have repeatedly denied the existence of an arms deal between the countries.

## N Korean leader stresses troops to treat S Korea as hostile enemy

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un reminded his troops to treat South Korea as a hostile foreign enemy and insisted that the North wouldn't hesitate to attack its rival if the South infringes upon its sovereignty, state media said Friday.

Kim's comments at an army headquarters came after North Korea this week confirmed that it revised its constitution to define South Korea as "a hostile state" and blew up front-line road and rail links that were once connected to the South.

The steps punctuated Kim's calls for North Korea to abandon its longstanding goals of reconciling with the South and reflect his intent to escalate tensions and increase leverage amid a deepening stalemate in diplomacy.

Analysts see increasing risks of possible clashes along the rivals' tense border areas, although it would be highly unlikely for the North to contemplate full-scale attacks in the face of superior U.S. and South Korean forces.

During a visit to the headquarters of the North Korean People's Army's 2nd Corps on Thursday, Kim stressed to troops the importance of understanding that any use of offensive force against the South would constitute a "legitimate retaliatory action against the hostile country, not the fellow countrymen." He said the North's detonation of the border road and rail sections on Tuesday demonstrated the North's resolve to cut off persistent "evil" relations with the South, which "lasted century after century and the complete removal of the useless awareness about fellow countrymen and unreasonable idea of reunification." He said the event was also a declaration that his troops wouldn't hesitate to use physical force against the South, an "apparent hostile country," if it violates North Korea's sovereignty, the North's official Korean Central News Agency said.

South Korea had no immediate comment on Kim's remarks. North Korea has been making increasingly provocative threats against rival South Korea in recent weeks.



NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte (left) speaks with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during the NATO-Ukraine Council working dinner at NATO Headquarters in Brussels on Thursday. AP/PTI

## Singapore detains teenager for planning terror attacks

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore has detained a 17-year-old self-radicalised supporter of terror group ISIS under the Internal Security Act (ISA) mere weeks before his planned attack on non-Muslim males in a public housing estate.

The teenager, purportedly influenced by the ongoing Hamas strikes and developments around Syria, wanted to use either a kitchen knife or a pair of scissors from his home as his weapon, said the Internal Security Department (ISD) in a press release on Friday.

It was a "very close shave as he could have easily gone on a rampage", Singapore's Minister for Law and Home Affairs K Shanmugam said. "I would say this is one of the ones where it was quite close, fairly close," Shanmugam said on the duration between the teen's arrest and the planned attack.

Shanmugam pointed out that the area that the teen had intended for the attack was frequented by "thousands of people" every day, including senior citizens and young children, and that it would be even more crowded during the school

holidays being a main housing estate area with shopping malls and leisure facilities. Since 2020, the ISD has detained five self-radicalised youths who wanted to carry out attacks in Singapore using such easily accessible weapons. Such attacks require little time and preparation to execute, said the department. In this particular case, the youth was determined to follow through with his plan and was less than a month away from executing it at the time of his arrest in August, it added.

He had planned to attack non-Muslim males near Tampines West Community Centre, during the school holidays in September. Following his arrest, the teenager was issued a two-year detention order in September as well, the Channel News Asia reported on Friday.

The youth chose the Tampines location as it was crowded and within walking distance from his home, said the ISD. Tampines is one of the major housing estates built, owned and managed by the state agency Housing Board.

He also took "concrete steps" to prepare himself for the attack, the agency added. A knife or

scissors was his weapon of choice because he felt he could wield them effectively and inflict "maximum damage" on his targets.

"To ensure that he could kill or grievously wound his targets, he planned to stab them in the neck, and practised stabbing motions using different grips with the scissors," said the ISD. In June, he conducted a walk-through of the route he would take from his house to execute the attack. The ISD added that the youth was determined to be killed by the police or passers-by in the course of his attack, as this would fulfil his aspiration to become a "martyr".

"He felt a sense of pride knowing that his planned attack if successfully executed would be the first terrorist attack in Singapore in recent decades," the release said. He crafted a declaration of armed jihad or struggle against non-Muslims, which he planned to release before his attack in the "hope of inspiring other Muslims to engage in armed violence," the ISD said. The ISD said the student became exposed to the teachings of foreign radical preachers in August 2023 while searching for religious knowledge online.

## Russia flaunts its doomsday weapons to keep West from supporting Ukraine

AP ■ MOSCOW

This year has seen President Vladimir Putin repeatedly brandish the nuclear sword, reminding everyone that Russia has the world's largest atomic arsenal to try to deter the West from ramping up support for Ukraine.

He ordered his military to hold drills involving battlefield nuclear weapons with ally Belarus.

He announced Russia will start producing ground-based intermediate range missiles that were outlawed by a now-defunct US-Soviet treaty in 1987.

And last month, he lowered the threshold for unleashing his arsenal by revising the country's nuclear doctrine.

Putin is relying on those thousands of warheads and hundreds of missiles as an enormous doomsday machine to offset NATO's massive edge in conventional weapons to discourage what he sees as threats to Russia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

A look at Russia's atomic arsenal and the issues surrounding it:

Russia's strategic weapons  
The Federation of American Scientists estimated this year that Russia has an inventory totaling 5,580 deployed and non-deployed nuclear warheads, while the US has 5,044. Together, that's about 88% of the world's nuclear weapons. Most of these are strategic, or intercontinental-range weapons.

Like the US, Russia has a nuclear triad of ground-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, long-range bombers and ICBM-armed submarines.

Since Putin came to power in 2000, the Kremlin has worked to upgrade the Soviet-built components of the triad, deploying hundreds of new land-based missiles, commissioning new nuclear submarines and modernizing nuclear-capable bombers. Russia's effort to revamp its nuclear forces has helped prompt the US to launch a costly modernisation of its arsenal.

Russia has reequipped its land-based strategic missile forces with mobile Yars ICBMs and recently began deploying the heavy, silo-based Sarmat ICBMs — designated "Satan II" missiles in the West — to gradually replace about 40 Soviet-built R-36M missiles. Sarmat has had only one known successful test, and reportedly suffered a massive explosion during an abortive test last month.

The navy commissioned seven new Borei-class atomic-powered submarines, each with 16 Bulava nuclear-tipped missiles, and plans to build five more. They are intended to form the core of the triad's naval component alongside a few Soviet-era nuclear subs still operating.

Russia still relies on Soviet-built Tu-95 and Tu-160 strategic bombers carrying nuclear-tipped cruise missiles. Moscow has restarted production of the super-sonic Tu-160 that was halted after the 1991 Soviet collapse, aiming to build several dozen modernized aircraft with new engines and avionics.

Russia's non-strategic nuclear weapons  
The US estimates that Russia has between 1,000 and 2,000 non-strategic, or tactical, nuclear weapons intended for use on the battlefield that typically are far less powerful than the strategic warheads capable of destroying entire cities.

Russia has high-precision ground-launched Iskander missiles with a range of up to 500 kilometers (310 miles), which can be fitted with either a conventional or a nuclear warhead.

The air force has a fleet of MiG-31 fighter jets that carry a hypersonic Kinzhal missile, which can be equipped with a nuclear or conventional warhead. Russia has widely used conventional versions of both Iskander and Kinzhal against Ukraine.

As part of the Kremlin's nuclear messaging, Russia and ally Belarus held drills to train their troops with the battlefield nuclear weapons in May, shortly after Putin began his fifth term.

## Yoga in Saudi Arabia dominated by women: Padma Shri Nouf Marwaai

PTI ■ RIYADH

The Saudis accepted yoga "unhesitatingly" seven years ago and now this ancient Indian practice is quite popular in Saudi Arabia and is dominated by women, says the country's first certified yoga instructor and the first Arab recipient of Padma Shri award Nouf Marwaai.

She says Saudis love anything that is good for health and well-being. Marwaai played an instrumental role in introducing yoga in Saudi Arabia in 2017 and was awarded the Padma Shri by the Indian government in 2018. She now heads the Saudi Yoga Committee, established in 2021, and is the founder and president of the Arab Yoga Foundation.

She says yoga today is dominated by women in Saudi Arabia.

At the second Saudi Open Yoga Asana Championship held in Mecca by Al-Wahda Club and the Saudi Yoga Committee this January, there were 56 girls and 10 boys, she says.

Marwaai was just 17 when she was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease



called Lupus Erythematosus.

"The doctors told my parents I won't live long. I was asked not to go to school and that is when I learnt yoga at home in Riyadh. My health condition surprisingly started improving. Finally, I decided to go to India to learn more about yoga,"

she recalls her tryst with yoga.

"In 2008, I went to India to study yoga and ayurveda and it was a big shift that happened in my life," she adds.

Asked how difficult it was to introduce yoga in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, Marwaai told PTI, "I think the

Saudi people just needed to know that they were not practising something which was in conflict with their religion."

She says yoga is vast and the philosophy itself is an ancient one.

"I believe there is no harm in studying any philosophy and learning for you to improve your life. Of course, the Vedic philosophy and yoga coming from a background like the Vedas is actually something ancient and something lived for thousands of years for humanity," she says.

According to Marwaai, there was no opposition as such from Saudi people, but from those outside.

"The Saudis love different cultures, they love to explore, they know their faith. If something doesn't conflict, they are not very hesitant. And anything that is good for health and well-being, people in Saudi Arabia love it," she says.

Last year, on the international day of yoga, we had 10,000 people including Saudis participating, she says, adding this year, in spite of the Hajj vacation, there were 8,000 people who took part.

## Over a billion people live in acute poverty, half are kids

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

More than 1 billion people in the world live in acute poverty, over half are children and nearly 40 per cent live in conflict-torn and fragile countries, according to a report released Thursday.

The report by the UN Development Programme and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative at the University of Oxford also said that more than 83 per cent of poor people live in rural areas — and the same percentage live in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

The UN Development Programme and Oxford have been publishing the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index, known as the MPI, since 2010 using 10 indicators including health, education and standard of living.

This year's index included data from 112 countries with a combined population of 6.3 bil-

lion people.

According to the index, 1.1 billion people live in acute poverty, with nearly half in five countries: India with 234 million impoverished people, Pakistan with 93 million, Ethiopia with 86 million, Nigeria with 74 million and Congo with 66 million.

Over half of the people living in poverty — 584 million — are children under the age of 18, with 317 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 184 million in South Asia, it said. In Afghanistan, where poverty has increased, the proportion of impoverished children is even higher — nearly 59 per cent.

UNDP and Oxford said this year's report focused on poverty amid conflict because 2023 saw more conflicts than at any time since World War II and that an all-time high of 117 million people were forced to flee their homes due to conflict, disasters and other factors.

Pedro Conceicao, director of

the UN Development Programme office that produces its annual Human Development Report, said: "By overlaying conflict data with global MPI data for the first time, the report reveals the stark realities of those simultaneously enduring conflict and poverty."

"A staggering 455 million people, both multi-dimensionally poor and living in contexts of conflict, face significantly harsher deprivations — three to five times more severe — when it comes to basic needs like nutrition, water and sanitation, electricity, and education, compared to those in poverty who live in more peaceful settings," he said in a statement to The Associated Press.

Sabina Alkire, director of the Oxford initiative, said it's intuitive that reducing poverty is easier in peaceful settings than for these 455 million people, representing nearly 40 per cent of the 1.1 billion poor.





# Finance Minister urges Mexican firms to partner with startups and academia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday urged Mexican firms to explore collaborations with startups as well as academic institutions and take advantage of India's business-friendly policies. In her address at Tech Leaders Roundtable at the Chamber of Commerce, Guadalajara, Sitharaman emphasised on opportunities and responsibilities for similar placed economies and how India and Mexico can leverage and collaborate with each other. Mexico has been thriving through nearshoring, which has resulted in collaborations between multinational companies and enabled exchange of talent as well as joint efforts for risk mitigation, she said. "The Union Finance Minister highlighted that rapid transformation that has been taking place in India while



working towards the goal of #ViksitBharat in 2047," the finance ministry said in a post on X. Citing new areas of development and collaboration between India and Mexico, she referred to the key Budget announcement made regarding setting up of Centres of Excellence (CoE) and shared information

Smt. @sitharaman said that for large economies, The challenges are not just around growth but also to bridge gap and create opportunities for all, and that there is a need for #ResponsibleCapitalism," it said. During her visit to Tata Consultancy Services Headquarters (Latin America), at Guadalajara, the finance minister paid tribute to the iconic industrialist Ratan Tata. On October 9, Ratan Tata, Tata Group's chairman emeritus and veteran industrialist, passed away at the age of 86 years. During her official visit till October 20, Sitharaman will hold a bilateral meeting with her Mexican counterpart Rogelio Ramirez de la O. She has discussions with several members of the Mexican Parliament to strengthen parliamentary cooperation and foster economic development.

# Infrastructure projects help in boosting tourism, creating jobs: Nitin Gadkari

PTI ■ PANAJI

Infrastructure projects like new expressways and facilities at tourist sites are helping boost tourism and create more jobs, Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Friday. In a message to a conference organised by the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) in Goa, the minister pointed out that the hospitality sector was crucial for the country's economic growth. Gadkari's message was read out on the second and last day of the conference which brings together hoteliers, restaurateurs and experts to explore topics ranging from sustainability to new-age restaurant trends, aimed at improving business operations and growth in India's hospitality industry. The minister expressed strong support for the hospitality sector and added it provides vast employment



opportunities and is crucial to economy. "Our country is focusing on developing religious and tourist destinations to boost tourism and create more jobs. Additionally, infrastructure projects like new expressways and facilities at tourist sites are helping boost tourism, which in turn creates more jobs," he added. Gadkari maintained the Union government is developing 18 more tourist destinations, with many projects nearing completion, which will further enhance tourism. "Nowadays, people are visiting not only pilgrimage sites, but also modern cities and exclusive tourist locations," he emphasised. The second day of the convention featured several insightful sessions focused on key trends shaping the hospitality industry. Mugdha Sinha, Director General of Tourism at the Union Ministry of Tourism, said, "We must rethink our approach to attracting international

wedding tourism by offering a seamless experience for foreign guests." Direct flight connectivity, simplified visa processes, and curated, unique itineraries will make India the ultimate wedding destination, she opined. With 54 per cent of people in India spending over Rs 10 lakh on marriages and an average guest size of 525, the 'Big Fat Indian Wedding' has evolved into a creative economic force, Sinha said. "This market, second only to China, presents immense opportunities for growth. Weddings in India are not just events, but cultural showcases, and the industry can greatly benefit from promoting honeymoon packages and milestone celebrations here," she noted. Chander Baljee, CMD of Royal Orchid Hotels, discussed the future of hospitality, highlighting the need for businesses to stay agile and embrace digitalization to remain competitive.

# Uber partners with IAF to offer mobility solutions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A leading cab aggregator has joined hands with the IAF to offer mobility solutions for official travel and commute of air force personnel and their families, according to an official statement issued on Thursday. An MoU was signed between the Indian Air Force (IAF) and Uber to that effect, a senior official said. "This partnership aims to provide reliable, convenient, and safe transportation services for IAF personnel, veterans and families," the statement said. Through the collaboration, the IAF will leverage Uber for Business, a platform that enables organisations to customise Uber's extensive scale and comprehensive travel benefits, ensuring a



seamless commuting experience, it said. The company will also facilitate effective change management for official travel and daily commutes, while offering enterprise benefits tailored to the unique needs of the IAF, it said. "The collaboration with Uber represents an important step in the journey towards enhanced mobility solutions for Air Force personnel and families," the IAF was quoted in the statement. The MoU signing ceremony took place on the presence of senior officials of the IAF and Uber. "We are proud to partner with the Indian Air Force to enhance mobility solutions... This partnership marks a significant step towards digitalisation by adopting shared mobility solutions. Through this MoU, we aim to support the Indian Air Force's broader vision of leveraging technology for a transformative progress."

# Infosys shares tumble 4.50 per cent post earnings announcement

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Infosys Ltd slumped 4.50 per cent on Friday morning after the company's second quarter earnings failed to cheer investors. The stock tanked 4.50 per cent to Rs 1,880.80 on the BSE. At the NSE, it dived 4.44 per cent to Rs 1,880.65. The stock was the biggest laggard among the BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty firms. The company's market valuation eroded by Rs 31,327.94 crore to Rs 7,86,437.37 crore during the morning trade. Decline in the bellwether stock dragged the markets lower. The BSE benchmark tanked 570.45 points to 80,436.16 in early trade. The NSE Nifty slumped 178.3 points to 24,571.55. Infosys Ltd, India's second-largest IT services exporter, on

Thursday reported a near 5 per cent rise in its second quarter net profit and raised revenue guidance for the year on broad-based recovery in demand particularly from its key financial industry clients. Consolidated net profit of Rs 6,506 crore in July-September - the second quarter of current 2024-25 fiscal year -- was 4.7 per cent higher than the year-ago earnings and 2.2 per cent more than the net profit in the preceding quarter, according to a company statement. Technology services bellwether for the second consecutive quarter raised its revenue guidance for the full fiscal. It now expects constant currency revenue growth between 3.75 per cent and 4.5 per cent for the financial year April 2024 to March 2025, higher than its earlier guidance of 3 per cent to 4 per cent.

# JSW Energy arms ink pacts to supply 1,200 MW solar-wind power to Maharashtra discom

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

JSW Energy on Friday said that its two arms have signed agreements to supply 1,200 MW of power to Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company. JSW Renew Energy Six Ltd and JSW Renew Energy Thirty Ltd, step-down subsidiaries of JSW Energy, have signed power purchase agreements (PPAs) with Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd (MSEDCL) for state transmission utility (STU)-connected solar-wind hybrid capacity, according to a company statement. The agreements have been signed for two hybrid projects, each with a capacity of 600 MW, totalling 1,200 MW. The letters of award for these projects were received on August 29, 2024, and September 10, 2024,



respectively, JSW Energy said. The projects are expected to be commissioned within 24 months, it said, adding that the agreements are set for a 25-year period at a tariff of Rs 3.60/kWh. Currently, the company has a project pipeline of 8.3 GW, with PPAs signed for 4.4 GW. JSW Energy has total locked-in generation capacity of 18.2 GW, comprising 7.7 GW operational, 2.1 GW under-construction across wind,

# The backbone of Star Air's growth: RCS-UDAN scheme

BY CAPTAIN SIMRAN SINGH TIWANA

The Government of India's Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) has been pivotal to Star Air's journey and growth. Since our inception, we've been dedicated to Connecting Real India, and UDAN has enabled us to do exactly that—connecting the underserved and unserved regions of the country, ensuring affordable air travel for everyone. When we launched our first two routes in January 2019, between Hubli to Bengaluru and Hubli to Tirupati, it was a significant milestone for us. It symbolized the beginning of our mission to enhance regional connectivity, starting with this crucial route. Today, I am proud to say that since that first flight, we've flown over 1.3 million passengers by fulfilling dreams of many who had tasted flight for the first time!



Today powered by the UDAN scheme we operate to 22 airports Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra. Through this initiative, Star Air was awarded 44 routes under UDAN 2 and 3-8 routes under UDAN-2 and 36 routes under UDAN-3. Further, we have been awarded 44 more routes under UDAN 5, giving us the opportunity to bring air connectivity to even more regions. The UDAN scheme has been instrumental in providing the necessary support for us to operate routes that otherwise may not have been viable. Through the infrastructural development that came along UDAN, allowed us to expand steadily into tier 2 and tier 3 cities, bringing us closer to our goal of Connecting Real India. We have seen the joy in the eyes of many as they took to the sky for the first time. We see many business come up to support this new air connectivity. Clearly proving

the economic multiplier Air Connectivity is. Our fleet has grown alongside our aspirations. What started with one Embraer E145 aircraft in 2019 has now expanded to five E145s and four Embraer E175s. This growth has enabled us to launch new routes, access more destinations, and serve an even larger number of passengers. Thanks to the RCS-UDAN initiative, Star Air is well on its way to realizing its vision of providing swift, affordable, and comfortable air travel to every corner of India. The backbone of our success has been this visionary scheme UDAN, which continues to empower regional carriers like us to play an essential role in India's aviation landscape. We look forward to many more milestones as we continue to build on these solid foundation. (Author of the article is Chief Executive Officer, Star Air)

# Ashneer Grover withdraws oppression and mismanagement plea against BharatPe management

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ashneer Grover, co-founder and former managing director of BharatPe, withdrew his plea from the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), in which he had alleged oppressive conduct and mismanagement by the board of the fintech firm. The withdrawal of the plea from the NCLT's Delhi bench came after Grover reached a settlement with the company on September 30, 2024. A copy of the settlement agreement was also placed before the NCLT by the counsel appearing for Grover, who had filed an application for withdrawal of the petition. "... During the pendency of the said petition, parties have arrived with settlement and also executed the settlement agreement dated September 30, 2024, a copy of which is



placed on record and in view of the settlement applicant (who is petitioner in the main company petition) has sought liberty to withdraw the company petition," the NCLT order dated October 14, 2024, noted. It further said: "Liberty is granted to the applicant to withdraw the company petition... And the same is dismissed as withdrawn. The present IA is disposed of."

Innovations Pvt Ltd, which is doing business as BharatPe, to be declared "illegal". He had also requested the NCLT to order an inspection and audit of the company by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and revocation of termination of his wife Madhuri Jain by the board of BharatPe. As per the settlement, the former co-founder will neither be associated with the company in any capacity nor be a part of its shareholding. Grover was removed from the position of managing director of BharatPe by the company's board in March 2022. Since then, both parties have been involved in legal disputes. Following the agreement, certain shares of Grover will be transferred to the Resilient Growth Trust for the benefit of the company and his remaining shares will be managed by his family trust.

# Homebuying decision may be impacted if mortgage rates cross nine per cent: FICCI-Anarock survey

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Nearly 90 per cent of respondents feel that their decision to buy residential properties will be significantly impacted if mortgage rates exceed 9 per cent, according to a survey conducted by FICCI and Anarock. Industry body FICCI and real estate consultant Anarock on Friday released their joint 'Homebuyer Sentiment Survey', with a sample size of 7,615 people, at a real estate conference here. "In a recent survey, over 71 per cent of respondents indicated that their homebuying decisions would remain unaffected if rates stay below 8.5 per cent. However, if rates exceed 9 per cent, then it will have a significant impact on over 87 per cent of respondents. For rates between 8.5 per cent and 9

per cent, about 54 per cent expect a moderate influence on their choice," the report said. Among other findings, the survey found that real estate is the most preferred asset class for investment for over 59 per cent of respondents. The Indian residential market continues to be predominantly driven by end-users, with over 67 per cent of survey participants buying properties for self-use. The survey revealed that the budget range of Rs 45-90 lakh continues to be the most favoured option for over 35 per cent of prospective homebuyers. Currently, over 28 per cent of survey respondents stated their preference for homes priced between Rs 90 lakh and Rs 1.5 crore. Top homebuyer demands are timely project completion (98 per cent), improved



boosting liquidity and accessibility. Sandip Somany, Past President, FICCI and Mentor, FICCI Committee on Urban Development and Real Estate, and CMD, Somany Impresa Group, said, "The Indian real estate sector has shown remarkable evolution. The significant shift in consumer preferences away from ready-to-move homes towards

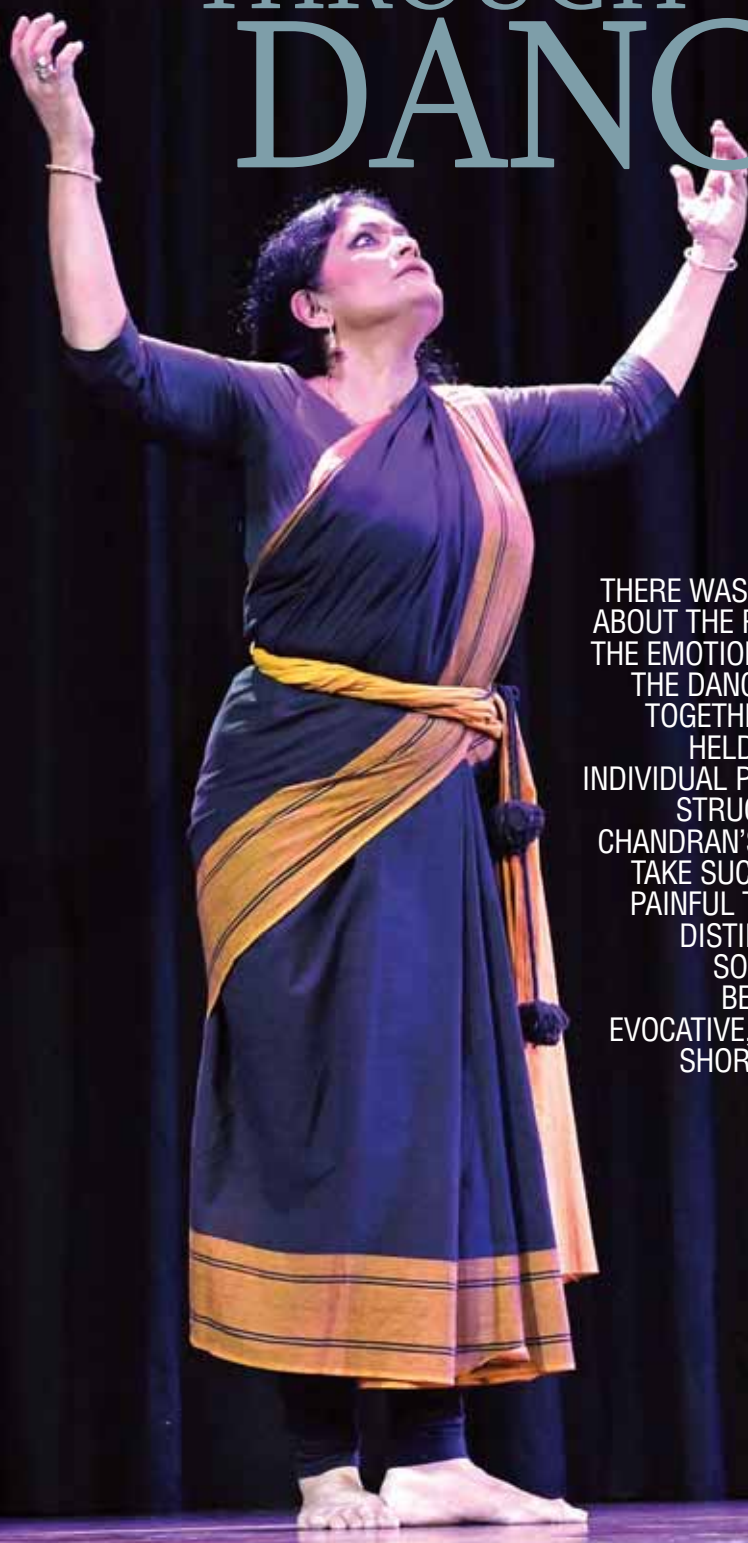
Supervisory Board, RMZ Corporation, said, "India's economic growth is driving rapid expansion in the real estate sector, with the residential market projected to reach USD 1.04 trillion by 2029, growing at a 25.6 per cent CAGR. This growth is fuelled by rising demand for ultra-luxury properties and significant investments." The commercial real estate sector is also thriving, supported by 1,600 Global Capability Centers and emerging secondary markets, Menda said. Anarock Chairman Anuj Puri said the consumer sentiment survey is timely and important, as it gauges contemporary homebuyers' preferences in the current market environment and highlights currently significant trends in Indian residential real estate. Sanjay Dutt, Managing

Director and CEO of Tata Realty and Infrastructure, highlighted the significant evolution of the real estate sector, particularly with the shift from traditional REITs to smaller-scale REITs (SM REITs). He emphasised the advantages of fractional ownership, noting how it allows investors to access high-quality assets with lower capital commitments, democratising real estate investment. Gaurav Pandey, Co-Chairman of the FICCI Committee on Urban Development and Real Estate and Managing Director and CEO of HDFC Capital Advisors Ltd emphasized on the critical importance of investing in skilled labour and workforce development to drive progress. Additionally, Roongta underscored the essential role of the private sector in creating impactful, scalable solutions to meet the growing demand in the industry.



In celebration of WISCOMP's 25th anniversary, Bharatanatyam legend Geeta Chandran and the Natya Vriksha Dance Collective delivered a moving performance, "Our Voice," which explored women's struggles, resilience and hope in times of conflict, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

# INSPIRING CHANGE THROUGH DANCE



THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT THE RAWNESS OF THE EMOTIONS, THE WAY THE DANCERS MOVED TOGETHER YET EACH HELD THEIR OWN INDIVIDUAL POWER, THAT STRUCK A CHORD. CHANDRAN'S ABILITY TO TAKE SUCH COMPLEX, PAINFUL THEMES AND DISTIL THEM INTO SOMETHING SO BEAUTIFUL, SO EVOCATIVE, IS NOTHING SHORT OF GENIUS



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

The hall was utterly still, a silence so real that it felt as though the entire audience had collectively held its breath. Not a single whisper broke the stillness. The audience was captivated by the intensity of the performance unfolding before them. As the final movement came to an end, the applause burst forth. It wasn't a brief acknowledgment, but a wave of appreciation that seemed to last forever.

At the heart of it all was none other than Padma Shri awardee Geeta Chandran, a living legend in the world of Bharatanatyam. As she performed, she commanded the stage with a presence so powerful it drew in every single spectator, binding them to her every move. It was not just a performance; it was an experience, one that resonated deeply with everyone in the room. Chandran, true to form, paid meticulous attention to every detail. Every gesture, every glance, every step was deliberate, contributing to a performance that was nothing short of spectacular. This evening was particularly special as it marked WISCOMP's (Women in Security, Conflict Management, and Peace) 25th anniversary. The event, *Our Voice*, was a collaboration between Chandran and the Natya Vriksha Dance Collective, commissioned by WISCOMP itself. Held at the C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium in New Delhi, the performance centred on the themes of women, war, and peace. Through the expressive language of Bharatanatyam, Chandran told a story that resonated deeply, not just because of its artistry, but because of its urgent relevance. What made 'Our Voice' so

compelling was the way it wove together the struggles of women with such authenticity and emotion. Chandran's portrayal of these themes was both profound and deeply human. It was not just a dance but a narrative, a reimagining of the age-old battles women have fought, battles against patriarchy, oppression and a world that too often refuses to hear their voices. Yet, this was not a lament. It was a celebration of resilience, strength, and the quiet but relentless pursuit of peace. I've seen many performances, but few have moved me as deeply as this one. There was something about the rawness of the emotions, the way the dancers moved together yet each held their own individual power, that struck a chord. Chandran's ability to take such complex, painful themes and distil them into something so beautiful, so evocative, is nothing short of genius.

In the words of Chandran herself, *Our Voice* was a deeply personal project, one that took her out of her comfort zone. She explained how the process of creating this piece began with conversations about women's issues, particularly the price women pay in times of war. However, it wasn't just about war in the literal sense; it was about the daily battles women face, the constant struggle to find space for their agency in a world that often seeks to diminish it. From these discussions, the script evolved into something larger, a movement, a performance that speaks not only of women's suffering but of their incredible capacity for endurance and hope. And it was this hope that stayed with me long after the

final bow. Hope, not as a vague or distant ideal, but as something real, something these women, these dancers, brought to life before our very eyes. Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Founder and Director of WISCOMP, captured this sentiment perfectly when she said that Chandran's performance was "sheer poetry in motion on the audacity of hope." It's true. There was something bold about the performance, not in its defiance, but in its belief that, despite everything, peace is possible. That women, even in the face of conflict, trauma and violence, continue to fight not just for survival, but for a better world.

This was not the first time Geeta Chandran has tackled such themes. *Our Voice* is a continuation of her earlier work, *Her Voice*, performed 25 years ago. While the original piece focused on Draupadi's personal losses from the Mahabharata, this newer work took on a broader scope, exploring the universal struggles of women against patriarchal forces. Chandran's use of water as a metaphor for women's lives, fluid, powerful, yet constrained - was especially poignant. It was a reminder of how often women's potential is stifled by societal expectations, but also of how, like water, they continue to find ways to flow, to push forward. It wasn't just Chandran's individual brilliance that made the evening so powerful, though. The Natya Vriksha Dance Collective, a group of dancers entirely trained by

Chandran, added a richness and depth to the performance that was undeniable. There was an unspoken trust and connection between the dancers, a shared understanding that made their movements feel like a conversation, not just between themselves, but with the audience. Each dancer brought something unique to the performance while contributing to the overall harmony of the piece.

As the performance ended, the applause was not just a formality. It was a recognition of something greater, a shared experience that had left everyone in the room changed in some way. The clapping didn't just end; it stayed with us, persistent and filled with emotion. It was as if the audience didn't want to let go of what they had just witnessed, as if by continuing to applaud, they could hold on to the feeling a little longer. Reflecting on the evening, I realised that what moved me most wasn't just the technical skill or the beauty of the dance, though both were extraordinary. It was the way in which the performance so perfectly captured the essence of WISCOMP's mission. For 25 years, WISCOMP has worked to promote women's leadership in peace and security, and this collaboration with Geeta Chandran was a powerful tribute to that legacy.

Art has always been a way to explore difficult subjects, provoke thought and inspire change. 'Our Voice' did all of that and more. It reminded us that the struggles of women are not confined to history books, but are ongoing and very real. Yet, in the face of these struggles, there is also incredible strength, resilience and most importantly, hope. As I walked out of the auditorium that night, I carried that hope with me.

## Step into a World of Melody and Peace

The *Guru Bhola Nath Music Utsav* at Kamani Auditorium celebrated the legacy of Pandit Bhola Nath Prasanna through captivating performances of Indian classical music

BY TEAM VIVA

The sound of melody filled the air, bringing with it a sense of 'SUKOON', a deep, soothing peace that only music can offer. This was the essence of the *Guru Bhola Nath Music Utsav* at Kamani Auditorium. The annual festival, honouring the legendary flautist Pandit Bhola Nath Prasanna, was a tribute to the timeless beauty of Indian classical music, celebrating the sacred bond between guru and disciple. As the audience settled into their seats, it became clear that the evening would be more than just a series of performances; it would be a journey into the heart of India's musical heritage.

The evening began with a breathtaking violin recital by Padma Bhushan N. Rajam, a maestro known for her unparalleled mastery of the instrument. Accompanied by her equally talented disciple, Nandini Shankar and the skilled Pandit Abhishek Mishra on tabla, the performance was a seamless fusion of tradition and artistry. Rajam's violin flowed effortlessly, creating



a soundscape that transported the audience into a world of tranquility. The synergy between the artists was remarkable, each note resonating with precision and emotion, setting the perfect tone for the night ahead.

The atmosphere was further enriched by the vocal magic of Padma Shri Shubha Mudgal, whose performance was nothing short of mesmerising. Her powerful voice, rich with emotion, filled the

auditorium, captivating every listener. Supported by an exceptional ensemble of musicians, Pandit Aneesh Pradhan on tabla, Ustad Murad Ali on sarangi and Pandit Vinay Mishra on harmonium, Mudgal's rendition of classical ragas showcased her deep understanding and passion for the art form. The performance was a fine blend of tradition and innovation, leaving the audience in awe.

**The evening began with a breathtaking violin recital by Padma Bhushan N Rajam, a maestro known for her unparalleled mastery of the instrument. Accompanied by her equally talented disciple, Nandini Shankar and the skilled Pandit Abhishek Mishra on tabla, the performance was a seamless fusion of tradition and artistry**

Yet, the heart of the festival was Pandit Ajay Prasanna's flute recital. As the son and disciple of Pandit Bhola Nath Prasanna, Ajay Prasanna carried forward his father's legacy with grace and dedication. His flute performance was a soulful tribute to his guru, each note filled with reverence and emotion. Accompanied by the rhythmic brilliance of Pandit Mithilesh Jha and Pandit Abhishek Mishra on tabla, Ajay Prasanna's

music was a seamless blend of melody and memory, evoking the timeless spirit of the bansuri. The audience sat in quiet admiration as the music washed over them, creating a moment of connection between past and present.

As the performances drew to a close, the hall remained filled with the gentle echoes of the night's music. The sense of Peace that the audience had experienced was unmistakable, a peaceful calm that stayed long after the final note had been played. The *Guru Bhola Nath Music Utsav* was not just a tribute to a musical legend, but a reminder of the profound power of music to touch the soul.

This festival, with its line-up of extraordinary artists and heartfelt performances, brought together the essence of Indian classical music in a way that felt timeless. The sound of melody, the rhythm of the tabla, the beauty of the ragas, this was the magic of the *Guru Bhola Nath Music Utsav*. It was an evening of pure musical bliss, one that left the audience with a deep sense of peace, or as the performers might say, 'SUKOON'.

Photo: Pankaj Kumar

# ROHIT, KOHLI, SARFARAZ FIFTIES TAKE INDIA TO 231/3 AT CLOSE ON DAY

**BENGALURU** Such an epic is still some distance away, but hopes will be flickering after the day's effort with the bat. Amid the more coruscating fifties by Rohit and Sarfaraz, Kohli's effort still stood out for its personal and situational significance. It was his first Test half-century of 2024, and he could not have timed his 31st in the longest format better -- literally and figuratively. Seldom a shot describes the touch of Kohli better than the cover drive, and the moment he executed one off pacer William O'Rourke, the 35-year-old was in full flow. He took 15 balls to get off the mark. Kohli brought up his fifty with a single off Matt Henry but at the other end, Sarfaraz resembled a race car on the tarmac. The Mumbai man punished all bowlers with disdain and left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel was shunted off the park for two successive sixes. Then there was a daring upper cut for maximum off O'Rourke and fortune also blessed him as a couple of edges fell inches short of Ajaz at gully and wide of third slip. Before Kohli and Sarfaraz ran

## RESURRECTION AFTER COLLAPSE



roughsho, another old-young combination of Rohit and Jasraj gave India a solid start. Jaiswal went through an early uncertain play-and-miss phase but he overcame that to play some sparkling shots. Rohit had no such issues. The right-hander flicked and drove New Zealand pacers to reach a fifty off just 59 balls, and also thrilled the crowd with that patented swivel pull on one leg. But his tenure in the middle ended in unfortunate circumstances. Rohit offered a forward defensive shot to Ajaz, but the ball trickled back onto his stumps after taking a deflection from his bat. A few minutes before that, Jaiswal's decision to give a charge to Ajaz resulted in him getting stumped by Tom Blundell, after adding 72 for the opening wicket with Rohit. The recovery was impressive but it could not overshadow what New Zealand accomplished earlier in the day. Resuming the day at 180 for three, the Kiwis were halted to an extent by Ravindra Jadeja (3/72) and the other Indian bowlers who took some early wickets to reduce them to 233 for seven. They lost Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Blundell and Henry in this period. Jasprit Bumrah snaffled Blundell while Mohammed Siraj had the number of Mitchell. Phillips and Henry perished to the crafty Jadeja. The Blackcaps were ahead by 187 runs at that point and it was imperative for them to stretch the lead at least till the 250-mark to maintain their edge. Ravindra and Southee exceeded the expectations during their partnership to take the lead past the 300-run mark. Ravindra started cautiously but unfurled his full range once he and the pitch settled down past the first-hour mark. The 24-year-old, who has his family roots in Bengaluru, showed the correct method of playing Indian spinners, either staying on the front foot or making a shimmy down to nullify the turn. A cleanly swept four off Ravichandran Ashwin carried him to his second Test hundred. Southee, who hammered a couple of his trademark sixes, gave solid company to Ravindra and duly completed his seventh Test fifty immediately after the lunch.



# Arjun crushes Maxime to win WR Chess Masters

**LONDON**

Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaise secured the WR Chess masters title after defeating Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France in the Armageddon game following two draws in Classical chess during the final. Arjun displayed great form and precision throughout the event to bag the winner's prize of 20000 Euros. He defeated his friend R Praggnanandhaa in the semifinals of the knock out event before eventually getting past Vachier-Lagrave. The 16-player tournament saw Arjun scoring a 2-0 victory over Sivananda Bodhana of England who is known to be the youngest ever to play in the Chess Olympiad for her country. Fellow Indian Grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi also fell to Arjun, who won the second game in the two-games mini-match by 1.5-0.5 margin. Against Praggnanandhaa in the semis, Arjun took an early lead by winning the first game as white and did well to draw the second game to win the match 1.5-0.5. In the final, Vachier-Lagrave put up stiff resistance against



the World number four Indian but eventually crumbled in the Armageddon. The first game ended in an easy draw for Arjun as black, while the second game

featured wild complex play out of a Sicilian Najdorf opening where the Indian played white. The dust subsided on the 21st move leading to a tricky endgame post the queen trade and the game was drawn. Vachier-Lagrave had 10 minutes on his clock with white pieces in the finale against Arjun's 6 minutes and 58 seconds. However, as is the law, the Frenchman needed a win. Arjun navigated the opening well despite less time out of a Petroff defense and reached a balanced position. Vachier-Lagrave sacrificed two minor pieces for a rook to make some threats around Arjun's King but the Indian remained on guard. The game could have been a draw through repetition but that would have won the match for Arjun anyway. The Queens were traded but Arjun was never in trouble as Vachier-Lagrave fought in vain for 69 moves before calling it a day. With this victory, Arjun moved closer to the coveted 2800 ELO rating mark, though he will need to wait for his next event to achieve it.

# Pakistan seals 152 run win in second test

**MULTAN (PAKISTAN)** Noman Ali and Sajid Khan claimed all 20 wickets on a recycled turning pitch as Pakistan ended a long wait for a home win with a 152-run victory over England in the second test on Friday. Left-arm spinner Ali took 8-46 to finish with a match haul of 11 wickets and England was bowled out for 144 inside the first session on Day 4 on a tailor-made dry wicket. Off-spinner Khan took 2-93 to go with his 7-111 in the first innings as both spinners bowled unchanged and ran through the tourists' batting lineup after Pakistan had set up a daunting target of 297 runs. The win was first for captain Shan Masood, who lost six tests in a row since being elevated as red-ball skipper last year and also ended Pakistan's winless 11-match home run that included four losses against England. England capitulated against Khan and Ali for the second time in the match after it resumed on 36-2 and needed a further improbable 261 runs for victory of a tricky turning wicket. Khan gleefully accepted a return catch from Ollie Pope on his second ball of the day before Ali cut through by claiming all the remaining seven wickets as the tourists failed to counter the spin through their sweeps and reverse sweeps. Captain Ben Stokes, who returned to lead the side after recovering from a torn hamstring, top-scored with 37 before falling in a bizarre fashion. Stokes charged down the wicket to Ali, but the bat flew out of England captain's hand to backward square leg and he was stumped. Brydon Carse smashed three sixes against Khan and scored 27 before he edged Ali in the slips as England couldn't counter the spinners on a wicket which had plenty of cracks and turn. England won the first test by an innings and 47 runs last week after posting a record-breaking 823-7 declared.

# Indian junior team, guided by Sreejesh, faces Japan in Sultan of Johor opener

**JOHOR (MALAYSIA)**

Two-time Olympic medal-winning stalwart P R Sreejesh will face his first major test as India's new junior men's hockey coach when the under-21 team aims for a fourth title triumph at the 12th Sultan of Johor Cup, beginning with a clash against Japan here on Saturday. The 36-year-old former goalkeeper, who retired after the bronze-winning campaign in the Paris Olympics earlier this year, took over the reins of the junior group soon after. India triumphed over Japan in their last encounter at the Junior Asia Cup in May last year, securing a 3-1 victory and also defeated them 5-1 in the 2022 Sultan of Johor Cup. "The team has been training well under the new head coach



PR Sreejesh and we are excited to play our first tournament with him," captain Amir Ali said in a release. "After losing to Germany last time, we were unable to retain our crown but this time we are better equipped and ready to take on any team in the competition." India, who have previously won the title in 2013, 2014 and 2022, will face Britain on Sunday. The side is also a four-time second-place finisher in the event. Following a day off, the Indians will take on hosts Malaysia on October 22 and then Australia on October 23. India will conclude the group stage against New Zealand on October 25, aiming to finish in the top two to advance to the final on October 26. "We have been training hard over the past few days to be in the best shape ahead of the Sultan of Johor Cup," vice-captain Rohit said. "This time around, the team has several new players who are excited to demonstrate their abilities on the field. All of the players are encouraging one another to improve in preparation for a busy time for us, which includes the men's junior Asia Cup Muscat in November." After the Paris campaign, Sreejesh had stated that he always harboured coaching ambitions and wanted to be the Rahul Dravid of Indian hockey by shaping the younger generation of players. Dravid, before serving as the senior team coach, mentored the under-19 players for a significant duration.



# Chelsea, Lyon and Roma stay perfect with victories in Womens Champions League

**WASHINGTON** Turkish champions, Roma dominated in Istanbul. Summer signing Hawa Cissoko scored in the seventh minute to mark her debut game in the competition. The France defender who transferred from West Ham headed home off Manuela Giugliano's corner. Valentina Giacinti made it 2-0 in the 24th minute when she was left unmarked near the spot to head in Verena Hanshaw's cross. Giugliano failed to convert from the spot in the first-half stoppage time but Emilie Haavi got Roma's third with a right-footed blast past goalkeeper Gamze Yaman early in the second. Giugliano finally found the back of the net from close range for a 4-0 lead before Andrea Staskova scored the consolation goal for the hosts. Roma substitutes Marta Pandini and Alice Corelli also scored. Blues win again under Bompastor/Chelsea struck early in another winning performance under new coach Sonia Bompastor, who joined from Lyon. Agnes Beever-Jones put the Blues ahead with a long-distance deflected strike in the seventh minute and Maika Hamano made it 2-0 a short time later by lifting the ball over goalkeeper Olivia Clark from outside the area. Substitute Guro Reiten added the third in the second from the spot just past the hour mark. Chelsea, Lyon and Roma all stayed perfect in the Womens Champions League by cruising to away victories. The Roma routed Galatasaray at Istanbul 6-1, Chelsea beat Twente in the Netherlands 3-1 and eight-time champion Lyon won 2-0 at Wolfsburg. Real Madrid claimed its first victory of the campaign by easing past Celtic 4-0. Roma and Lyon both have six points in Group A. Two-time champion Wolfsburg and Galatasaray, the first Turkish team to reach the group stage, have no points. In Group B, Chelsea leads with six points, with Madrid and Twente on three and Celtic last bottom without a point. Renard strikes on Popp's day/Wolfsburg striker Alexandra Popp made her 100th competition appearance - becoming only the second player to reach the mark but it was Lyon defender Wendie Renard, the only one who has played more, who stole the show. Renard's header found the back of the net early on in her 118th game in the competition. U.S. International Lindsey Horan netted from the penalty spot in the second half. Lyon is the competition's record eight-time champion but last won the trophy in 2022. It was runner-up last season to Barcelona. Roma rout/n a matchup between the Italian and

# Nadal loses to Alcaraz at Six Kings Slam exhibition event

**RIYADH**



With an eye on the Davis Cup, Rafael Nadal said he was pleased with his performance despite losing 6-3, 6-3 to Carlos Alcaraz at the Six Kings Slam. Jannik Sinner beat Novak Djokovic 6-2, 6-7 (0), 6-4 in the other semifinal at the exhibition event that awards money but no ATP ranking points and is Saudi Arabia's latest foray into tennis. The match against Alcaraz was Nadal's first since he announced last week that he would be retiring after playing for Spain in the Davis Cup next month. Nadal and Alcaraz played doubles together at the Paris Games and could team up again for the Davis Cup. "I have the Davis Cup in front (of me) in a month so every day is an opportunity to be better and better and be ready for this final tournament of my career," Nadal said. "I want to try my best to be ready for that and help the team in some way." Thursday's match was the first contest for Nadal since his exit at the Paris Olympics in July. "Carlos was too good. I haven't been on the competitive stage since a couple months ago," Nadal said. "So yeah I think it was a good performance, even if it was not enough to play

against an animal like him. But it was a positive match for me and I'm happy." Nadal will play Djokovic on Saturday in a third-place match before Sinner faces Alcaraz. The top-ranked Sinner was cleared in a doping case shortly before winning last month's U.S. Open, although the World Anti-Doping Agency has appealed that exoneration. Djokovic and Sinner met for real on Sunday, when the Italian won in straight sets for the Shanghai Masters title.

# Iga Swiatek has hired Wim Fissette as her new coach

**WASHINGTON**



Iga Swiatek is hiring Wim Fissette to be her new coach, announcing via social media that she is bringing aboard someone who has worked with a long list of top players that includes Naomi Osaka, Kim Clijsters and Victoria Azarenka. "I'm excited and motivated to start a new chapter," posted the No. 1-ranked Swiatek, who parted ways with Tomasz Wiktorowski two weeks ago after three years together. Swiatek hasn't competed since Sept. 4, when she lost in the U.S. Open quarterfinals to eventual runner-up Jessica Pegula. Since then, Swiatek withdrew from the China Open and Korea Open. Next up for Swiatek is the season-ending WTA Finals, which will be held in November in Riyadh, Saudi

Arabia. "As you know, I'm preparing for the WTA Finals but my perspective is, as always, long-term, not short-term. I said many times that my career is a marathon for me, not a sprint, and I'm working, operating and making decisions with this approach," Swiatek wrote on Thursday. "I want to say that I'm very excited and looking forward to working with Wim. He seems to have a great attitude, vision and huge experience at a very top level of tennis. It's always crucial to try and get to know each other better but we're off to a good start and I can't wait to compete soon." Swiatek is 54-7 this season with five titles and about \$7.5 million in prize money. She won the French Open in Paris and fourth in the past five years, raising her career haul to five Grand Slam trophies. Four of those came with Wiktorowski as her coach. The 23-year-old from Poland also picked up a bronze medal at the Paris Olympics in August. She will be trying to hold off Sabalenka for the year-end No. 1 ranking. Fissette, who is Belgian and Swiatek's first non-Polish coach, had worked with Osaka most recently, and helped her win two of her four Grand Slam titles. He also was with Clijsters and Angelique Kerber for major championships. Other No.

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