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Nation Awards its Artists National Awards for Indian Cinema

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday conferred the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke award upon famous actor Waheeda Rehman. She became the eighth woman artiste to receive the award, the highest recognition in the field of Indian cinema. The 85-year-old actor dedicated it to her "dear film industry" and its various departments.

The President presented the award to Rehman during the 69th National Film Awards ceremony, held at Vigyan Bhawan. The veteran, who received a standing ovation from the A-list gathering as she walked to the stage, said filmmaking is a collaborative process.

"I feel very honoured and humbled... But whatever I have achieved today, it is because of my dear film industry. Luckily, I got to work with top directors, producers, filmmakers, technicians, writers, dialogue writers, music directors and musicians," Rehman said in her acceptance speech.

"I got a lot of support, respect and love from them," she said, also crediting the make-up artists, hair and costume designers.

"...Which is why I am sharing this award with all the departments of the film industry. They gave me a lot of respect, support and love from the



President Droupadi Murmu after presenting the Dadasaheb Phalke Award to actor Waheeda Rehman during the 69th National Film Awards at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on Tuesday

very beginning. A film is not made by just one person, we need each other," she added. President Murmu praised Rehman for championing women empowerment through her roles and life.

"I am elated to honour Waheeda Rehman ji with Dadasaheb Phalke award. I congratulate Waheeda ji. With her art and personality, she has reached on top in the film industry. She has made a name for herself as a woman of dignity, confidence and original-

ity in her personal life too," the President said.

Murmu also spoke about how Rehman refused to change her name as a newcomer in the film industry when it was common for actors to opt for a different screen name.

"In her movies, she played roles of women who broke shackles. Waheeda ji has set the example that women have to take the initiative when it comes to women empowerment," she added. Rehman was selected for the

prestigious honour by a five members jury comprising close friend and last year's Dadasaheb Phalke awardee Asha Parekh, actors Chiranjeevi, Paresh Rawal, Prosenjit Chatterjee and filmmaker Shekhar Kapur.

The actor made her debut in Hindi films opposite Dev Anand in Guru Dutt's 1956 film "CID" and went on to build a stellar career of over five decades, including classics "Pyaasa", "Kaagaz ke Phool" and "Chaudhvin Ka Chand",

"Guide" as well as later hits such as "Kabhi Kabhie" and "Khamoshi".

The announcement of the Dadasaheb Phalke honour coincided with the birth centenary of her "Guide" and "CID" co-star Dev Anand on September 26, 2023.

Rehman, who forayed in cinema with the 1955 Telugu films "Rojulu Maraayi" and "Jayasimha", has worked in more than 90 films across languages. In the 2000s, she appeared in "Om Jai Jagdish", "Rang De Basanti", "Delhi-6" and "The Song of Scorpions". Film actor producer Devika Rani was the first Dadasaheb Phalke awardee. Other female artists to have received the honour are Sulochana, Kanan Devi, Durga Khote, Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle and Asha Parekh.

Alia Bhatt made a fashion statement at the awards ceremony by repeating her ivory wedding saree as she attended the ceremony with actor husband Ranbir Kapoor. Alia won the best actress National Film Award for her performance in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's "Gangubai Kathiawadi".

Alia shared the best actress award with Kriti Sanon, who also wore a ivory saree. Kriti is receiving the award for her work in Hindi film "Mimi" while her co-star Pankaj Tripathi won the best supporting actor award for his role in the film.

SC says No to same sex marriage

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday unanimously refused to accord legal recognition to same sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act, ruling that it is within Parliament's ambit to change the law for validating such union.

The top court, however, recognised equal rights for queer people and their protection, while calling for sensitisation of the general public so they don't face discrimination.

The apex court, while passing four separate verdicts, was unanimous in holding that there is "no unqualified right" to marriage, and same sex couples can't claim it as a fundamental right under the Constitution.

The bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud was critical of the Centre's stand that the pleas for legal validation of same sex marriage was reflective of an urban elitist concept. Queerness is neither an urban nor an elite concept or characteristic, said the apex court, which pronounced the verdicts on 21 petitions seeking legal sanction for same sex marriages.

It, however, differed on certain aspects, especially on the applicability of adoption rules for queer couples. The five judges bench comprising the CJ, and Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, S Ravindra Bhat, Hima Kohli and PS Narasimha concurred on the main issue

that the court can't accord legal validation to same-sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act. Agreeing with the views of the CJ and Justice Kaul, Justice Bhat said the Constitution does not grant a fundamental right to marry. At the outset, Justice Chandrachud said there are four judgments — by himself, Justices Kaul, Bhat and Narasimha — in the matter.

Directing the Centre, states and Union Territories (UTs) to ensure the queer community is not discriminated against, the CJ said queer is a natural phenomenon known for ages and is neither urban nor elitist.

Justice Kaul said he agrees with the CJ on grant of certain rights to queer couples. "Non-heterosexual and heterosexual unions must be seen as both sides of the same coin," Justice Kaul said, adding legal recognition of non-heterosexual unions is a step towards marriage equality.

The CJ said it is for Parliament to decide whether there is a need for a change in the Special Marriage Act regime. "This court can't make law. It can only interpret it and give effect to it," he said.

While reading out the operative portion of his verdict, Justice Chandrachud directed the Centre, States and UTs to take steps to sensitise the public about the rights of queer people and ensure that sex reassignment surgeries are not performed on inter-sex children at an age they cannot fully comprehend the consequences.

TMC silent on its Party MP

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress continues to remain tightlipped on the cash-for-queries charges brought against its MP Mahua Moitra with some senior leaders privately communicating party supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's views that she should be left to "clean the mess she has created, if at all she has created it".

And as a measure to do so, Moitra on Tuesday filed a defamation suit against BJP MP Nishikant Dubey who had written letters to two Union Ministers and Speaker Om Birla charging her with accepting bribes from one business conglomerate in lieu of asking questions against its rival group: In this case the Adanis.

A senior party leader and a State Cabinet Minister said all the party leaders were expected to follow the "austere lifestyle and valued principles of Mamata," and if anyone "deviates" from that then "it is for that person to explain her

conduct... the party will not take any responsibility".

Earlier Dubey had alleged that Moitra had taken bribes from a business house to ask questions in the Lok Sabha against its rival the Adani group. Dubey claimed "if the claims are found to be true," then it "constitutes a serious criminal breach of trust as well as a violation of India's national security."

The TMC MP, however, put up a brave front saying she is ready for any kind of probe and iterating that all the allegations leveled against her were malicious and untrue. The Speaker is known to have referred the matter to the Ethics Committee.

Moitra on Tuesday filed a defamation case against BJP Dubey before the Delhi High Court. A Supreme Court advocate has also been made a party in the suit. The reason behind the top TMC leadership distancing itself from the Moitra case, or in the least not openly backing her are three-fold, insiders say.

Firstly, as a straight-talker, Moitra has often earned the wrath of senior TMC leaders most of whom have no sympathy for her now.

Even party supremo Mamata has on a couple of occasions rebuked her for crossing swords with other leaders or their supporters. Secondly, the Chief Minister who is desperate to showcase some investment in Bengal post her Singur movement that drove away the Nano car factory of the Tata Motors from the State during the Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee regime is not willing to enter into an issue where the Adanis are involved.

"Remember the Adani group has offered to construct a deep sea port at Tajpur in East Midnapore district," a senior Bengal Minister said, adding Moitra had gone too far across asking questions against them in her bid to politically corner the BJP.

"If Mamata is not happy with her on certain issues this is perhaps the one of them," said the TMC leader, adding the

TMC has privately conveyed to the Adanis that Moitra's stance would not reflect on what the TMC thought about the group.

And finally when a number of its senior leaders are already in jail in connection with recruitment, coal and cattle scams the Bengal ruling outfit does not want to get embroiled in more number of such issues "particularly when Moitra is not a mass leader and a dispensable leader," a TMC sympathiser and a political analyst said. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has referred the "bribe-for-query" complaint made by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey against Moitra to the Ethics Committee of the lower House.

Dubey alleges that Moitra accepted "bribes" from a businessman in exchange for posing questions in Parliament. He has urged Birla to establish an "inquiry committee" to thoroughly investigate these accusations. The Ethics Committee of the Lok Sabha is presided over by BJP member Vinod Kumar Sonkar.



Netherlands captain Scott Edwards plays a shot during the ICC Men Cricket World Cup 2023 match between South Africa and Netherlands at HPCA Stadium in Dharamshala on Tuesday

Low pressure over BoB by Oct 20 System unlikely to affect Durga Puja

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A low-pressure area is likely to form over the Bay of Bengal (BoB) around October 20, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasted on Tuesday.

"A cyclonic circulation lies over southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining Andaman Sea extending up to 4.5 km above mean sea level. It is likely to move west-northwestwards and under its influence, a low pressure area is likely to form over Central parts of Bay of Bengal," the IMD said.

However, the system is unlikely to play spoilsports in the Durga Puja festivities in Odisha. The predicted low-pressure area is likely to move westwards towards north Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh coasts with low probability of further intensification into depression, the IMD said.

However, the Regional Office of the IMD here hasn't issued rainfall warning for the State

30 poor families denied basic amenities

NHRC asks Dhenkanal DM to submit ATR in 8 wks

RAJESH BEHERA ■ BHUBANESWAR

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed the district Collector of Dhenkanal to take appropriate action within 8 weeks and submit report on the alleged matter of 30 poor families in Naradamunda village, (Ward No 4) under Kankadahada Block who were deprived of basic amenities including houses under Awaz Yojana.

The NHRC passed the order acting on a petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer and rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy.

Tripathy in his petition said that more than 130 poor persons of 30 families in Naradamunda hamlet have been deprived of basic human rights due to apathy of the



district administration and State authorities.

All these poor families have been living in thatched, dilapidated houses. Though the families belong to vulnerable

strata of society, they have failed to get houses under the Central or State housing schemes meant for these poor villagers. Due to lack of all-weather connectivity ambulance, fire brigade cannot

reach and the thatched houses of the villagers are prone to fire tragedy. The villagers also are forced to live under the fear of elephant attack also.

The residents of the villages are yet to be ensured with safe drinking water, playgrounds, open-air theatres, all weather roads, primary healthcare, education under RTE Act, and construction of toilets for each household under the Swachha Bharat Abhiyan, Tripathy pointed out.

The petitioner prayed the Commission to investigate the case in detail by a team of officials and direct the Chief Secretary, Government of Odisha, district Collector, Dhenkanal and also Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, to act over the issue immediately.

Bhubaneswar to be beggar-free before Puja

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Ahead of the festive season, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Tuesday decided to make the city beggar-free. The decision was taken at a meeting of the civic body chaired by its Commissioner Vijay Amruta Kulange.

Beggars will no longer be allowed to seek alms along roadsides or near temples. To enforce this, three dedicated squads have been formed. If a beggar is found on the streets, a squad will take him/her away.

These squads will conduct regular patrols in their respective areas of jurisdiction, ensuring that begging activities are not taking place near places of worship during festivals.



The beggars will be housed in five rehabilitation centres managed by the BMC. These centres are located at Rang Bazar, Andharua, PWD Colony, Dakkua and Niladri Vihar. Each centre can accommodate up to 100 beggars.

Furthermore, in some instances, beggars have been reunited with their families after discussions with their relatives. The BMC has sternly warned that any family found sending a previously-abandoned member back to beg will face strict consequences.

'Huge kickback made in rural water supply work' CM honours Kishore with Rs 1.5 cr

Congress demands Lokayukta probe
NALINI SAHU
BHUBANESWAR

The Congress on Tuesday brought serious charges of corruption and nepotism in award of rural water supply work contracts and sought a probe by the Lokayukta.

Addressing a Press conference here, OPCC Campaign Committee chairperson Bijay Kumar Patnaik said the tender process of the Odisha Government for awarding the work contracts is highly tilted in favour of non-Odia work contractors.

"In the past few years, the Odisha Government has awarded work contracts worth over Rs 35,000 crore for rural



drinking water supplies. However, 96% of these work contracts have been given to non-Odia contractors hailing from States like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. It's because the annual turnover of a firm to be eligible to get a work contract of Rs 100-crore project was fixed at Rs 262 crore. Such a hefty turnover

benchmark was deliberately fixed to deny the Odia contractors the opportunity to qualify for the work contracts," said Patnaik.

He cited a number of examples where small work contracts were put together as one project so as to enable the outside contractors to bid for them.

"We suspect huge

kickbacks behind such dubious deals. We demand a proper probe by the Lokayukta. Or else, we'll knock at the door of Lokayukta," said he.

PCC president Sarat Pattanayak said he doubts if the government had examined the expertise of outside contractors and the works executed by them.

"As many projects were not completed as per the schedule, their costs have substantially escalated, causing unwarranted losses to the State exchequer," said he.

"One wonders why the government did not go for global tenders. Is it because it wanted to favour a handful of contractors?" asked Pattanayak.



PNS BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday felicitated Odisha's Javelin star Kishore Kumar Jena with a cash award of Rs 1.5 cr for his stellar performance in the recent Asian Games 2023 in Hangzhou, China, where he bagged a Silver medal bringing

laurels to the State and nation and sealed his berth in the upcoming Paris Olympics 2024.

Secretary (ST) VK Pandian also congratulated Kishore for his exemplary journey and wished him for his upcoming events.

Kishore thanked the CM for recognising his achievement.

Kishore, who hails from Puri, has become a shining example in the world of athletics. In the build-up to the Asian Games he impressed with a 5th place finish at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest for which he was recognised with a cash award of Rs 50 lakh by the CM.

In city Valuables worth 1 cr looted from apartment

PNS BHUBANESWAR

Proving the notion wrong that apartments are safe in Bhubaneswar, burglars targeted a number of flats at an apartment under the Infocity police station in the city.

As per reports, thefts were reported from four flats of Rajvatika Apartment in the city. Despite the presence of security guards, the miscreants managed to enter the apartment and decamp with gold ornaments, cash and other valuables from the four flats.

Sources said the miscreants looted the valuables after gaining entry by breaking the grille and locks of the flats. It was claimed that the burglars decamped with gold ornaments and other valuables worth Rs 1 crore.

Local residents said the miscreants gained entry into the apartment by scaling the boundary wall.

Following the burglaries, senior police officials reached the apartment and initiated a probe with the help of forensic experts and a dog squad.

HC admits Anubhav's petition, issues notice to Varsha

PNS CUTTACK

The Orissa High Court on Tuesday admitted a petition filed by actor and politician Anubhav Mohanty, in which he has challenged the verdict of Family Court, Cuttack over the divorce plea filed by him against his actress-wife Varsha Priyadarshini.

The High Court also issued a notice to Varsha in this regard. It asked the lower court to submit all records related to the case.

The next hearing of the petition was scheduled for November 9.

The Family Court had on September 22 rejected Mohanty's divorce petition. It had also rejected the plea for



restitution of conjugal rights filed by Varsha.

The Family Court had said, "The petitioner (Anubhav Mohanty) has failed to establish preponderance of probability that the

respondent (Varsha Priyadarshini) refused and avoided for consummation of their marriage and caused mental cruelty to the petitioner by her conduct towards himself and his family members. As the petitioner has failed to substantiate his pleadings, he is not entitled to get a decree of divorce in his favour in the interest of social justice."

"At the same time, though the respondent is claiming restitution of conjugal rights, she has also made unsubstantiated allegations against the petitioner. As revealed from her evidence she is under the protection of police and she has filed some other cases against the petitioner, which are sub-judice. Therefore, allowing the prayer of restitution is not safe while the wife is not feeling secure in the house of the petitioner," it had ruled.

Vegetables sale to stop in city from Oct 20!

PNS BHUBANESWAR

The Vegetable Traders' Association has warned of stopping the sale of vegetables in the capital from October 20 protesting lack of a proper road for arrival of vegetable-laden vehicles to the Unit-I market here.

Association president Kabiraj Swain said the road leading to the Unit-I vegetable market has been occupied by a puja pandal, for which the vehicles carrying vegetables are unable to reach the market. It has forced the traders to carry vegetables to their shops from a long distance.

As the shopkeepers drew the attention of the Unit-I Traders' Association towards



the matter, they were advised to use another road located in a residential area in the vicinity. However, the residents opposed the movement of the vegetable-laden vehicles in the locality, he said.

In view of the issue, the association has decided to stop selling vegetables from October 20, he added.

Tiger census in Similipal begins

PNS BARIPADA

A tiger census commenced at the Similipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district on Tuesday and would continue till the end of this month, official sources said.

Similipal Tiger Reserve Director Dr Prakash Chand Gogineni said, "The census is being carried out in 173 beats of 16 ranges in the Tiger Reserve Project and Baripada, Rairangpur and Karanjia Forest Division areas. It will be held from 9 am to 4 pm everyday till October 31. Camera trapping will be done between November and January. Pugmarks and stool samples will be collected for DNA sampling. Eventually, all data will be submitted to the government in the form of a report."

Notably, confusion has been prevailing over the number of tigers in Similipal for the last



few years. Recently, national media had reported that Similipal housed 20 tigers.

On the other hand, the Forest Department has seized several tiger hides while it is yet to be ascertained whether those belong to the big cats of Similipal or not.

The ongoing census is expected to bring clarity over the number of tigers in Similipal.

'BJD not saviour but perpetrator of crimes against women'

NALINI SAHU BHUBANESWAR

The BJP on Tuesday came down heavily on the ruling BJD for rising atrocities against women in the State. The party said the womenfolk feels unsafe as some Ministers and BJD MLAs are found meting out heinous crimes against them.

"It's quite shocking that involvement of some ministers and MLAs in sexual exploitation of women have surfaced on many occasions. Besides, names of ruling party leaders have come up in mysterious deaths of some women and female children," said BJP spokesperson Sonali Sahoo.

Quoting a woman from Nimpara who recently alleged that she was coaxed by some BJD leaders to come to



the Bhubaneswar residence of former Minister Samir Ranjan Dash for some "special mind-fresh interactions," the BJP leader said this speaks how BJD leaders stoop low to satiate their sexual desire.

"Dharmendra Sahoo, a BJD

leader of Nimpara, was forced commit suicide as Samir Ranjan Dash literally coaxed his wife to have relationship with him," alleged Sahoo.

Sahoo also named BJD MLAs Srikanta Sahoo, Divya Shankar Mishra, Arun Sahoo,

Jyoti Pangigrahi, Braja Pradhan and Bijaya Shankar Das and said they have also committed crimes of various natures against women.

There was, however, no reaction from the BJD to Sahoo's charges.

In Khordha 5-yr-old boy dies as truck hits scooter

PNS KHORDHA

A five-year-old boy died and his mother was injured after a truck hit a scooter at Bhalibadi Chhack on National Highway-57 in Khordha district on Tuesday.

The deceased was identified as Binayak Das, an LKG student at a private school in Khordha town.

According to reports, Bajiyanti Das of Gandhi Padia was returning home along with her son from school by her scooter when a speeding tanker truck hit the two-wheeler from the rear..

While Bajiyanti sustained injuries after falling off the scooter, the truck ran over her son killing him on the spot.

Locals managed to catch the truck driver, who was trying to flee from the spot following the incident.

The injured woman was rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH), from where she was referred to Bhubaneswar.

The Town police seized the body of the boy and sent it for postmortem.

Later, irate locals staged a road blockade, demanding a speed breaker on the main road. Police rushed the spot and are trying to pacify the agitators to clear the road.

Puri king unveils 2-day Divya Sangam



PNS PURI

Puri King Dibyasingha Deb inaugurated a two-day spiritual celebration on Tuesday. Organised by Sri Gopinath Gaudiya Mutt, around five thousand spiritual leaders, practitioners, devotees and followers from several parts

of the world joined the religious conclave named as Divya Sngam.

President of Mutt Bodhyan Swami presided over the conclave. Religious exponents like Rohini Nandan Das, Suniti Nandan Das, Baman Swami and Barah Swami were on dais.

Divya Sangam was a transformative event marking the 125th appearance anniversary of Bhakti Pramod Puri Goswami and 150th advent

of Bhakisdhant Pravubud.

The objective of the event is to unite and honour the spiritual legacy of Sanatan Dharma which also aims to bring together diverse cults of Hinduism so as to achieve a larger goal of peace and universal fraternity in the ongoing war in middle-east.

UP CM Yogi Adityanath and Defence Minister Rajanath Singh who were to attend the concluding session, cancelled their visits due to elections in four States.

Integrated Teacher Edu Program begins at IIT BBS

PNS BHUBANESWAR

Students selected via National Common Entrance Test

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar has introduced a 4-year B.Sc.-B.Ed Integrated Teacher Education Program (ITEP) from the 2023-24 academic year.

The classes for the first batch of 50 students from different States of India commenced from October 17. The students were selected via National Common Entrance Test (NCET) conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

The IIT Bhubaneswar is one among the two IITs, including IIT Kharagpur, to start the



programme this year. The institute has offered the Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) with Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) in Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Economics. Students will complete their studies within a condensed timeframe of four years, unlike the conventional five-year duration mandated by the current B.Ed. curriculum.

To maximise the effectiveness of this new programme, separate interactive orientations were

held for the students, their parents and associated faculty. IIT, Bhubaneswar Director Prof Shreepad Karmalkar, along with experts, highlighted the unique features.

In contrast to students of other programmes, the assessment of ITEP students will include a component involving demonstration of teaching skills in all courses undergone by them. A majority of ITEP students are women though

there is no reservation for women in the programme.

ITEP is an initiative by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) under the Union Ministry of Education to ensure that outstanding students enter the teaching profession at the school level. ITEP will be available to all students who choose teaching as a profession after passing the exit examination of Higher Secondary (10+2) in

any discipline (Science/ Humanities/ Commerce/ Others). The primary objective of ITEP is to equip the teachers of tomorrow with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach students at the various stages of formal education following the revised educational framework outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020. A student undergoing this programme will be grounded in Indian values, languages, knowledge, ethos, tribal traditions and well versed in latest advances in education and pedagogy.

The ITEP at IIT Bhubaneswar includes various subjects like Art Education (performing and visual), Sanskrit Language and Yoga along with the core subjects.



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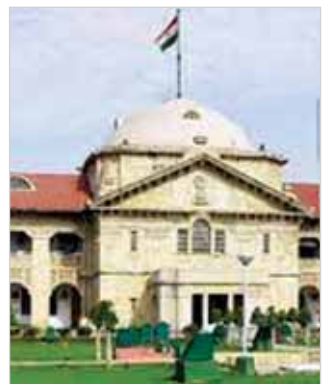
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PAPER WITH PASSION

Murder without killer

Nithari killing prime suspects win relief, justice for kin families goes abegging

This has become an intermittent habit with our justice delivery system, our judicial system and us as society. From Jessica to Arushi to now at least 19 underprivileged kids in the Nithari are of the NCR, there have been murders most foul discovered, but our learned courts at last tell us that the investigation does not prove that the suspects/accused did it. So they are let off with a rap on the knuckles. The investigators ---- transferred, promoted, retired or dead ---- face no accountability either. That seems to be the bane that has come to revisit us in the form of Allahabad HC's shocking decision on the Nithari murder accused, domestic help Surinder Koli and his master Moninder Singh Pandher. The incident, reported from Noida in 2005-06, took years for the horrifying details to come out. The Nithari murders were especially gruesome as they involved killing innocent children in cold blood; several dead bodies were recovered from a nearby drain. Many bodies had internal organs removed, hinting also at an organised organ racket. But a botched-up investigation along with loopholes in the judicial system made sure that the perpetrators could go scot-free. Though Koli and Pandher were found guilty in 2009, the High Court has recently overturned the guilty verdict ostensibly because of lack of evidence and the testimony of alleged witnesses.



In the annals of Indian criminal history, the Nithari serial killings stand as a chilling testament to the depths of human depravity. The case shocked the nation as young women and children fell victim to unimaginable brutality. The Nithari killings were a series of abductions, sexual assaults and murders. The victims disappeared without a trace, leaving their families in anguish and despair. As investigations progressed, the police unearthed gruesome evidence at the residence of Pandher and Koli. The house was a charnel house, revealing the ghastly remains of several missing persons. The CBI recovered many bodies and body parts from the nearby drain and it was thought that the case was foolproof against the prime suspects. But turns out that the scales of the blindfolded lady do not tilt equally for the influential and the underprivileged. Most victims were migrants from UP and Bihar, living on day's earnings and thus hardly had any say in the system or resources to pursue the case. The Nithari case is emblematic of the slow, convoluted and frustrating Indian justice system. The Nithari case is not just a local tragedy but a national shame. It epitomises the systemic issues that afflict India's criminal justice system, including lack of accountability, shortage of forensic resources and the inordinate delay in adjudication. It calls for immediate and comprehensive reforms within the Indian criminal justice system. Only then we can hope to prevent the travesty of justice from being repeated. This decision to acquit the prime suspects should stir society's collective conscience. If it does not, we are all as good as dead.

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PICTALK



Artisans prepare effigies of demon King Ravana ahead of the Dussehra festival, in Rampur

Hamas's resolve may survive IDF onslaught



ASHOK K MEHTA

Hamas pulled off Pearl Harbour and 9/11 combined, on October 7, which shows its mettle and motivation. Annihilating it will not be easy for Israeli Defence Forces

On this page last week, a colleague expressed misgivings about the Israeli Defence Forces' (IDF) resilience and wondered if the steel was blunted. No one has ever doubted the will, fighting prowess and potential of Israelis given their history of conflict, survival and incredible prosperity. Israel has almost similar experience in its conflicted history as our own: war on creation in 1948, a second bigger round in 1956 and full-fledged regional wars in 1967 and 1973.

IDF, like now, was caught with its pants down when Egyptians executed a cross-Suez offensive that hesitated allowing the counter-Canal riposte led by Ariel Sharon's Centurion Tank division and Squadron and Troop leaders like Chaim Erez and Benny Taran. In the 1973 war on the Syrian front, the hero was Avigdor Kahalani who later became Mayor of Tel Aviv and Minister of National Security. His book Heights of Courage is a prescribed reading for the Israeli military. He was worshipped by Armoured Corps officers who used to take a second oath near Mount Hermon on Golan Heights where a UN Indian Mechanised force is currently located.

And who will not remember Moshe Dayan, the toast of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and Commander of Jerusalem Front? He became a legend: his eyepatch was replaced with the Jaffa orange in an ad proclaiming The Best. I was privileged to know Kahalani, Erez and Taran, all Armoured Corps, the sword in desert terrain. With the last two, we spent year-long training and friendship at Fort Leavenworth, US and Belgravia, UK. I visited Israel before India formally recognized it in January 1992. That travel is etched as the journey that commenced in Cairo where the Yom Kippur War was conceived. The taxi was driven by a retired Artillery Lieutenant Colonel from the Egyptian Army. We crossed the Suez and drove through Sinai still littered with debris from the 1967 and 1973 wars. The drive was punctuated with a vanquished Veteran's narration of victory turned into defeat. In 1991,



Israel had a string of pearls of UN/EU Peacekeeping Forces. Most are still there - Lebanon, Syria and Jerusalem. Before entering Israel on the border with Egypt, we were welcomed by Lt Gen Johannes Van Ginkle, the Dutch Force Commander of the EU PeaceKeepers. He like I was an Erez admirer who we were going to meet after nearly 20 years since Fort Leavenworth. Since then, I have been in Israel more than a dozen times including attending uninterrupted since 2010, the annual International Institute of Counter Terrorism conference in Herzilya till COVID paused it. So, I think I know the IDF pretty well. For anyone doubting its combat strength is a strategic error. Israel has signed peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt and the Oslo Accord in 1993. The most recent is the Abrams Accord which hopes to improve Israel's relations with Arab states. Except with Iran, Syria and Lebanon, there is peace including efforts to mend ties with Saudi Arabia. Since 1973, no Arab country has challenged de facto nuclear Israel. Tel Aviv is fighting internal wars against non-state actors Hezbollah in Lebanon, Islamic Jihad and Hamas which has been mis-governed since 2007 Gaza is the periodic source of Hamas rocketry against Israel.



ISRAEL HAS SIGNED PEACE TREATIES WITH JORDAN AND EGYPT AND THE OSLO ACCORD IN 1993. THE MOST RECENT IS THE ABRAMS ACCORD WHICH HOPES TO IMPROVE ISRAEL'S RELATIONS WITH ARAB STATES

The West Bank, which was infiltrated by Islamic State last year, has opened a third front for the IDF where more than 300 Palestinians and 50 Israelis have been killed this year. But Hezbollah appears to be only shadowboxing. Iran is external enemy no 1. Both Iran and Israel have vowed to destroy each other and do not recognize the other's right to exist. Iran backs Syria, Lebanon and Gaza. Hamas has a stockpile of 130,000 rockets and missiles. It was only in 2012 that their accuracy improved and Israel decry the Iron Dome whose launch I witnessed. It is an expensive antidote to missiles but can distinguish which missile will hit populated areas. Its discrimination capacity makes it valuable. The current ground offensive against Hamas will be the fifth large-scale operation with the first launched in 2008 after Hamas took control of Gaza. Similarly, Israel has invaded Lebanon thrice - in 1978, 1982 and 2006. IDF has failed to deter Hamas and diminish Hezbollah. Its punitive strikes only degrade capability till their next rocket attack. This time IDF is tasked to permanently destroy Hamas and rescue the 199 hostages hidden in an underground web of tunnels. This cordon and search operation can take months and become an abattoir. Taran says the

operation is not the reoccupation of Gaza. Israel is known to have exchanged 1,200 Palestinian prisoners for one soldier. Iran says Hamas will release hostages if air attacks cease. Ultimately the safety of hostages will constrain operations with IDF fighting on enemy terrain. Hamas's daring incursion into Israel is a brilliant strategy but the barbarity and brutality of tactics shaming Chengis Khan. Hamas achieved total surprise and horrendous gains. This time they did 9/11 and Pearl Harbour combined, inflicting on Israel their highest losses since the Yom Kippur war. It has already become the world's largest man-made humanitarian catastrophe that you and I watch on TV. But no one can stop the mauled Israelis from retaliation and the IDF from wreaking retribution by reducing Gaza to the stone age. Fingers crossed the Gaza Front does not spark Lebanon and the West Bank. IDF may destroy Hamas's capability to fight; but not its will to fight another day. (The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SWINE FEVER OUTBREAK IN MANIPUR

Sir—The Manipur's Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Department has confirmed an outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF) in the state, with the Pig Farm of the Central Agriculture University (CAU) in Imphal West District declared as the 'epicenter' of this contagious disease. Measures have been taken to prevent, control, and eradicate the infectious disease, including prohibiting the movement of pigs from the affected areas.

Reports indicate that ASF might have been introduced through pigs or pork from neighboring countries like Myanmar and Bangladesh. The outbreak has already caused significant damage to the region's pork industry, affecting thousands of families and causing financial losses. The northeastern region's annual pork business is substantial, and this outbreak poses a severe threat to the livelihoods of many. **Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai**

IN BAD TASTE

Sir—MakeMyTrip's recent advertisement, aimed at Pakistan cricket fans during the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023, has faced backlash for its lack of sensitivity. The ad begins with an "Open Invitation to Pakistani Fans," encouraging them to put aside rivalries when visiting India. It goes on to offer discounts based on Pakistan's performance: a 50% discount if they lose by 10 wickets or 200 runs, with the code "BoysPlayedWell"; a 30% discount for a 6-wicket or 100-run loss, using the code "EkShaheenHaar"; and a 10% discount for a 3-wicket or 50-run loss with the code "NoMaukaMauka." India has a historical record of victories over Pakistan in World Cup matches, having won in 1992, 1996, 1999, 2003, 2011, 2015, and 2019. Nevertheless, the ad has faced criticism for its tone and the way it ridicules the Pakistani team. **Manzur Hasan | Howrah**



Two distinct eras

The four decades before and after 1990 mark two distinct eras in India, accompanied by differing social and economic philosophies. The 1950s represented a shift from agricultural deficiencies, with the Green Revolution transforming India from a nation living hand-to-mouth to a self-sufficient one. The Nehruite philosophy emphasized technology, economic growth, and progress, leading to the

establishment of the first IIT before the nation's first general elections. The present day reflects a thriving middle-class that emerged from this transformation and ushered in the era of aspirational India. While the 1990s witnessed economic liberalisation, the current leadership is focused on leveraging India's political and economic standing. This progress has, however, led to social strain and disproportionate wealth distribution, exacerbated by jobless growth from disruptive technologies. The next generation of leaders faces the challenge of optimising multiple factors, using technology to promote inclusiveness and bridge socio-political divides. This requires statesmen with vision and foresight, and it's essential to trust in India's ability to produce such leadership through the electoral process. **R Narayanan | Mumbai**

CHECK ELECTION SOPS

Sir—Election dates have been announced for five states. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar has pointed out that freebies offered by political parties have a "tadka" of populism, and voters have every right to ask the parties how they intend to fulfill these promises if elected to power. He is correct, and the promises made by these parties are often extravagant, unrealistic, and outright absurd. However, these promises are still made because there are certain sections of society that are susceptible to such grandiose assurances. As long as there are segments of the population ready to be exploited, there will be political parties willing to offer free rations, direct money transfers to women's accounts, monthly cash incentives for women, free electricity up to a certain unit consumption, specific annual allocations of free

gas cylinders, and the list goes on. It appears that the Election Commission (EC) can do little to curb this practice. So, who else can put an end to this unsavory practice? The courts, of course. Politicians find courts easy to approach and convenient to evade the issue, which would otherwise be their own responsibility. The Supreme Court had, on a previous occasion, criticized the "freebie culture," noting that offering freebies disrupts the level playing field in an election, with the party making such promises standing to gain. The Supreme Court suggested the formation of a committee of experts to address this issue. Indeed the country must decide a policy on freebies that are offered by the political parties so that there is no confusion on the issue. **Ganapathi Bhat | Akola**

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Development census serves our goals better

A census on the educational and professional profiles of citizens would help the government devise policies to plug in gaps that impede our development



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

Even though scientifically we are one species of Homo sapiens, human beings continue to show discrimination based on religion, race and caste. It's a shame for our country in particular and humanity as a whole when people kill each other in the name of caste, religion and race in different parts of the country. Most of the so-called developed countries have reached the level that we see today as they were able to do away with this social mischief. Unfortunately, in our country caste is a dominating player in our social set-up. To preserve the dignity of one's caste even parents are killing their children who try to move away from the clutches of caste rules. People make relationships, friendships and even helping hands based on caste factors. The caste system that we see today was initiated during the post-Vedic period when more rigid 'Jathis' emerged from the varnas. Around the 6th century BCE, religious movements led by figures like Buddha and Mahavira challenged the hierarchical nature of the caste system.



However, the colonial British rule, as part of their policy of divide and rule, reinstated the social divisions. They introduced census operations that classified people into various castes and communities. This had the effect of reinforcing existing social divisions. The great spiritual philosopher from Kerala Sree Narayana Guru advised people to follow the "one caste, one religion, one god" philosophy for the betterment of humanity. Unfortunately, even in his home state, no one is following this in true spirit. The Christian missionaries who converted native people on the belief that Christianity does not follow a caste system and gives respect to everyone are also bereft of a culture of oneness. Few Christian sects in Kerala are more fanatic than any other community in

the country. It seems that caste is a deeply ingrained aspect of Indian society, its reflection can be seen in every religious group in the country. Even after 75 years of independence despite efforts to dismantle the formal caste system through legal means, caste-based discrimination and social stratification continue to be significant challenges in contemporary India. It is at this juncture, that the demand by the opposition parties in "INDIA" pushing for a nationwide caste census comes as a retrogressive step. What do our political parties expect from this? Do they want to reinstate the caste sentiments in the mindset of our youngsters? Are they promoting the historical wrongs our predecessors have done and want our youngsters to fight against one another along caste lines? Are they not interested in seeing our country as a developed nation? Politicians should not play petty electoral politics by fooling people. What is the ultimate objective of pushing for a caste census? If it is for the upliftment of a community/ caste by providing reser-

ervations, previous experience shows that it has failed miserably as the community that receives reservations remains backwards even today. What is the use of giving reservations to the children of government servants based on caste lines? Government support can be provided for one generation for their upliftment. There is no meaning in providing reservations to the next generation, as these people have been lifted from the marginalized category. Many communities that had been the dominant earlier are becoming marginalized now. Irrespective of caste, governments should support every citizen who is marginalized based on their financial status. Instead of a caste-based census, our political parties should take steps to conduct a census on the educational profile and professional profiles of citizens. This can help devise policy measures to identify gaps that impede our development. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

SPIRITUAL LITERACY IS A MUST

Our real enemies are not our rivals but suspicion, fear, hatred and violence



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ

It's a proven fact today that disharmony in human relations gives rise to not only wars but to almost all other problems directly or indirectly related to us. The phenomenon of split in families, the rising number of cases of divorces, and even most of the psycho-somatic diseases which are caused by stress or mental tension are due to disharmony in human relations only and nothing else. In the past few days, we all have witnessed how extreme conflict between 2 countries over a border issue resulted in a mass exodus of people from their homeland as well as deaths of innocent people in massive bombings during night time. Hence one cannot deny the fact that the forces that are leading to the disintegration of nations, communities and political parties crop up primarily from disharmony. Most problems of law & order and even the commotions and disturbances in major Legislatures also are due to disharmony in relations between political parties or various linguistic groups, religious communities, etc. It is, thus, very much essential to find a solution to eliminate this problem lest it will eliminate us. But what is the way out? How does one move ahead? Well! It is quite clear from some of the examples that have been given of the world-events that these problems are mainly the creations of our minds, our attitudes and our negative thinking. Hence, to create harmony, we need to first of all disarm our minds to dismantle the forces of disharmony. It is estimated that world over approximately two trillion dollars are spent every year by various countries on what is called 'Defence' or 'Security' and yet it's quite surprising that insecurity is increasing rather than decreasing. What's more saddening is that all the diversion of resources to war purposes deprives the poorer sections of society of the help that they need or deserve. In this respect, it is essential to redefine security and to break the link between security and military force. We need to understand that our security lies not in an armed state of readiness for war but in friendliness, love and peace with others.



Our real enemies are not men and women but suspicion, fear, hatred, violence and feeling of revenge and these enemies cannot be eliminated by military means. It has, therefore, rightly been said in the Gita: 'Arjuna, the soul is its own best friend and it is its own worst enemy'. A deep study of the history of human civilization would reveal that presently, there are prevalent certain wrong beliefs that have led us to this kind of a negative culture, negative lifestyle and negative attitudes, one of these wrong beliefs is that there has always been disharmony in the world and there was no time in the history of mankind when there was total harmony. If that were so, then why today do we have a greater number of wars that are more devastating and which result in mass killings? Why are we today inventing more and more deadly weapons? It shows that there was a time in the distant past when there were less and less wars and there was also the earliest era which was free from all kinds of disharmony. Thus, there must have been a time when the world population was small, the environment was clean and there were no wars and people lived in amity and peace. Such an era was known as the Golden Age. That was the time when there was Universal Harmony. It is that new world which we wish to usher in again. And, we want those attitudes and that thinking which can restore harmony in human relations. So, how can we bring about that change? It's very simple, for that we need to realize that most of our problems arise from our spiritual illiteracy which has to be eradicated. If, therefore, we can get rid of this kind of illiteracy and have a new lease of consciousness beyond war and enmity, then we can open to a new paradise, otherwise, we will end in eternal darkness.

(The writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist; views are personal)

State doles can put discoms at risk



UTTAM GUPTA

Discoms will be profitable only when they are unshackled from state controls and electricity distribution is deregulated



Even as the Central government is making all-out efforts to remove the financial distress of power distribution companies or discoms (situated at the core of the power supply chain, they procure electricity from power generating companies or genscos and distribute it to the consumers) and restore them to robust health, actions of the state governments undermine these efforts. The financial distress of discoms arises fundamentally due to their inability to generate enough revenue to pay for the electricity they buy. For over two decades, they have been incurring losses year after year. They have funded these losses by borrowings from banks and other FIs apart from keeping bills pending. At the end of FY 2021-22, their total debt was Rs 620,000 crore. Discoms' inability to generate required revenue has to do primarily with two factors viz. aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses - a jargon for power theft - and shortfall in the average revenue realization from the sale of electricity vis-a-vis the average cost of supply (cost of purchase, wheeling and distribution), or the ACS-ARR gap. During 2020-21, AT&C losses were 22.32 percent while the ACS-ARR gap was Rs 0.54 per kWh. Both maladies arise due to constant meddling in the running of discoms by their owners namely the state governments. Power theft on such a massive scale is unthinkable without the complicity of the political establishment. People living in slum settlements/jhuggi clusters being a big vote bank, the party in power encourages unauthorized connections to enable their access to free power. As for the second malady, the political brass orders discoms to sell a major slice of electricity to households (HHs) and farmers, either at a fraction of the cost of supply or even free (the state electricity regulatory commissions or SERCs which are mandated to fix tariff merely act as rubber stamps). Even as the state government promises to reimburse the differential amount to discoms, most states don't reimburse or do it partially and after considerable delay.



REPORTEDLY, MORE THAN 100,000 METERS HAVE BEEN BIFURCATED OR TRIFURCATED ENABLING EVEN HIGH-END CONSUMERS TO AVAIL OF THE FREE BONANZA

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

Given nearly a quarter of the revenue lost due to power theft and a substantial amount in subsidies remaining unpaid, the financial stress of discoms is inevitable. The politics of freebies now deeply entrenched in the system has exacerbated the already grim situation. Let us look at the developments in Punjab. Last year, amongst a host of freebies promised by AAP the most prominent was free electricity to households (HHs) for consumption up to 300 units per month. Going by sheer common sense, the State should give help only to those HHs who can't afford to pay cost-based tariffs. The way to go is to identify households whose income is below a threshold. AAP hasn't gone by this. Could it be presumed that only low-income HHs have consumption of fewer than 300 units? So, in essence, the assistance reaches only to those who can't afford it. A closer scrutiny would reveal that the approach adopted by the AAP government is mischievous. Its real intent was to give the dole to 'all and sundry'. If a household consumes less than 300 units a month, it doesn't necessarily follow that it is a family with low income. For instance, there would be umpteen number of well-off/high-income old-age couples living alone who consume less than 300 units a month. Even for others, who consume more than this threshold, we see a dastardly trend of consumers applying for multiple connections within the same HH. For instance, a household consuming 900 units a month, gets three meters installed to keep consumption of each under 300 units thereby ensuring zero bill. Reportedly, more than 100,000 meters have been bifurcated or trifurcated enabling even high-end consumers to avail of the free bonanza. As a consequence, cur-

rently almost over 95 per cent of power consumers in Punjab avail of subsidies. The swelling number of connections has increased the subsidy by Rs 125 crore per month on average. As a result, the total domestic subsidy for the current FY is now expected to be Rs 8,813 crore - Rs 1,500 crore higher than the initial estimate of Rs 7,313 crore. In Delhi, where there is no charge for HHs consuming up to 200 units (HHs consuming between 200 and 400 units get a deduction of Rs 800 from their bill), the possibility of the majority of households availing of access to electricity - free of any charge - is not ruled out. The situation in other states won't be different. Given almost the entire population of the State - including the rich, millionaires, billionaires and so on, getting to enjoy the free bonanza, the burden of power subsidy is bound to gallop. Faced with budget constraints, the states will take increasing recourse to underpayment and delayed reimbursement of subsidy dues to discoms. Meanwhile, the Centre is dealing with discoms under a two-pronged strategy (i) forcing them to make timely payments and (ii) helping them cut AT&C losses and reduce the ACS-ARR gap. Under (i), it implemented late payment surcharge (LPS) and related matters Rules, in 2022. The LPS rules made it mandatory for discoms to clear their legacy dues as existing on June 3, 2022, in a time-bound manner in 12 equal monthly instalments (EMI) with the benefit of non-applicability of the LPS after its implementation date. The same rules are also provided for time-bound clearance of current dues failing, which will attract a power supply cut. The pressure tactics have worked. The legacy dues of all stakeholders in the electricity supply chain viz.

power generating companies (genscos) and transmission companies (transcos) from discoms decreased from Rs 1,39,747 crore in June 2022 to Rs 69,957 crore in July 2023. Faced with the threat of LPS, the latter could have used loans taken from PFC and REC (out of Rs 130,000 crore sanctioned under 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan') to make payments to the former. As for (ii), under the 'Reforms-Linked, Result-Based Scheme for Distribution' (RLRBS) launched in July 2021, the Centre has undertaken a massive investment of Rs 300,000 crore to improve the reliability and quality of the power supply and enhance the efficiency of discoms. It has compulsory pre-paid and smart metering components to be implemented across the power supply chain, including in about 250 million households. The Scheme has yielded results. The AT&C losses of discoms have gone down from 22.32 per cent during 2020-21 to 13.5 per cent during 2022-23. The ACS-ARR gap has also reduced from Rs 0.54 per kWh during 2020-21 to Rs 0.15 per kWh in 2022-23. A 9 per cent cut in AT&C losses is a stupendous achievement. It seems that pre-paid and smart meters have been installed, and power theft is almost eliminated. The Centre is keen that the ACS-ARR gap should be reduced to 'zero' by March 2025. This will require making power theft 'nil' and timely recovery of all subsidy dues from the States. But, this won't be possible if states continue with business as usual; it could even lead to erosion of the gains made in 2022-23. Modi's efforts would deliver only when (a) discoms are unshackled from state controls; (b) States give subsidies directly to the beneficiaries and (c) electricity distribution is deregulated.

The Israel-Hamas war: Where does India stand?

India's diplomatic stance, which supports a two-state solution, may necessitate a revision in light of the evolving dynamics of the conflict

When the global economy is reeling under the crisis, the current geopolitical crisis in the Middle East has doubly heightened the level of inflation. This crisis emerged following the unexpected offensive launched by the Hamas against Israel, which subsequently led to Israel declaring war. Since Israel is a significant trading partner for India, the effects could be escalating. With sheer surprise, the week-end's unexpected strike by Hamas on Israel has triggered a huge armed war in the Middle East. More than 2300 people have been killed in the fighting so far, and hundreds more have been held prisoners. Israeli Prime Minister has warned of a harsh response, so the situation is unlikely to



UTTAM CHAKRABORTY

(Chakraborty is HoD-Digital Marketing and associate professor at the School of Management, Presidency University Bangalore; views are personal)

improve very soon. In this context, India, one of Israel's oldest and greatest allies, has expressed its support for the Jewish state and has pledged to assist in the time of crisis. India's Prime Minister has timely expressed shock and condemnation of the terror incident. Inflation throughout the world is possible if the terror attack and retaliation between Israel and Palestine escalate into a full-scale war. This might be economically comparable to the beginning of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. **Consequences on India's Trading** At present, Israel is India's third-largest Asian trading partner and India's 10th-largest trade partner globally. Military trade between India

and Israel is valued at approximately Rs 74,000 crore, making it the second largest supplier of military equipment to India after Russia. India's goods exports to Israel constitute 1.8% of India's overall exports, mostly driven by the sale of petroleum products. Israel imports between \$5.5 to 6 billion worth of refined petroleum products from India. During the fiscal year 2023, the aggregate value of India's exports to Israel amounted to \$8.4 billion. Hence, there exists a significant likelihood of rupee devaluation, necessitating intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). In such a scenario, the currency range is expected to increase to the ₹83-84 bracket. In contrast, India engages in the importation of equip-

ment, pearls, diamonds, and other valuable gemstones, including both precious and semi-precious varieties, from Israel. Israel's primary exports to India are the essential materials and machinery used in India's major industries and factories, such as precious stones and metals, electronic equipment, fertilisers, machines, engines, pumps, medical and technical equipment, organic and inorganic chemicals, salt, sulphur, stone, cement, and plastics. Currently, Israel exports items and equipment to India valued at more than \$3 billion. If bilateral commerce between the two nations is halted due to the terror strikes and the conflict, India might miss out on commodities worth Rs 25,000

crore, resulting in a surge in the prices of several common household items. The ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas has caused a sense of unease in financial markets worldwide, leading investors to redirect their investments towards safe-haven assets. Investors maintain a cautious stance and exhibit vigilance in response to global developments, as a risk-averse mentality pervades the market. Investors may tend to exercise caution when considering high-risk ventures. **Indian stock market** Last week, the Indian stock market had a notable decline, along with the performance of other global stock indexes. This decline was influenced by the unexpected multifaceted assault carried out by the ter-

rorist group Hamas, involving land, air, and sea operations, resulting in the loss of more than 1,000 lives in Israel. The aforementioned trend has resulted in an escalation of geopolitical tensions, accompanied by an increase in crude oil prices and heightened volatility in global stock markets. **Only predictions** There are only predictions with conclusions. The right-wing politics in Israel and Palestine exhibit a disinclination towards embracing compromise. This hinders the process of negotiation. India's diplomatic stance, which supports a two-state solution, may necessitate a revision in light of the evolving dynamics of the conflict. Indian citizens stuck in Israel may need to be

evacuated as quickly as possible to avert loss of lives. The Indian diaspora residing in these nations may also experience repercussions in their life. In the context of the broader Israel-Palestine conflict, India has always advocated for a peaceful resolution that upholds the rights of all involved parties. The persistent war has resulted in heightened geopolitical tensions. The attainment of a peaceful resolution of the issue necessitates the collaborative endeavours of the global community. A balanced approach is of utmost importance, as it not only facilitates the cultivation of positive ties with Arab nations but also ensures a productive and meaningful interaction with them.

Belgian cops shoot suspect accused of killing two Swedes

AP ■ BRUSSELS
Police on Tuesday shot dead a suspected Tunisian extremist accused of gunning down two Swedish soccer fans in a brazen assault on a Brussels street that sent shockwaves through Belgium and Sweden.
Hours after the suspect disappeared into the night and a manhunt was launched in the Belgian capital, Interior Minister Annelies Verlinden posted on X, formerly Twitter, that “the perpetrator of the terrorist attack in Brussels has been identified and has died.”
She thanked Belgium’s intelligence and security services, as well as prosecutors, “for their swift and decisive action.”
The man was shot in the Schaerbeek neighbourhood near where the rampage took place. The weapon used in the assault was recovered.
Amateur videos posted on social media of Monday’s attack showed a man wearing an orange fluorescent vest pull up on a scooter, take out a large weapon and open fire on people getting out of a taxi.
He chased them into a building to gun them down. He was also filmed calmly loading his weapon as cars drove slowly by.
Questions remain unanswered over how a man who was on police files, thought to be radicalised and being sought for deportation was able to obtain a military weapon and launch such an attack.
“Last night, three people left for what was supposed to be a wonderful soccer party. Two of them lost their lives in a brutal terrorist attack,” Prime Minister Alexander De Croo said at a news conference just before dawn. “Their lives were cut short in full flight, cut down by extreme brutality.”
“The attack that was launched yesterday was committed with total cowardice,” he said. Security was beefed up in

EU leaders seek harmony at virtual summit

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

AP ■ BRUSSELS
He insisted that it would be the main common message coming out of the summit.
On Tuesday, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz travelled to Israel for an impromptu visit. French President Emmanuel Macron said that he will travel to the region “as soon as I consider that we have a useful agenda and very concrete actions to drive forward.”
Few other international crises divide the bloc like the Israel-Palestinian conflict.
Just last week in the wake of the Hamas attack, a commissioner at the bloc’s executive branch announced that development aid meant to help the Palestinian Authority reduce poverty would be immediately suspended. Hours later, the European Commission’s position changed. It announced an urgent review of the assistance to ensure that no money is being misused. Since it is listed by the EU as a terror group, Hamas does not receive any such funds anyway.
Then on Saturday, the commission said it was tripling humanitarian aid to Gaza - money meant to be used in times of crises or disasters.
Macron, a key player in Tuesday’s summit, said that beyond supporting Israel’s right to defend itself, he also has been able “to pass on warning messages calling for respect for humanitarian law, international law and civilian populations in Gaza and the West Bank, and for non-escalation of the conflict in Lebanon.”
“We remain extremely vigilant and committed,” he added.
EU Council President Charles Michel said in announcing the summit that “the conflict could have major security consequences for our societies.” He said that the leaders would look at ways to help civilians in Israel and Gaza caught up in the war and to work with other countries in the Middle East and Persian Gulf regions to try to prevent the conflict from spreading.

The European Union leaders are trying to overcome the cacophony of different opinions and voices over the Israel-Hamas war into one single political hymn in an attempt to have a bigger diplomatic impact on the global stage.
Even if their summit on Tuesday is by virtual video conferencing only, the attack in Brussels that left two Swedes dead last night further underscored the need to show a unified stance in the face of common threats.
Ever since the attack of Hamas on Israel on October 7, the EU has shown it is a group of 27 different nations and even their common institutions have sent out different messages, sowing confusion about the bloc’s intentions and reaping international criticism.
Many member states feel that EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen overstepped her authority by visiting Israel on Friday without a pre-agreed political message and then toed what many saw as an excessively pro-Israeli line.
“Foreign and security policy remains a responsibility of the member states,” EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said Tuesday ahead of the virtual summit. Von der Leyen’s executive Commission maintains she is free to travel as she wants and express solidarity with a nation in need as she pleases, and will do so again if need be. Still, the unease was compounded because, for some, an EU insistence that Israel respect international law in its fight against Hamas was not expressed explicitly enough by von der Leyen.
“The position is clear: Israel has the right to defense, but this defense has to be developed in compliance with international laws and in particular humanitarian laws - because war also has its laws,” Borrell said.



In this photo released by an official website of the office of the Iranian supreme leader, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei speaks in a meeting in Tehran, Iran, Tuesday. Khamenei warned that Israel’s continuing offensive in Gaza would cause a violent reaction across the region.

MOTHER OF ISRAELI WOMAN HELD BY HAMAS APPEALS FOR HER RELEASE

Jerusalem (AP): The mother of a young Israeli woman held by Hamas appealed for her release on Tuesday, calling the seizure of some 200 hostages by the Palestinian militant group “a crime against humanity.” A day earlier, Hamas’ military wing released a video showing a dazed Mia Schem, 21, having her arm wrapped with bandages. It was the first sign of life from any of the hostages since Gaza-based gunmen smashed through border fortifications on October 7, killing more than 1,400 people in Israel. “I didn’t know if she’s dead or alive until yesterday,” her mother, Keren Schem, said at a news conference. “All I knew is that she might be kidnapped. I’m begging the world to bring my baby back home. She only went to a party, to a festival party to have some fun. Now she’s in Gaza.” Mia Schem was seized at a desert rave just over the border from Gaza that became the site of what is believed to be the worst civilian massacre in Israeli history.

Medics in Gaza struggle to save lives

AP ■ GAZA CITY
For hours and hours, Moen Abu Aish digs through the rubble of demolished homes to find survivors of Israeli airstrikes, toiling in a vast and desperate search complicated by the shortage of critical supplies and the sheer scope of destruction across the Gaza Strip.
Even as rescue worker Abu Aish, 58, and his colleagues struggle to pry lifeless bodies from the concrete and twisted metal where residential towers once stood, the death toll keeps rising.
Gaza’s Health Ministry has reported that Israel’s bombardment - launched after Hamas mounted a bloody, unprecedented attack on Israel on Oct 7 - has killed more than 2,700 Palestinians, many of them women and children.
But far more Palestinians have been killed than have been officially reported, with 1,200 people, among them around 500 minors, believed to be trapped under the rubble awaiting rescue, or recovery,



health authorities said. They based their estimates on distress calls they received.
“So many times medics say they hear victims scream, but they cannot do anything about it,” said Mohammed Abu Selmia, general director of Shifa Hospital, Gaza’s biggest medical centre. The untold scores of victims buried beneath destroyed buildings shed light on the struggles of rescue teams in Gaza trying to save lives, while cut off from the internet and mobile networks, running out of fuel and exposed to unceasing

Palestinian Civil Defence, which provides emergency service, his voice cracking as he fought back tears.
“Where are the Arab countries? Where is the rest of the world? We are begging you, please, save us from this madness.”
At dawn Monday, Israeli warplanes struck the headquarters of the Civil Defense in Gaza City, killing seven paramedics as they prepared for a rescue mission, the Interior Ministry said. In widely shared videos of the aftermath, medics, shellshocked and exhausted, crouched on the back of their blood-smeared ambulance with their heads in their hands. “They targeted a centre for ambulances,” one of them cried out, his voice frantic.
“There are no weapons. There are no militants. There is nothing, nothing but civilians.” The Israeli military didn’t immediately comment on the airstrike, but has alleged in the past that Hamas militants use hospitals and rescue services as protective cover.

‘Alleged attacker in French school stabbing declared allegiance to IS’



Paris: France’s anti-terror prosecutor said Tuesday a suspected Islamic extremist declared allegiance to the Islamic State group before fatally stabbing a teacher in school attack last week.
The prosecutor, Jean-Francois Ricard, said, in a press conference, an audio recording was found by police investigators in the suspect’s phone. In it, the alleged attacker declared allegiance to the Islamic State and expressed “his hatred of France.”
Ricard took no questions.
A teacher was fatally stabbed in the neck and three other people injured in the school attack Friday in the northern town of Arras. AP

Legal challenge to dethrone Zulu king heads to court

Johannesburg (AP): The battle for the throne of South Africa’s ethnic Zulu nation has reached the courts as a faction of the royal family seeks to dethrone the king after less than a year. The North Gauteng High Court in the capital Pretoria is hearing legal arguments this week in the royal succession battle between King Misuzulu kaZwelithini and his half-brother, Prince Simakade Zulu, who believes he is entitled to be king. The Zulu nation is the largest ethnic group in South Africa with an estimated 12 million Zulu-speaking people, predominantly in the KwaZulu-Natal region.
They are acknowledged for resisting British colonialism in the early 1800s and the Zulu king is arguably the most influential traditional leader in South Africa. Prince Simakade wants the court to overturn President Cyril Ramaphosa’s recognition of King Misuzulu as the rightful heir. He is disputing the traditional and legal processes followed to appoint Misuzulu, and his lawyers have told the

Polish election winner urges prez to move quickly to form new govt

AP ■ WARSAW
The opposition leader who won Poland’s parliamentary election, Donald Tusk, appealed to the nation’s president Tuesday for “energetic and fast decisions” so that a new government could be formed quickly.
Three opposition parties that vowed to restore democratic standards in Poland together won over 54 per cent of the votes in the nation’s weekend parliamentary election, putting them in a position to take power, according to a complete ballot count reported Tuesday. Poland’s constitution now requires President Andrzej Duda to assess the new political alignment of forces and to appoint a new prime minister who is tasked with forming a government that will need parliament’s approval, all within a set timeframe.
In a video statement, Tusk appealed to Duda, saying, “I would like to ask for energetic and quick decisions” and stress-



ing that “the winning democratic parties are ready to take over responsibility for governing the country any moment.”
“People are waiting for the first decisions that will be the result of the elections” that took place Sunday, Tusk said.
Duda is an ally of the conservative Law and Justice party, which has been in power since 2015. His term runs until 2025.
Law and Justice, which governed the country for eight

turbulent years, won slightly over 35 per cent of the votes, making it the single party with the most votes. But the party and its leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski lost their majority in parliament and appeared to have no way to hold onto power.
Turnout was nearly 75 per cent, the highest since Poland’s return to democracy, surpassing even the level of 63 per cent in 1989, a vote that triggered

Greta Thunberg among detained climate activists

London (AP): Greta Thunberg was detained by British police on Tuesday alongside other climate activists who gathered outside a central London hotel to disrupt a meeting of oil and gas company executives. Thunberg was among dozens of protesters who chanted “only money out” and attempted to block access to the InterContinental Hotel on Park Lane, which is hosting the Energy Intelligence Forum.
The conference is hosting speakers, including the chief executives of Saudi Arabia’s Aramco and Norway’s Equinor, as well as the UK’s energy security minister.
An Associated Press photographer saw Thunberg being led away by officers and taken into a police vehicle, along with about 10 other activists.
Earlier Tuesday, London’s Metropolitan Police said five people were arrested on suspicion of obstructing a highway during the protest.
Protesters attempted to block access to the conference venue by sitting on the sidewalk by the entrance. They held aloft banners and chanted “only money out” and “cancel the conference,” while some lit yellow and pink smoke flares.
Greenpeace activists absented down from the roof of the hotel to unfurl a banner reading “make big oil pay.”
The protesters accuse fossil fuel companies of deliberately slowing the global energy transition to renewables in order to make more profit.
“The world is drowning in fossil fuels. Our hopes and dreams and lives are being washed away by a flood of greenwashing and lies,” Thunberg told reporters before she was detained. “It has been clear for decades that the fossil fuel industries were well aware of the consequences of their business models, and yet they have done nothing.” “We cannot let this continue. The elite of the oil and money conference, they have no intention of transition,” she added.
“We have no other option but to put our bodies outside this conference and to physically disrupt. And we have to do that every time, we have to continue showing them that they are not going to get away with this.”

Sikh teen assaulted in NY for wearing turban

New York (PTI): In a suspected hate crime, a 19-year-old Sikh was assaulted and injured in New York for wearing a turban while travelling in a shuttle bus, the police said.
The attack took place early on Sunday when the Sikh teen was riding a shuttle bus in Queens, a borough of New York City, CBS News channel reported.
According to the police, the suspect approached the victim, asking him to remove his turban and said, “We don’t wear that in this country and take that mask off!” The attacker then repeatedly punched the teen in his face, back, and the back of his head, causing minor cuts. He also tried to remove the victim’s turban from his head before getting off the bus and leaving the scene on foot, the report said. Police described the suspect as “a male, 25-35 years of age, dark complexion, slim

Amazon to battle fake reviews

AP ■ NEW YORK
Some of the most used platforms for travel and online shopping said Tuesday they’re going to team up to battle fake reviews. Amazon, reviews site Glassdoor and Trustpilot as well as travel companies Expedia Group, Booking.com and Tripadvisor said in an announcement they’re launching a coalition that aims to protect access to “trustworthy consumer reviews” worldwide.
The companies said the members of the group, which will be called Coalition for Trusted Reviews, will look for best practices for hosting online reviews and share methods on how to detect fake ones.
That will include developing standards for what constitutes a fake review and sharing information about how bad actors operate.
Phony reviews have long plagued online marketplaces despite their efforts to eradi-

cate it. Much of the problem is fueled by brokers who solicit fake customer reviews through social media platforms, encrypted messaging apps and other channels in exchange for money, free items or other benefits. Brokers can solicit positive reviews to boost sales for businesses or sellers. They can also solicit negative reviews for competitors in order to tank their sales.
Last month, Amazon said two review brokers in China were sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison and three years of probation after using messaging apps to advertise and sell fake reviews to Amazon selling accounts.
The company has filed a flurry of other lawsuits in the past year against operators that it says were doing similar things. Last year, it also sued the administrators of more than 10,000 Facebook groups that it alleged were coordinating bogus reviews in exchange for money or free products.

US updates policies to stop China from getting advanced computer chips

Washington (AP): The US Commerce Department on Tuesday updated and broadened its export controls to stop China from acquiring advanced computer chips and the equipment to manufacture them.
The revisions come roughly a year after the export controls were first launched to counter the use of the chips for military applications that include the development of hypersonic missiles and artificial intelligence.
“These export controls are intended to protect technologies that have clear national security or human rights implications,” Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said on a call with reporters. “The vast majority of semiconductors will remain unrestricted. But when we identify national security or human rights threats, we will act decisively and in concert with our allies.” The updates stemmed from consulting with industry and conducting technological analyses.
There will now be a gray zone that will be monitored for chips that could still be used for military aims even if they might not meet the thresholds for trade limitations. Chip exports can also be restricted to companies headquartered in Macao or anywhere under a US arms embargo, preventing countries of concern from circumventing the controls and providing chips to China.
The updates also introduce new requirements that make it more difficult for China to manufacture advanced chips abroad.

Putin begins China visit

AP ■ TAIPEI

Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Beijing on Tuesday for a visit that underscores China's support for Moscow during its war in Ukraine as well as Russian backing for China's bid to expand its economic and diplomatic influence abroad.

Chinese state media, Putin praised the massive but loosely-linked BRI projects. "Yes, we see that some people consider it an attempt by the People's Republic of China to put someone under its thumb, but we see otherwise, we just see desire for cooperation," he told state broadcaster CCTV, according to a transcript released by the Kremlin on Monday.

economic alliance of former Soviet Union nations mostly located in Central Asia to "achieve common development goals." He also downplayed the impact of China's economic influence in a region that Russia has long considered its backyard and where it has worked to maintain political and military clout.

'Russia sending more forces to eastern Ukraine city after assault slows'

AP ■ YJIV

Russia is throwing more units into its effort to take a key eastern Ukraine city, Western analysts say, after apparent setbacks that have slowed its dayslong onslaught.



A Ukrainian soldier in his position in Avdiivka, Donetsk region, Ukraine, on August 18, 2023. Russia is throwing more units into its effort to take this key eastern Ukraine city, Western analysts say, after apparent setbacks that have slowed its dayslong onslaught.

ly making slow progress and sustaining high casualties in what is proving a costly effort, the UK defence ministry said on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter.

has reportedly slowed in recent days since its launch last week, a Washington-based think tank said. Citing the Ukrainian General Staff, the Institute for the Study of War said Ukrainian forces pushed back 22 Russian attacks on Monday,

down from 30 reported assaults the previous day. Kyiv officials said Russia mounted up to 60 attacks per day in the middle of last week. The Ukrainian defence ministry said Tuesday that Russia is nevertheless still attempting to encircle the city, with 10 attacks over the previous 24 hours.

Ukraine uses ATACMS missiles against Russian forces for the first time

Washington (AP): A US official says the longer-range ballistic missiles long sought by Ukraine have been delivered quietly by the US and are being used on the battlefield against Russia nearly a month after President Joe Biden promised them to his Ukrainian counterpart.

Pakistan court adjourns Imran Khan, Qureshi's indictment till October 23

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

CIPHER CASE

A special court in Pakistan on Tuesday adjourned till October 23 the indictment of former prime minister Imran Khan and his close aide Shah Mahmood Qureshi in the cipher case for allegedly violating the secret laws of the country.

ed a plea by Khan against holding his trial in jail. Judge Abual Hasanat Zulqernain adjourned hearing till October 23 with the remarks that Khan and former foreign minister Qureshi would be indicted on that day.



Monday (October 23), Geo News reported. "On October 23, the charges will be framed and the indictment will be filed. After the indictment, the regular trial of the cipher case will begin," he said.

As per the court's orders of October 9, both PTI leaders were expected to be indicted in the case on Tuesday. However, the indictment could not take place on Tuesday with the court only distributing the copies of the challan (charge sheet) among the suspects.

Pak Army backs govt's decision to deport illegal foreigners

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's powerful army on Tuesday extended its full support to the government's decision to repatriate and deport all illegal foreigners, including Afghan refugees, from November 1 onwards.

'40 places of worship of Ahmadis destroyed in 2023 in Pakistan'

PTI ■ LAHORE



At least 40 places of worship of the Ahmadi minority community have either been attacked by radical Islamists or partially demolished by police in different parts of Pakistan during the first 10 months of this year, a body representing the persecuted group said on Tuesday.

While in most cases, radical Islamist party Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) attacked the Ahmadi worship places, in some incidents, police demolished minarets, arches and removed sacred writings from the prayer halls under the pressure of religious extremists, Mahmood said.

Pakistan said the situation is becoming worse day-by-day for the already marginalised community. "Ahmadis are facing persecution at the hands of the evil elements. The acts of desecration of the places of worship in various areas of Pakistan continues unabated. It is a new norm and the authorities are doing nothing," it said.

Child killed, 9 injured in hand grenade explosion

Karachi (PTI): A child was killed and eight others injured on Tuesday when a hand grenade exploded in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province. According to police, a group of children belonging to a religious seminary were playing with the hand grenade when it exploded in the Zarchain area of Wadh city.

Indian former chief priest fails in appeal to cut jail term

PTI ■ SINGAPORE



A former Indian chief priest at one of Singapore's oldest Hindu temples has failed in his bid for a lighter jail term for pawning the temple's gold jewellery for more than SGD 2.3 million.

Disagreeing with the lawyer, Justice Vincent Hoong pointed out that when Senapathi pawned the jewellery pieces, he received the proceeds, as reflected in the charges. The amount represented the value of the items misappropriated.

Afghan mob attacks Pak Customs, police and paramilitary rangers

Karachi (PTI): A mob of Afghans residing in Pakistan's biggest city attacked a team of Customs accompanied by police and paramilitary rangers after they carried out a raid to seize smuggled goods from a market in a main commercial area of the city.

and said the team had gone with police and rangers back up after confirmed intelligence reports that smuggled cloth and fabrics worth millions of rupees were being sold by Afghan shop owners on Tariq Road.

Baidu unveils Ernie 4.0 AI model, claims that it rivals GPT-4

AP ■ HONG KONG

Chinese search engine and artificial intelligence firm Baidu on Tuesday unveiled a new version of its artificial intelligence model, Ernie 4.0, claiming that it rivals models such as GPT-4 in the U.S.

In a live demonstration, Li prompted Ernie 4.0 to generate advertising materials including advertising posters and a marketing video. He also asked Ernie 4.0 to come up with a martial arts novel complete with characters with various personalities.



shares fell 1.7 per cent Tuesday following the announcement. Baidu introduced its Ernie Bot in March. In August, it made the model available to the public. Ernie 4.0 is not yet available to the general public but

some people have been invited to try it. Li said Baidu plans to incorporate artificial intelligence technology into its search engine, maps and cloud drive services, and its business intelligence offerings for enterprise customers. He did not give a timetable for that.

The technology can transform how certain products work. Baidu's search engine might generate a customized answer to a query instead of just providing a list of results and links.

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Markets rebound after 3 days of fall

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Equity benchmark indices bounced back on Tuesday after three days of fall amid recovery in global markets and buying in HDFC Bank post its quarterly earnings. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 261.16 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 66,428.09. During the day, it jumped 392.89 points or 0.59 per cent to 66,559.82. The Nifty gained 79.75 points or 0.40 per cent to 19,811.50. Among the Sensex firms, Power Grid, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, ITC, Bharti Airtel, Nestle, NTPC, Bajaj Finance, Reliance Industries, Infosys and HDFC Bank were the major gainers. HDFC Bank ended nearly 1 per cent up after the company reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 16,811 crore for the September quarter, its maiden quarterly earnings announcement after merging parent HDFC with itself. Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro, IndusInd Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, JSW Steel and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the laggards. "The market's gap-up opening today, offsetting the losses of the past three days, indicates an optimism over the ongoing Q2 earnings despite concerns about the Middle East and subdued start by the IT sector. The

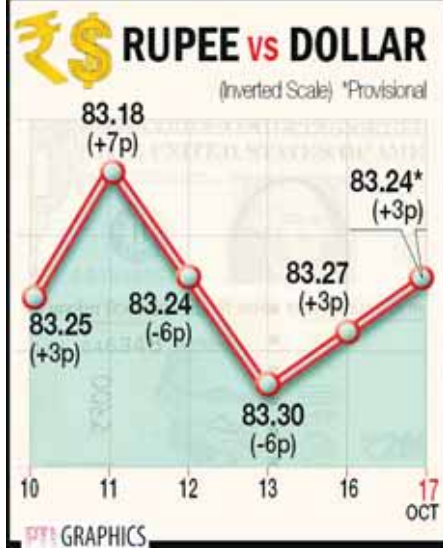


upward trend was broad-based with particular upside in banking, oil & gas and FMCG sectors. "However, some profit-taking was evident as the day concluded. FIIs continue to withdraw funds due to rise in the US bond yields. An insight about the future direction of

interest rates is expected from the Fed chair's upcoming speech on October 19th. While the market will also closely monitor the developments in the Israel-Hamas conflict, with a consensus emerging that the geopolitical risk will not elevate," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. In the broader market, the BSE small-cap gauge jumped 0.70 per cent and midcap index climbed 0.39 per cent. Among the indices, utilities rallied 1.21 per cent, power jumped 0.98 per cent, energy (0.94 per cent), oil & gas (0.80 per cent), financial services (0.66 per cent) and telecommunication (0.64 per cent). Capital Goods and realty were the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the positive territory. European markets were trading in the green. The US markets had ended with gains on Monday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.48 per cent to USD 90.08 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 593.66 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. The BSE benchmark had declined 115.81 points or 0.17 per cent to settle at 66,166.93 on Monday. The Nifty slipped 19.30 points or 0.10 per cent to 19,731.75.

Rupee rises 3 paise to close at 83.24 against \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day higher by 3 paise at 83.24 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday amid a positive trend in domestic equities. Forex traders said the rupee is trading with a slight positive bias on positive domestic markets. However, a strong US dollar and concerns over the ongoing conflict in the Middle East capped sharp gains. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.22 against the US dollar and moved in a range of 83.22 to 83.26 in the day trade. The rupee finally settled 3 paise higher at 83.24 (provisional) against the previous close. On Monday, the rupee settled at 83.27 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on the rise in risk appetite in global markets and decline in crude oil prices. Diplomatic efforts to contain the Middle East conflict may also support the risk assets," said Anuj Choudhary — Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. However, elevated US dollar and any further escalation on geopolitical tensions between Hamas and Israel may cap sharp gains. "Selling pressure from FIIs and RBI's maturing of dollar/rupee swap transactions may pressurise the rupee at higher levels. Traders may take cues from retail sales and industrial production data from the US. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 82.90 to Rs 83.70," Choudhary added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the



greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.09 per cent to 106.33. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.41 per cent to USD 90.02 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex closed 261.16 points or 0.39 per cent higher at 66,428.09. The broader NSE Nifty advanced 79.75 points or 0.4 per cent to 19,811.50. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Monday as they sold shares worth Rs 593.66 crore, according to exchange data.

RBI imposes penalty on ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank for violation of norms

PTI ■ MUMBAI
The Reserve Bank on Tuesday said it has imposed a penalty of Rs 12.19 crore on ICICI Bank and Rs 3.95 crore on Kotak Mahindra Bank for non-compliance of certain regulatory norms. The penalty on private sector lender ICICI Bank has been imposed for contravention of norms related to 'Loans and Advances-Statutory and Other Restrictions' and 'Frauds classification and reporting by commercial banks and select FIs'. In another statement, the RBI said the penalty on Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited has been imposed for contravention of directions related to "Managing Risks and Code of Conduct in Outsourcing of Financial Services by banks", "Recovery Agents engaged by Banks", "Customer Service in Banks", and "Loans and Advances - Statutory and Other Restrictions". In both cases, the RBI said the penalties are based on the deficiencies in regulatory compliance and is not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the banks with their customers.



Vedanta explores tieup with Japanese tech firms as it plans to set up chip plant

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Indian conglomerate Vedanta Group on Tuesday said it is exploring collaborations with Japanese technology companies as it continues with its plan to set up a semiconductor fab in Gujarat. Vedanta's semiconductor and display business Global Managing Director Akarsh K Hebbur during Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit roadshow in Japan had said that it is a USD 80-billion opportunity for companies willing to come and invest in the electronics manufacturing hub in Gujarat. "He (Hebbur) outlined Vedanta's ambitious plans to establish semiconductor and display fabs in Dholera SIR, Gujarat, and invited Japanese companies to partner with Vedanta in helping build the country's first electronics manufacturing hub in the state," the statement said. Hebbur also pointed out that the hub has the potential to attract hundreds of SMEs and create more than one lakh jobs. "There is a USD 80-billion opportunity for companies willing to come and invest in this electronics manufacturing hub, and Vedanta will be the anchor

GPT Healthcare refiles IPO papers with Sebi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
GPT Healthcare, which operates and manages mid-sized multispecialty hospitals under the ILS Hospitals brand, has refiled draft papers with capital market regulator Sebi to raise funds through an Initial Public Offering (IPO). The IPO comprises a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating to Rs 40 crore, and an offer for sale of up to 2.6 crore equity shares by BanyanTree Growth Capital II, LLC, a Mauritius-based structured private equity, according to the draft red herring prospectus filed on Monday. Proceeds from the fresh issue will be used for payment of debt and general corporate purposes. Kolkata-based GPT Healthcare had in January 2021 filed preliminary papers with Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to raise Rs 450-500 crore through the



issue. The company had received the capital markets regulator's nod to float the issue but it didn't go ahead with the launch. GPT Healthcare, which started with an eight-bed hospital in Kolkata in 2000, operates four full service multispecialty hospitals, with a total capacity of 561 beds, and attends to over 35 specialties and super specialties such as internal medicine, diabetology, gastroenterology, orthopaedics and joint

replacements, interventional cardiology, neurology, neurology, neurosurgery and paediatrics, as per the DRHP. The company competes with listed industry peers, including Global Health Ltd, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences Ltd, Jupiter Life Line Hospitals Ltd, Yatharth Hospital & Trauma Care Services Ltd, Kovai Medical Center & Hospital Limited and Shalby Ltd. Its total income increased 7.11 per cent to Rs 366.73 crore in FY23 from Rs 342.40 crore in FY22. The company's net profit declined to Rs 39.01 crore for FY23 from Rs 41.66 crore a year ago. The company had reported a net profit of Rs 9.98 crore in the June quarter while the total income was at Rs 97.63 crore. JM Financial is the sole book-running lead manager to the issue. The equity shares are proposed to be listed on the BSE and the NSE.



India to spend nearly ₹143 lakh crore on infrastructure between FY24 and FY30: Crisil

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India will spend nearly Rs 143 lakh crore on infrastructure between fiscals 2024 and 2030, more than twice the Rs 67 lakh crore spent in the past seven financial years starting 2017, rating agency Crisil said on Tuesday. Of the total, Rs 36.6 lakh crore will be green investments, marking a five times rise compared with the amount spent during fiscals 2017-2023, it added. "India's infrastructure spending will double to Rs 143 lakh crore between fiscals 2024 and 2030, compared with 2017-2023," Crisil said in its Infrastructure Yearbook 2023. Crisil Ltd managing director and CEO Amish Mehta said the agency expects India's gross domestic product to grow at an average 6.7 per cent through fiscal 2031 to be the fastest-expanding large economy. "Per capita income is seen rising from USD 2,500 now to USD 4,500 by fiscal 2031, creating a middle-income country," he said, adding that this growth will be underpinned by massive all-round infrastructure development, with sharp focus on integrating sustainability. While releasing 'CRISIL Infrastructure Yearbook 2023', which includes a unique national index CRISIL Infralnvex, Mehta said policy interventions and a conducive investment climate have aided the uptrend in the CRISIL Infralnvex scores across sectors. "Four of these — roads and highways, power transmission, renewable energy and ports — have an overall score of 7-plus (out of 10), which underscores the pace of reforms and developments of the past few years," he added. The rating agency noted that the next phase of infrastructure development will be marked by growth in the average ticket size of projects and a significant number of mega-scale projects. Appropriate and consistent policy and regulatory interventions and focus on timely execution build an attractive case for various stakeholders to accelerate investments across infrastructure sectors, Crisil said. The rating agency predicted that prominent sectors such as roads and power are expected to remain major contributors, while relatively nascent ones such as EVs, solar, wind, and hydrogen will pick up pace. "The share of EVs in India's overall automobile sales is likely to reach 30 per cent by 2030. "Two-wheeler EV sales are expected to outpace other segments up to 2028, while demand for EV buses will be driven by state transport undertakings," it said. According to Crisil, favourable total cost of ownership and total cost of acquisition, as well as model availability for two- and three-wheelers will support EV uptake in coming years. It said the share of renewable energy in total capacity is estimated to grow 4x between fiscals 2023 and 2030.

IN BRIEF

GOLD REMAINS FLAT; SILVER DIVES ₹300
New Delhi: Gold remained flat at Rs 60,150 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday, according to HDFC Securities. However, silver declined Rs 300 to Rs 73,700 per kilogram. In the previous trade, silver had settled at Rs 74,000 per kg.

GOVT TO SELL UP TO 7 PER CENT STAKE IN HUDCO
New Delhi: The government will sell up to 7 per cent stake in Housing & Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) at a floor price of Rs 79 per share. The Offer For Sale (OFS) for over 14.01 crore shares or 7 per cent stake will open for institutional investors on Wednesday.

MALABAR SHOWROOM COUNT REACHES 333
New Delhi: Malabar Gold and Diamonds, the world's leading gold jewellery retailer, has taken the global showroom count to 333 with the simultaneous launch of four showrooms located at Rajouri Garden in Delhi, Ambala in Haryana, Bhavnagar in Gujarat and Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. Our design versatility which perfectly meets the evolving customer sensibilities and commitment to offer quality, transparency and top-class customer services make us the favourite jeweller among jewellery buyers in India and beyond, said MP Ahammed, Chairman, Malabar Group.



Delhi Metro's first Managing Director E Sreedharan, popularly known as Metroman, visited Metro Bhawan on Tuesday. He was received by the present Managing Director Dr Vikas Kumar and Principal Executive Director, Corporate Communications Anuj Dayal. Sreedharan interacted with the senior officials and wished the Phase 4 of the project all success.

CCI approves merger of IDFC Ltd with IDFC FIRST Bank

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Fair trade regulator Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Tuesday approved the merger of IDFC Ltd with IDFC FIRST Bank. IDFC FIRST Bank is in the business of providing banking services, while its parent IDFC Ltd (IDFCL) is an RBI-registered non-banking financial company. The deal is subject to conditions, including the merger of IDFC Financial Holding into IDFC Ltd in the first step and subsequently, the amalgamation of IDFCL with IDFC FIRST Bank. Further, CCI also approved the cancellation of the existing shares held by IDFC Financial Holding in IDFC FIRST Bank and then the issue of new shares of the bank to IDFCL's shareholders. IDFC Financial Holding is a non-operative financial holding company registered with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The Competition Commission said it has

approved the deal under the green channel route. "There are no horizontal overlaps or vertical/complementary linkages between the business activities of the parties in the country. "Given the absence of any horizontal overlaps or vertical or complementary linkages between the parties, the transaction is being notified under the green channel route," CCI said. Under the green channel route, a transaction which does not raise any risk of an appreciable adverse effect on competition is deemed to be approved on being intimated to the CCI. In July, IDFC FIRST Bank announced the merger of its parent IDFC Ltd with itself in an all-stock transaction. Also, boards of IDFC FIRST Bank and IDFC have approved the reverse merger and said the composite scheme of amalgamation includes the merger of IDFC and IDFC Financial Holding Company with IDFC First Bank.

Bajaj Finance Q2 profit up 28 per cent at ₹3,551 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Bajaj Finance Ltd (BFL) on Tuesday reported a 28 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to Rs 3,551 crore for the second quarter ended September 30. The non-banking finance company had posted a net profit of Rs 2,781 crore in the July-September quarter a year ago. Its total consolidated income increased to Rs 13,382 crore during the July-September period against Rs 9,974 crore a year earlier, BFL said in a regulatory filing. The Pune-headquartered company's total expenditure rose to Rs 8,624 crore compared to Rs 6,222 crore in the year-ago period. Its consolidated assets under management (AUM) as of September 30, 2022, grew by 33 per cent to Rs 2,90,264 crore from Rs 2,18,366 crore a year ago. Capital adequacy ratio (including Tier-II capital) as of September 30, 2023, was 23.19 per cent. The Tier-I capital was 21.88 per cent, it said. The board at its meeting held on October 5 has approved raising of capital through a qualified institutions placement (QIP) for an aggregate amount not exceeding Rs 8,800 crore by issue of equity shares of face value of Rs 2 each. Besides, the board has also approved preferential issue (PI) of up to 15,50,000 warrants convertible into equivalent number of equity shares to Bajaj Finserv Limited, the promoter and holding Company, for an aggregate amount not exceeding Rs 1,200 crore in accordance with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2018, it said.

SUV segment to see intense competition among players: Tata Motors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Tata Motors on Tuesday said it plans to keep updating its SUV range as it expects the robustly growing segment to remain highly competitive with presence of all leading players. Sports utility vehicles are driving the overall growth of the domestic passenger vehicle segment. As per the latest SIAM data, SUV sales account for 60 per cent of the overall passenger vehicle sales in the country. In an interaction with PTI, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Managing Director Shailesh Chandra said the company has a leadership position in some of the SUV sub-segments and is looking to consolidate in others. "The SUV segment is going to be an intensely fought segment. The top three-four players will have just a few thousand (units) here and there. At some point someone will be number one, sometimes somebody else will become number two," he said. He noted that in such scenarios it is more important to focus on the individual products and whether they are in the top two consideration for buyers. Chandra said Punch and Nexon are market leaders in their respective segments while Harrier Safari combo was number two in its vertical. Tata Motors on Tuesday rolled out new versions of Harrier and Safari with price starting at Rs 15.49 lakh and Rs 16.19 lakh, respectively. "Going beyond this, we are coming with two more models — Curvv and Sierra — in 2024



and 2025, respectively," he stated. So the company's SUV portfolio is going to further strengthen from where it is now, Chandra noted. "We have been number one for quite some time. There have been few new launches by other players. The ranking will keep changing... There is no clear number one here. "Important thing is that we are doing excellent in all these four SUVs that we have. More importantly, we are adding to this portfolio, so our strength in SUV is going to always remain very strong going forward," he added. The updated versions of both Harrier and Safari have received top safety ratings from the vehicle safety group Global NCAP. "With their 5-star GNCAP rating and highest scores by any Indian vehicle to date, our SUVs are the safest spaces on Indian roads," Chandra said. In a separate statement, Global NCAP said it has given five-star safety ratings to the new versions of Tata Safari and Harrier SUVs. Both models have achieved the

highest ever score for adult and child occupant safety in the crash tests done by Global NCAP on Indian cars so far, it stated. Global NCAP rates vehicles from zero to five based on their safety features and automobiles with a higher rating are considered safer for occupants. "This is a very strong result... The top adult and child safety score in our testing to date confirms the manufacturer's strong commitment to developing safer vehicles, which we warmly welcome and applaud," Global NCAP Secretary General Alejandro Furas said in a statement. Global NCAP's crash test protocols assess frontal and side impact protection for all models, as well as electronic stability control.

SABITZER'S PENALTY, SENDS AUSTRIA TO EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP



Sweden players take overnight flight home, returning to clubs

AP ■ BRUSSELS

Sweden players were returning to their clubs on Tuesday after taking an overnight flight home from Brussels following the suspension of their European Championship qualifier against Belgium at halftime because a gunman killed two Swedish nationals before kickoff.

The squad went directly to the airport and flew back to Sweden once they were allowed to leave King Baudouin Stadium, which was locked down for 2½ hours for security reasons before officials began an evacuation process around midnight local time.

It was around 4 am local time when the last of the Swedish supporters — totaling about 650, according to the Swedish Football Association — left the stadium under police surveillance, along with some staff from the federation.

All hotels where Swedish supporters were staying were also guarded by police, the federation said.

The Swedish FA confirmed to The Associated Press that the national-team players were now making their way back to their clubs.

The suspect in the shooting was shot dead by police on Tuesday, Belgian Interior Minister Annelies Verlinden said, and the weapon believed to have been used by the man has been recovered.

Authorities had been searching for a 45-year-old suspected Tunisian extremist who was known to police and was living in Belgium illegally.

Swedish FA officials said information about the shooting incident, which also led to another Swedish national getting seriously injured and taken to hospital, reached them just before the match began and that Belgian authorities and police considered the game should be played because the stadium was viewed as the safest place for the Swedish fans.

A decision was made to halt the match at halftime. Martin Fredman, the federation's head of security, said about 400 Swedish fans "received help during the evening and night."

"The cooperation between supporters, federations and authorities has worked very well in an extremely stressful situation," Fredman said.

AP ■ BRUSSELS

Substitute Marcel Sabitzer scored from the penalty spot shortly after entering the game to secure a 1-0 win for Austria at Azerbaijan and send his country to next year's European Championship in a day overshadowed by a deadly shooting in Brussels which saw Belgium's game against Sweden halted at halftime.

"Due to the incidents in Brussels earlier tonight, play is suspended. Our thoughts are with all those affected," a post from the

Belgian national team read on X, formerly known as Twitter.

European soccer governing body UEFA confirmed the Group F match had been called off following consultation with both teams and local police.

The score was 1-1 at the time. Viktor Gyokeres gave Sweden a 15th-minute lead, but Romelu Lukaku had Belgium level just after the half-hour.

Belgium had already qualified for Euro 2024 while Sweden's chances of a top-two place had been ended by Austria's victory earlier.

AUSTRIA ADVANCES

After losing 3-2 to Belgium in Vienna last week in the fight for Group F supremacy - Austria's only defeat in seven qualifying games so far - Sabitzer and his teammates knew a win in Baku would secure a spot at the tournament hosted by Germany.

With several key players sidelined because of injuries, Austria struggled to create real chances in the first half. It was awarded a penalty just minutes into the second half after a hand ball. Sabitzer was clinical in converting with a strike into the corner

in the 48th.

Sabitzer, who plays for Borussia Dortmund, recently returned to competition after recovering from an adductor injury he picked up last month in a Champions League match against PSG.

Austria finished with 10 men after striker Guido Burgstaller was sent off in stoppage time for a second yellow card.

Austria became the seventh team to qualify after Belgium, France, Portugal, Scotland, Spain and Turkey, along with host Germany.

RONALDO SCORES 2

Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice for Portugal in a 5-0 demolition of host Bosnia in Group J.

Bruno Fernandes, Joao Cancelo and Joao Felix also scored with all goals coming in the first half.

Iceland routed Liechtenstein 4-0 and Slovakia won 1-0 at Luxembourg in the same group.

Netherlands came away from Greece with a 1-0 win in Group B to revive its hopes.

Virgil Van Dijk's penalty in second-half stoppage time sent the Netherlands above their oppo-

nents and into second in their group. Both have 12 points.

Wout Weghorst earlier failed to convert his penalty.

"We do not have a specialist for penalties, corners and free kicks," said Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman.

"When Virgil was behind the ball for the second one, I suddenly thought Surely it won't be one of those evenings when this one goes wrong too." But Virgil took it well and decided the match.

Ireland thrashed Gibraltar 4-0 in the group's other game.



India men's hockey plays compactly at Asian Games: Somaya

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Olympic gold medalist M M Somaya feels the Indian men's hockey team produced one of the most "compact" performances to win its fourth yellow metal at the recently-concluded Hangzhou Asian Games.

Somaya, who was the Indian contingent's deputy chef de mission at Hangzhou, said it was mostly an unblemished performance from the Harmanpreet Singh-led side, who directly qualified for Paris Olympics by winning the gold.

"I think they (India) played outstanding in all the matches, barring a few lapses of concentration against Japan and Korea, but otherwise, overall, I think one of the most compact and sound performances we have seen," said Somaya, a member of India's 1980 World Cup-winning team in Moscow.

With next year's Paris ticket secured, the Indian team can focus on its preparations now.

"Now that the burden of qualifying is gone, they can concentrate on making a strong program up to Paris. So just because

they're not playing in the tournament for qualification doesn't mean that they will be complacent. They can now engage in preparatory camps and tours with Paris in mind," Somaya said.

The 64-year-old also lauded the women's team, who bagged the bronze at the Asian Games but missed out on a direct ticket to Paris.

"The women also played very well, barring that game against China in the first half where they were a little overwhelmed. And then in the second half they opened up, but it was too late. Overall, it was an excellent performance from both the teams."

Somaya also had words of appreciation for the Odisha government for its overwhelming support to Indian hockey.

"Odisha have stood out because of their support for hockey, I don't remember any other sport where a state has supported the national team. It's always been a corporate, but in this case the state itself has supported the national team, which is a big thing."

AITA actions against Sasi for not wearing official jersey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The AITA is contemplating action against Sasi Mukund for not wearing the official jersey during the Davis Cup tie against Morocco and has also introduced a players' code of conduct to ensure 'discipline' in future.

In the opening singles of the World Group II play-off tie against Yassine Dlimi on September 16, Mukund wore the jersey provided by his personal sponsor and not the one made available by official Indian team sponsor 'OOK' after taking "permission" from skipper Rohit Rajpal.

To make matter worse, the jersey that Mukund wore had 'INDIA' spelt wrongly and the matter was brought to AITA's notice by the team sponsor.

The team name printed on the back had an extra 'I'.

It may be mentioned that the official sponsor only provided the kit and no sponsorship money was given to either All Indian Tennis Association (AITA) or the players who were part of the tie that India won 4-1 in Lucknow last month.

AITA issued a showcause notice to Mukund on September 28, asking him to explain within seven days why action should not be taken against him for not wearing the official jersey and playing with a jersey that had India written wrongly.

On October 3, Mukund sent his reply to the national federation, saying that "shorts received from OOK were not comfortable".

Mukund also wrote that he had taken prior permission from both captain Rajpal and coach Zeshan Ali to wear the jersey that had his sponsor's



name printed.

Explaining the spelling fiasco, Mukund wrote that he had received eight T-shirts from his sponsor and unfortunately he picked the only one that had printing mistake.

He also lamented that neither the captain nor his teammates noticed when he stepped on to the court.

"I have immense respect for my country and I would never do something intentionally to tarnish its image," he wrote and also apologised for the inadvertent mistake.

On October 13, the AITA communicated to Mukund that his explanation was not acceptable since the captain has denied giving him any permission and further asked him to clarify his stand.

When contacted by PTI,

Mukund said captain Rajpal had indeed allowed him.

"There was no money involved. The players were not given any sponsorship fee for this tie. Only the kit was provided by the official sponsor. Captain Rajpal had understood this and allowed me," Mukund, who had lost his match to Dlimi, said.

"Usually the players are asked to sign a contract with the AITA for that one week if they are being paid for wearing that official kit. In this case, we did not sign any contract. My personal sponsor 'Indian Tree' pays me, so what's wrong in it. The pockets of the shorts were such that the ball were coming out. "These are the reasons that the players lose interest in playing for the national team," he said.

AITA Secretary General Anil

Dhupar said they have introduced a players' code of conduct for clarity and all players will be bound by it.

"The players code of conduct is before the Executive Committee members. It will come into effect immediately. It is for all players, be it men's, women's, boys or girls," he said.

Asked if they will indeed take action against Mukund, Dhupar said, "Mukund has apologised but we are still discussing the matter".

Asked for his viewpoint, Davis Cup coach Zeshan Ali said, "All players should be wearing only the official kit. During the Asian Games all the players and support staff wore the official kit only. Procedure has to be followed by all".

It is not the first time that an Indian player has preferred

playing with the kit that has his personal sponsor's name written. They do get paid for wearing the sponsor's name. If the match is telecast live, the amount increases.

"The AITA had also introduced the system of paying the players for official sponsor's name. The initiative was taken by captain Rohit Rajpal. If you have to stop players from wearing the name of their personal sponsor during the Davis Cup, then you have to compensate," said a team source.

"In this case (Morocco tie), no sponsor was willing to pay any sponsorship money to the players and the AITA. Just the kits had arrived through OOK, it is difficult to even arrange for kits for Indian Davis Cup team," the source said, summing up the state of Indian tennis.



Contrasting results for Indian sub-junior hockey teams

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian boys' and girls' sub-junior (U-16) hockey teams endured contrasting results on the final day of their maiden tour to the Netherlands.

While the boys beat the Netherlands' U-16 side 4-0, the Indian girls lost 1-4 against the Dutch.

Rohit Irengbam Singh, Ketan Kushwaha, Rahul Rajbhar and captain Manmeet Singh Rai scored for the Indian boys team.

"This is a great way to finish off such a historic tour. The boys showed immense character and grit and the efforts that have been put in are unmatched. It's a matter of pride to have produced such a fine show especially in overseas conditions," Indian sub-junior boys' team coach Sardar Singh said.

In the girls' game, Kajal Jr scored the lone goal for India. Former India captain and sub-junior girls' team coach Rani Rampal, said, "The girls played their hearts out and that is exactly what is expected of them every time they step out on the field."

"There are a few areas for us to work on and this tour has given us exactly what we needed to identify our strengths and shortcomings."

Kusale now aiming for gold at Asian Championships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rifle marksman Swapnil Kusale's dream of winning an Asian Games medal in Hangzhou might have gone sour, courtesy one poor shot, but that has not stopped him from aspiring for gold at the Asian Championships, scheduled to commence in Changwon, South Korea on October 22.

One of the best 50m rifle 3-positions shooter in the country, the 28-year-old Kolhapur marksman was leading by a huge margin in his event at the Asian Games recently before a rank bad 7.6 on the third-last shot in the finals saw him take a mighty tumble from No.1 to 5.

That effectively ended his hopes of winning even a bronze medal in the quadrennial continental showpiece as he finished fourth.

However, as the shooting team leaves for the Asian Championships, Kusale has put the disappointment on the back-burner and wants to concentrate on the next assignment.

"That shot... How did it go that way, I have absolutely no idea. It's a game basically. I still had two shots remaining and I focused on them. I just forgot that had I shot a poor score," said Kusale, one of the early birds to secure a Paris Olympic quota place.

Initially, I was a bit shocked how it

could happen to me. But without bothering about it much, how and why it happened, I prepared myself for the next two shots," said Kusale, who had bagged the 2024 Olympic quota by finishing fourth at the World Championships in Cairo last year.

"Yes, it did strike me that I had missed the gold medal because of that one shot, but then I thought it can happen in this sport and I will concentrate on the next championship."

A similar last shot in the finals at the 2022 World Championships in Cairo had robbed him of a medal, but that disappointment was masked by the Olympic quota place



he won there.

"It had happened to me at the World Championships in Cairo last year as well, but yes, I bagged an Olympic quota there and finished fourth, so that was the saving grace," said Kusale on the sidelines of a function organised by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) to felicitate the Asian Games medal winners.

India returned home with 22 medals in shooting, their best ever performance at the Games.

"I was very deeply concentrating on the moment, too much focused and because of that, maybe, my entire process (went for a toss). It's something which I never anticipated I

could do. I tried my level best to come back, but I still missed an individual medal.

Kusale, though, won the team gold along with Aishwary Prapat Singh Tomar and Akhil Sheoran.

Kusale, a junior TC with the Railways, says that world champion rifle shooter Tejaswini Sawant has helped him handle tricky situation while competing.

Sawant, who also hails from Kolhapur but now resides in Pune, had become world champion in 2010 in women's 50m rifle prone.

"Teju di (Tejaswini) has taught me how to handle different situations, etc. I have learnt from her and she has inspired me a lot over the

years," said Kusale.

Kusale is also not surprised that his "best pal" Akhil Sheoran too has bagged the second Olympic quota for the country at the World Championships in Baku, Azerbaijan just before the Asian Games.

The two have been competing together since 2012, when they were juniors, and Kusale said he cannot remember a national camp when they have not been room-mates.

"Akhil has been my roommate and best pal since 2012 since the time we were competing as juniors. We are like brother and both have won (Olympic) quota, albeit one year apart."



NZ AIMS TO KEEP THEIR UNBEATEN RUN INTACT

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Afghanistan's upset win over defending champions England has given the side a new stature and New Zealand would underestimate Hashmatullah Shahidi's side at their own peril when the two sides clash in their World Cup match here on Wednesday.

While the Kiwis would look to keep their unbeaten run going in the tournament, Afghanistan, who shocked England by 69 runs, would be keen to create another big upset and put their campaign firmly on track in the showpiece event.

New Zealand are going great guns in the tournament, having won all three matches so far and are currently placed second on the points table, trailing India on net run rate.

On the other hand, Afghanistan had an inauspicious start to their campaign losing to Bangladesh and India before leaving Jos Buttler's England in a tizzy with a victory to be cherished for long in New Delhi on Sunday.

New Zealand will again be led by wicketkeeper-batter Tom Latham after their charismatic skipper Kane Williamson suffered a fracture on his left thumb during the match against Bangladesh and was ruled out for a few games.

Williamson, who had missed the opening two matches — against England and the Netherlands — due to an ACL



injury suffered during IPL 2023, was looking good to strike a century after being out of action for more than five months. But the skipper's innings was cut short at 78 when he was struck on the thumb by a throw from the outfield.

Despite the huge setback, the Kiwis would be banking on their success so far to win their fourth game on the trot against an unpredictable Afghanistan, who played their guts out against England. It would be interesting to see if

pacers Tim Southee finally gets a chance against Afghanistan, having recovered from a thumb injury, though his match fitness has remained an issue.

The Kiwis will rely heavily on their top order comprising Will Young, Devon Conway and Daryl Mitchell, while all-rounder Rachin Ravindra, with his impactful performances across departments, will also be the player to watch.

The Kiwi batters would certainly have watched the video footage of Afghanistan spinners Rashid Khan and Mohammed

Nabi many times over to counter the slow-bowling threat, given that the duo accounted for five England wickets.

With the meeting happening at the Chepauk, where the pitch has traditionally assisted spinners, New Zealand will have their hands full when they take on the trio of Rashid, Mujeeb Ur Rehman and Nabi. As for the Afghanistan batting, opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz is the man in form, having scored 50-plus in two matches so far, while the likes of skipper

Shahidi, Azmatullah Omarzai and Ikram Alikhil could come in handy as well.

While Trent Boult and Matt Henry's searing pace will be feared by the Afghan batters, their main challenge could unexpectedly come from the spin duo of Ravindra and Mitchell Santner, with the latter being the most successful slow bowler in the competition so far.

The two teams have clashed in this format only twice with New Zealand winning on both occasions.



Rohit best man to lead India to third WC title

PTI ■ DUBAI

Australian legend Ricky Ponting believes a "laid-back" Rohit Sharma is the ideal captain to lead India to their third ODI World Cup title, the second on home soil after the 2011 triumph.

With three convincing wins under their belt, India have made a perfect start to their World Cup campaign.

India defeated Australia by six wickets in their tournament opener, before registering emphatic eight and seven-wicket wins over Afghanistan and Pakistan to sit on top of the points table.

"He's very laid back, Rohit. Very laid back with everything he does. You can even see that by the way that he plays. He's a pretty laconic sort of batsman as well, and that's the way he is both on and off the field," Ponting told the ICC on Tuesday.

Rohit took the captaincy reins from Virat Kohli in both the white-ball formats in December 2021.

And Ponting believes Rohit's character fits perfectly for the India job, allowing Kohli to focus on his batting.

"Someone like Virat, who is a bit more heart-on-the-sleeve, and probably listens to the fans and plays up with the fans a little bit more, someone with his personality would probably find it a bit harder," the two-time World Cup winning Australia skipper said.

"But I think Rohit will be fine with it. He's a terrific bloke and has been a great player for a long time, and he's done a great job as leader of India."

The Men In Blue last won the World Cup when the tournament was jointly hosted by India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in 2011.

So, the extra pressure of performing in front of home fans would definitely be there, but Ponting feels Rohit is the best man to deal with that.

"We can't sit back and say that the pressure won't get to them (India) at some stage, or it won't affect them, because it will, just with the enormity of the tournament.

"But he'll (Rohit) take it and cope with it as well as probably anyone," he said.

Ponting said that with all bases covered, India are the team to beat in the ongoing showpiece.

"I said from the start that I think they're going to be the team to beat. They've got a very talented team," he said.

"They've got all bases covered with their fast bowling, their spin and their top-order, middle-order batting. They're going to be extremely hard to beat. But we'll see how they hold up under extreme pressure as well," Ponting concluded.

India will next play Bangladesh in Pune on Thursday.

We regret squandering promising: Nissanka

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

A disappointed Pathum Nissanka said anything close to 300 would have been a challenging total but Sri Lanka failed to sustain a promising start against Australia in a World Cup match here.

Nissanka (61) and fellow opener Kushal Perera (78) gave Sri Lanka an ideal start on Monday, stitching a 125-run partnership but the island nation suffered an unexpected batting collapse, losing all 10 wickets for just 84 runs to put up a below-par 209 on the board.

The Australians grabbed the opportunity with Josh Inglis (58) and Mitchell Marsh (52) scoring half-centuries each to take their side to a five-wicket win in 35.2 overs, their first victory in three matches.

"Despite our promising start, we deeply regret not being able to sustain it, resulting in us being limited to a score of 210 runs," Nissanka said at the post-match



press conference.

"On a wicket like this, I believe we should aim for a total closer to 300 runs, and this was a contributing factor for our defeat."

Nissanka's 61 off 67 balls was his second successive half-century in the tournament.

"I believe I've given my best for the team. I'm hopeful that I can contribute significantly by scoring substantial number of runs and playing substantial innings in the upcoming matches," he said.

Sri Lanka have lost three games they have played so far and need to win all their remaining six matches for a shot at the semi-finals.

They next face the Netherlands here on Saturday.

"Our focus now is to learn from our mistakes and strive for strong performances in the upcoming matches. Our mental level is good. We hope to play well in these matches and win the remaining matches," Nissanka said.

Shami's role is clear still no place in 'Perfect IX'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

At times, the greatest of actors don't fit the character of a particular film and in director Rohit Sharma's 70 mm World Cup panorama, Mohammed Shami is that protagonist who is missing out on a meaty role.

Unlike the 2019 World Cup campaign, the Indian team management seems to have absolute clarity on the role of each squad member, leaving a world class operator like Shami on the bench for the first three games of the ODI showpiece.

With the team ticking all the boxes so far, Shami, who is among the best in the business and ended with a five wicket haul against Australia ahead of the World Cup, might just have to keep warming the bench in the coming fixtures.

Mohammed Siraj is Jasprit Bumrah's new ball partner at the moment while all-rounder



Hardik Pandya is performing the role of a third pacer effectively.

Shardul Thakur, who has bowled a total of 8 overs in two games, is the fourth fast bowling option on a flat deck and if it is a spin friendly track like the

lead up of which saw the number four position become a game of musical chairs, Shreyas Iyer, if he is fit, is the clear choice in that position. Even though he oozes X factor, Suryakumar Yadav has to wait for his return.

Rohit Sharma has led from the front thus far and India look the team to beat in the World Cup. However, there are a few questions that need to be answered. Can the team rely on Hardik as the third seamer? Should Shami not play in place of Thakur as the latter has not yet been required with the bat at number 8?

Speaking to PTI, former chief selector MSK Prasad lauded the team's horses for courses approach.

"They are using horses for courses and it is working fantastically well for the team. If you see they used Ashwin in Chennai and Shardul for the other two games (in Delhi and Ahmedabad). Last game, Shardul was not required as the others did the job (he bowled only two overs)," said the former India wicketkeeper.

"Shami will come into picture if they want to rotate Siraj. Replacements are very clear right now, Sky will replace Shreyas if there is a need, Ishan will replace Gill at the top and Shardul will play if it is a flat deck. Aswin will come in his place if it is a turning track."

Hardik lends a critical balance to the playing eleven but considering his fitness issues in the past, can he be expected to bowl 10 overs game after game as the third seamer if the need arises?

"With Hardik, you can't expect him to bowl 10 overs in every game. The job that he is doing, Of bowling 5-6 overs per game, that is good enough. Team management seems to have absolute clarity on the role of every individual," added Prasad.

Gurbaz reprimanded for breaching ICC's Code of Conduct



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Afghanistan batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz has been handed an official reprimand for breaching level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct during their epic World Cup match against England.

Gurbaz was found to have breached Article 2.2 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to "abuse of cricket equipment or clothing, ground equipment or fixtures and fittings dur-

ing an International Match."

In addition to this, one demerit point has been added to Gurbaz's disciplinary record, for whom it was the first offence in a 24-month period.

The incident occurred in the 19th over of Afghanistan's innings, when after his dismissal, Gurbaz slammed his bat on the boundary rope and a chair. Gurbaz admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by Jeff Crowe of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees, so there was no

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender No. : 32-KUR-TRD-OT-2023-24, Dtd.10.10.2023

Name of Work: EXECUTION OF OHE MODIFICATION WORK IN CONNECTION WITH CONSTRUCTION OF 2ND EXIT ROAD CUM FLYOVER AT PARADIP AS A PART OF ADDITIONAL PORT CONNECTIVITY FROM NATIONAL HIGHWAY AT BRIDGE NO. 4 OF MS PARADIP PORT TRUST AT PARADEEP IN DEPOSIT TERMS.

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Completion Period: 180 (One Hundred Eighty) days

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Sd/ Collector-cum-CEO, Zilla Parishad, Bhadrak

OIPR-19230/11/0010/2324

INTEGRATED TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY, NABARANGPUR

CAD-2485

Lr. No. - 7538 -Y2023 Date 16th October 2023

Short Tender Call Notice

1. The Project Administrator, ITDA, Nabarangpur, on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites Short Tender for Supply of Books as detailed below.

2. Type of products to be supplied	: Books
3. No. of Books	: 4050 Nos.
4. Bid Cost.	: ₹ 1,000/-
5. Publication of Short Tender	: Dt.18.10.2023
6. Last Date of receipt	: Dt.02.11.2023 (Up to 05.00 PM)
7. Date of Opening of Bid	: Dt.03.11.2023 at 11:30 AM.
8. The details of book list, terms & conditions are available in the Website https://nabarangpur.nic.in/ from 10.00 AM of 18.10.2023 to 01.11.2023 up to 5.30 PM and can be downloaded from the Website. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.	

Project Administrator, ITDA, Nabarangpur

OIPR-26064/11/0004/2324

BHUBANESWAR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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CAD-2472 Visit us at: <http://www.bda.gov.in/>

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Executive Engineer, Division No.III, BDA on behalf of Bhubaneswar Development Authority invites Percentage Rate bids in Double cover system to be received in online mode only for the work detailed below:

1. No. of works	- 02 (Two) Nos.
2. Estimated Cost	- Approximate Rs.96.83 lakh and Rs.93.97 lakh
3. Period of Completion	- 120 (One Hundred Twenty) Days.
4. Tender Cost	- Rs.10,000/- excluding 18% GST
5. Date & Time of availability of Bid	- 17.10.2023 to 5.00 P.M. of 26.10.2023
6. Class of Contractor	- 'B' Class and above.

The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website <http://tendersodisha.gov.in/>.

N.B. The quoted rate should be all inclusive but excluding G.S.T. applicable under works contract.

Sd/ Executive Engineer, Division No.III, BDA.

OIPR-13033/11/0375/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA WATER CORPORATION OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER, WATCO DIVISION, SAMBALPUR.

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement Bid Identification No. GMWATCOSBP-09/2023-24 Dt. 12.10.2023

01. Name of the Work	: 05 nos Works.
02. Type of Bid.	: Single Bid System
03. Estimated Cost	: Rs. 8.37 lakhs to Rs. 40.30 lakhs
04. Period of Completion	: 3 (Three) Calendar Months.
05. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal	: From 11.00 AM of dt. 18.10.2023 to 5.00 PM of 28.10.2023
06. Last date / time of receipt of bids in the portal	: 5.00 PM of 28.10.2023.
07. Date & Time of opening of technical bids	: At 11.30 AM of 30.10.2023.
08. Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid	: General Manager, WATCO Division, Sambalpur, Brooks' Hill, Near Stadium, At/Po- Motijharan, Dist- Sambalpur-768 001.

Further details can be seen from the web site <http://tenders.ori.nic.in> or www.tendersorissa.gov.in

General Manager, WATCO Division, Sambalpur

OIPR-13247/11/0013/2324