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MONEY 10
20 PER CENT CYBERCRIMES INVOLVE DARK WEB USAGE BY ATTACKERS SAYS REPORT



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BULLETS FIRED IN GOLDEN TEMPLE



Narain Singh Chaura nabbed after he opened fire at Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal while the latter was serving the punishment given by the Akal Takht at the Golden Temple, in Amritsar PTI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AMRITSAR/NEW DELHI

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader and former Punjab Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal on Wednesday escaped a brazen assassination attempt in Golden Temple when a former terrorist fired at him from a close range. However, the missed as a plainclothes policeman overpowered the assailant. He was identified as Narain Singh Chaura. Badal, a 'Z Plus' protectee, who was serving as a guard at the Temple entrance as part of a religious punishment, is safe. Videos showed the wheelchair-bound leader, in a blue 'sewadar' uniform and holding a spear in one hand and a small board hung around his neck, acknowledging his "misdeeds". The attack, which took place around

9:30 am, was captured on cameras of media persons who had gathered to cover the second day of Badal performing the duty of 'sewadar' outside the shrine as penance for "mistakes" committed by the SAD government in Punjab from 2007 to 2017. Television footage showed the shooter slowly walking towards Badal (62), who was sitting in a wheelchair due to a fractured leg, and pulling out a gun from his pocket. The weapon is reportedly a sophisticated 9mm pistol and sources said prima facie it appeared to be a lone wolf attack. A police official in plainclothes standing near Badal quickly grabbed the attacker's hands and pushed him away. In the melee, a bullet hit the shrine's entrance wall behind Badal, who escaped unhurt. Soon other security personnel and Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak

Committee (SGPC) task force members also intervened. Badal continued his penance after the attack, with a security ring thrown around him. His wife and Bathinda Member of Parliament Harsimrat Kaur Badal also reached the Golden Temple to meet him. The shooter Narain Singh Chaura, is a resident of Dera Baba Nanak, and a former terrorist owing allegiance to Babbar Khalsa International (BKI). After the attack, he was taken away by security officials, and arrested. Amritsar Police Commissioner Gurpreet Singh Bhullar said the attack on Badal was foiled because of the alertness of police. Police official Rashpal Singh noticed Chaura first, as he is a former terrorist and has a criminal history. When Chaura whipped out his weapon, Assistant Sub-Inspector Jasbir Singh and another police

official, Parminder Singh, held Chaura's hands and as a result, the bullet went upwards, said the commissioner. "Narain Singh Chaura has been arrested and an FIR has been registered against him. The weapon used in the attack has been recovered," Bhullar said, adding that the case will be investigated from all angles. The motive behind the attack will be ascertained after Chaura's questioning. He came alone to the Golden Temple, he said. Responding to a question, Bhullar said the security deployment at the shrine was sufficient. Police cannot carry out frisking because religious sentiments are involved, he said. Detailed security deployment had been made at the Golden Temple complex. Around 175 police personnel led by an assistant inspector general have been deployed

there, he said. ASI Jasbir Singh, whose brave act won him praise from all quarters, told reporters that he was only performing his duty. Additional Deputy Commissioner Harpal Singh said police were alert and had been keeping an eye on the accused. "We had covered Sukhbir ji," he said. Chaura was here on Tuesday as well, the officer said. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann directed police to thoroughly investigate the incident while opposition parties demanded his resignation over the "breakdown" of law and order in the state. Mann lauded police for their promptness in nabbing the attacker and termed it a "great success". He said "Punjab Police prevented a major incident today. It is the result of the promptness of Punjab Police that the conspiracy to defame Punjab and Punjabis has failed," he said. "I strongly condemn the attack on Sukhbir Badal ji. I have issued strict instructions to police to immediately investigate the incident and submit a report," he added. Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh said it was not an attack on Badal but on the 'sewadar' who was performing his duty outside the Golden Temple. SGPC chief Harjinder Singh Dhani said the "targeting" of Badal while performing religious service at the holy shrine was "extremely saddening" and "immoral". Senior SAD leader Daljit Singh Cheema, who is also undergoing religious punishment, demanded Mann's resignation over the incident. "For Punjab, this is a big incident. Where are we taking the state? I want to ask the Punjab chief minister where Punjab is headed. It is a 100 per cent failure of law and order. The chief minister should resign," he told reporters. Cheema also demanded a judicial inquiry into the incident.

Delhi boxer kills his entire family to avenge 'insult'



Police personnel and others at a house at Neb Sarai area where a middle-aged couple and their daughter were found dead Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

A 20-year-old state-level boxer killed his father, mother and elder sister on Wednesday morning in South Delhi's Neb Sarai, as he was "hurt" and felt "insulted" by them, as he suspected that they were going to name their daughter in their will. According to police, the accused Arjun Tanwar alias Bunty's father had recently scolded him in public, and this proved to be the last straw for him. Arjun decided to kill his parents on their 27th anniversary to gain sympathy, and avoid any suspicion, police said. The deceased have been identified as 51-year-old Rajesh Kumar Tanwar, his 46-year-old wife Komal and their 23-year-old daughter Kavita. According to police sources, Arjun, who has represented in the Delhi Olympics in boxing and earned a silver medal, executed the brutal

crime by first killing his sister. He slit her throat while she was sleeping on the ground floor. However, while he was attacking her, Kavita bit Arjun on the finger. He then went to the first floor and slit his father's throat after stabbing him on his head first. When his mother Komal tried to escape, he silenced her by cupping his hands on her mouth, and then slit her throat, the police said. According to preliminary investigation, the murders took place between 5 am and 7 am. According to neighbours, Rajesh was a retired army officer and Kavita had earned a black belt in Martial Arts. Arjun used his father's 'army' dagger to commit the crime. To avoid suspicion, he murdered his family members and then went for a jog to Sunder nag, instead of going to his gym session to establish an alibi. **Continued on page 2**

Fadnavis wins Maha musical chairs



BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis with Shiv Sena chief Eknath Shinde, NCP chief Ajit Pawar and BJP Central Observers Nirmala Sitharaman and Vijay Rupani meet Maharashtra Governor C P Radhakrishnan to stake claim to form the new Maharashtra Government PTI

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After 11 days of drama, suspense and speculation, Devendra Fadnavis was elected unanimously as the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party Legislature Party (BJPLP) leader here on Wednesday, thus paving way for him being sworn in as Maharashtra's next Chief Minister at a ceremony to be held on Thursday. Within hours after Fadnavis' election as the BJPLP leader, the ruling MahaYuti - comprising BJP, Shiv Sena and Nationalist Congress Party

NCP (AP) met Governor CP Radhakrishnan at Raj Bhavan in south Mumbai and staked claim for forming a new Government in the State. The Governor invited them for the oath-taking ceremony scheduled for Thursday. With his election as the BJPLP leader, 54-year-old Fadnavis will be administered the oath of office and secrecy as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra for the third consecutive time, at a swearing-in ceremony to be held at the historic Azad Maidan in south Mumbai at 5.30 pm Thursday.

Fadnavis, who has once again staged a comeback as the chief minister of Maharashtra, was earlier the CM of the state for five years from October 2014 to October 2019 and for a brief 90 hours in November 2019. A six-time MLA, Fadnavis is close to the top brass of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). He is the second Brahmin chief minister in Maharashtra politics after Manohar Joshi of the united Shiv Sena who held the top post between 1995 and 1999. In the run-up to the 2014 Maharashtra polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promoted Fadnavis as a chief ministerial candidate, by saying: "desh me Devendra", while senior BJP leader Amit Shah had described him as "current and future" CM of Maharashtra. Not many in Maharashtra political circles can forget his much-discussed statement "Me Punha Yain, Me Punha Yain" (I will return, I will return) that he had made repeatedly in the run-up to the 2019 State Assembly polls to suggest that he would return as the chief minister of the state. **Continued on page 2**

Commuters suffer, police, Cong lock horns at UP border

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who were heading towards violence-hit Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh, were stopped at the Ghazipur border between Delhi and Noida, causing a high-voltage drama, leading to massive traffic jams during the morning peak hours. The traffic congestion at Delhi-Meerut Expressway in Ghaziabad worsened as Congress workers gathered there ahead of Rahul and Priyanka's planned visit to Sambhal. The Congress workers defied barricading and also engaged in a scuffle with the commuters on the stretch, who faced a harrowing time reaching their destinations due to the traffic congestion. Long queues of vehicles could be seen at the border, leaving commuters frustrated. Many people got stuck in the jam at the Delhi-UP Ghazipur border, which led to their work being affected, and as a result, some lost their cool. Some couldn't reach their offices, while others missed their exams. The situation was



Police stop Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Congress supporters at the Ghazipur border while they were on the way to visit the violence-hit Sambhal district, in Ghaziabad PTI

so dire that the angry crowd clashed with Congress workers. Vehicles were seen clogging the roads for several kilometres. Several commuters shared their grievances with The Pioneer, and slammed the Congress leaders for blocking the traffic during the morning peak hours. "My daughter is having an examination in Meerut at 1 pm. I have been stuck in traffic for the past two hours. If politicians want to protest, they can sit on the side of the

road. Why should the public suffer?" said a commuter who was involved in the scuffle with Congress workers. Sambhal authorities had requested neighbouring districts to stop the Congress leaders before they enter the district. The District Magistrate has written to officers in Bulandshahr, Amroha, Ghaziabad, and Gautam Buddha Nagar, appealing to them to intercept the Rahul Gandhis at the border. He has also instructed

the officials to closely monitor Rahul Gandhi's activities on his way to Sambhal. As the Congress leaders stopped at the border, Rahul and other leaders stepped out of the vehicle and held discussions with senior police officers but were not permitted to proceed further. After hours of deadlock, Rahul and Priyanka were escorted to the Parliament in Delhi by the Uttar Pradesh Police in their vans. Rahul said that he was willing to travel to Sambhal alone with the police but was not allowed to proceed. "As the leader of the opposition, it is my constitutional right. I should have been allowed," he said. Priyanka who was accompanying him, added, "Rahul ji holds a constitutional post and has the constitutional right. He should be allowed to meet the victims' families." Curbs under Section 163 (power to issue an order in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), which were set to expire on Sunday, have now been extended till December 31 in Sambhal. **Continued on page 2**



Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

NCR breathes 'moderate' air after 50 days

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi breathed almost 'clean' air on Wednesday, after a gap of 50 days, as the Air Quality Index (AQI) was recorded in the 'moderate' category. The 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) of the city was recorded at 178 at 4 pm, registering an improvement from 268 on Tuesday. Many people are hoping to get relaxation from the GRAP IV restrictions when the matter comes up for hearing in the Supreme Court on Thursday. Earlier, the AQI was recorded in the 'moderate' category with a reading of 198 on October 15. However, the AQI had deteriorated and shifted to the 'poor' category the following day, according to Central Pollution Control Board data. Najafgarh was the least air polluted area with an air quality index of 112 while Mundka was the most polluted area with an AQI 286. Speaking about the improved air quality, an official of the India Meteorological Department said strong surface winds were forecast in the city on Wednesday. The winds will blow till December 7, when a new western disturbance is expected, which will lead to moderate fog starting December 8. Of the 38 air quality monitoring stations in the city, only Sri Aurobindo Marg reported air quality in the 'very poor' category on Wednesday, while eight others showed air quality in the 'poor' category. The remaining reported 'moderate' air quality, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). **Continued on page 2**

Active terror module busted in Srinagar Central Jail

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Counter Intelligence Kashmir (CIK) and State Investigation Agency (SIA) of Jammu and Kashmir Police Wednesday busted an active terror module of proscribed terrorist organizations and recovered mobile phones/SIM cards and other incriminating documents during a surprise raid inside the Central Jail, Srinagar. More than 500 inmates are lodged inside one of the oldest Central Jails of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The investigating agencies are also looking into the aspect of a major security breach of Central Jail premises as to how these digital communication devices reached the jail premises. According to a statement issued by the Jammu and Kashmir police, the searches at Central Jail, Srinagar were conducted in pursuance to a search warrant issued by



Court of Special Judge, Designated under NIA Act, Srinagar in case FIR No. 06/2023 u/s 153-A, 505,121 & 120-B IPC r/w 13 & 39 UA(P) Act. The police spokesman said the Facilitators/collaborators in this act will also become the subject of investigation. During the raid, searches were conducted in different blocks/barracks of Central Jail Srinagar wherein incriminating material in the form of SIM cards, Mobile

phones and other digital devices having bearing on the investigation of the case have been recovered and seized in the case. The police spokesman said that the case pertains to a larger conspiracy hatched by proscribed terrorist organizations operating within J&K and across the LoC at the behest of Pakistani agencies, in connivance with their OGWs/supporters/facilitators/ sympathizers in Kashmir valley. These terrorist organisations and their handlers are continuously in the process of creating 'new terror modules' (gangs) wherein by misusing various social media applications, youths of Kashmir are lured by varied ways and means including radicalisation/ instigation/ provocation etc. to make the youths indulge in unlawful and terrorist activities and also to join terrorist ranks for furthering the activities of these terrorist organizations. During investigation of the instant case, it emerged that mobile phones/ devices are being used in Central Jail, Srinagar premises by under trial terrorists/ OGWs/ supporters/ sympathizers of various proscribed terrorist organizations for communicating with active terrorists and passing on directions so received from the handlers sitting across for furtherance of terrorist activities. **Continued on page 2**

Tharoor's monkey baat...



Congress leader Shashi Tharoor reads a newspaper while a monkey sits on his lap PTI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Known for his extensive vocabulary, veteran politician Shashi Tharoor may have been at a loss of words for a few moments when he had a warm encounter of the wild kind at his residence on Wednesday. He soon shared the "extraordinary experience" he had at his home when a monkey ran towards him, hugged him and after being treated to a couple of bananas. The monkey felt so much at home that he rested on former Union Minister Tharoor's chest, while he continued reading newspapers in the garden. Tharoor shared a series of photos of this unusual encounter on X, and went on to narrate the incident that left many

users of the platform amused. "Had an extraordinary experience today. While I was sitting in the garden, reading my morning newspapers, a monkey wandered in, headed straight for me and parked himself on my lap. He hungrily ate a couple of bananas we offered him, hugged me and proceeded to rest his head on my chest and dozed off," the Congress leader said on X. "I gently began to get up, he leapt off and loped away," Tharoor added. He said reverence for wildlife is ingrained in him, and though he was a bit concerned about the risk of a monkey-bite which would have necessitated anti-rabies shots, he stayed calm and welcomed his presence as non-threatening. "I am gratified that my faith was borne out and our encounter was entirely peaceful and gentle," Tharoor said. Reacting to the post, one X user said, "Probably you got the blessings of Hanuman ji. I zoomed in on all the pictures to find out which newspaper the best Member of Parliament was reading." Another person wrote, "What a beautiful encounter with nature! Moments like these remind us of the deep, unspoken connection we share with other beings. That monkey's trust in you speaks volumes about your aura of kindness. Truly, experiences like these make us pause and appreciate the simplicity and warmth of life beyond words."

Didi clips Abhishek's wings, asserts her leadership



SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Forcing the message down the party line as to who the real boss in the Trinamool Congress (TMC) is, West Bengal Chief Minister (CM) Mamata Banerjee has taken some administrative decisions, making it loud and clear that her decision will be final in all spheres. To begin with the CM has reportedly decided to snap her party's ties with the professional election managers India Political Action Committee (I-PAC) of Prashant Kishore, who was imported into the state politics by her nephew Abhishek Banerjee five years ago. Dealing out an assertive message regarding the party command structure during a meeting of a select few, Banerjee said that she was still in command and that she would continue to remain the final word on the party. "I am still here. I am the final word (in the party). Connect with the people. Speak less, work more. All the decisions will be taken by Bakshi da (former MP Subrata Bakshi) and I," Banerjee said without uttering the name of Abhishek Banerjee, the party general secretary, who is often seen as the CM's successor to the Bengal masnad. She stopped short of asserting her dislike for the recent chorus in the party in favour of Abhishek, whom many leaders wanted to be

appointed as her deputy. Saying that no one should share any information with any "Pack" and that the TMC workers were enough to win elections without any outside "package" Banerjee said that "I am not bothered about these PAC-facs. A lot of incorrect information is coming ... But I will decide on the information I get ... so don't share any information with any Pack." The CM's statement apparently was aimed at I-PAC, insiders said, adding the election consultants were likely to work in Delhi with another political party and there was "good possibility of TMC leaving Prashant Kishore." I-PAC was imported to Bengal politics by Abhishek Banerjee after the 2019 General Elections, which saw the TMC's fortunes dwindle to just 20 seats compared to the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) 18. In fact, it was the junior Banerjee who introduced Kishore to the CM at state secretariat Nabanna. In 2021 Banerjee roared back to power with a thumping majority and much of the credit was given to the poll consultancy firm. Subsequent to 2021's electoral success the general secretary's office and I-PAC gained in prominence and height, while Abhishek used the election consultants for conduct electoral surveys and election campaigns sidelining the

traditional workers. It was during this period that a parallel power hierarchy developed with a number of leaders beginning to show allegiance to Abhishek Banerjee with a senior MLA and former minister Humayun Kabir even going to the extent of advising a deputy CM role for him. "No one can continue in a post for whole life ... besides there is much pressure on Mamata Didi, who is likely to assume bigger role in the national politics in near future ... is so it is time appoint Abhishek Banerjee as the deputy chief minister with the port folio of home ministry," Kabir said even as the party started to get divided vertically between two blocks: one led by the old-timers like Saugato Roy, Kalyan Banerjee, Sudip Bandopadhyay and Firhad Hakim and the other led by Kabir, Naryan Goswami, Shaukat Molla and others. Banerjee's decision to wrest back the organisational reins of the party tends to come at this juncture. As late as on Wednesday the Chief Minister transferred out the State Additional Director General of Criminal Investigation Department Rajshekhara known for his proximity to Abhishek Banerjee to a comparatively less ceremonial post of ADG, Training. He will replace present ADG Training Damyanti Sen.

Opposition protests new railway bill, claims will be used to privatise carrier

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition MPs on Wednesday said the government should not privatise Indian Railways as it will hurt the interest of poor people and demanded that concession for senior citizens be restored. The Bill that seeks to simplify the legal framework in the Railways Act, 1989, however received strong backing from NDA partners, including the TDP, Janata Dal (United), and the LJP (Ram Vilas), in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. However, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners also highlighted areas that need attention, particularly passenger safety and concessions for senior citizens. Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw said the number of rail accidents has come down from 171 during UPA regime to 40 in 2023-24. In the current fiscal, 29 rail

accidents have taken place so far. Minister was replying during the debate on Railways (Amendment) Bill 2024 bill in Lok Sabha, which proposes to simplify the legal framework by incorporating the proposals of the Indian Railway Board Act, 1905 in the Railways Act, 1989. This will reduce the need to refer to two laws. Also, the Rail Budget has been hiked in 10 years from Rs 29,000 crore in 2014 to Rs 2.52 lakh crore, he said. Neeraj Maurya (SP) said the Government should have sent this bill to an all-party committee for deliberation. Manoj Kumar (INC) claimed that after the passage of the Bill, the government would look for scope to privatise railways. Bapi Haldar (TMC) demanded that rail ticket concessions to senior citizens, which was withdrawn during Covid, be restored. Moving the Bill for discussion, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the efficiency

of Indian Railways will improve with the passage of the Bill. Earlier during the Question Hour, replying to the demands of MPs demanding better facilities, Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is focusing on the improvement of services of the general coach passengers and, as part of the process, 1000 more general coaches will be added to the railway network by the end of this month. He said the Railways is also planning to build 10,000 additional general compartment coaches in the coming years. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focus is to improve the services of the general class coaches. As part of the exercise, 1000 more general coaches will be added by the end of December. Our focus is more on general coaches rather than AC second or AC 3rd class coaches," he said during

the Question Hour. TDP MP GM Harish Balayogi praised the Bill for its transformative potential. "This Bill marks a significant step towards shedding outdated colonial laws and replacing them with indigenous, futuristic legislation. It introduces essential changes to streamline administrative and legal procedures, empowering the Railway Board," he said. Janata Dal (United) MP Kaushalendra Kumar lauded safety measures such as the Kavach automatic train protection system but urged the government to address lingering issues. Shrirang Barne of the Shiv Sena echoed the call for benefits for senior citizens, reminding Parliament that concessions were standard practice before the pandemic. LJP (Ram Vilas) MP Rajesh Verma called for an expansion of mechanised laundries across all railway divisions.

BJP accuses Gandhis of Muslim appeasement on Sambhal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday accused Congress MP Rahul Gandhi of enacting a drama over his visit to Sambhal to "appease" the party's Muslim vote bank. The Uttar Pradesh police stopped Gandhi at the Delhi-UP border today, preventing him from visiting the violence-hit city in the BJP-ruled state. BJP's national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said Gandhi wanted to visit Sambhal without giving prior intimation to authorities. He said the Congress and the Samajwadi Party were fighting for Muslim votes. "Rahul Gandhi had gone there without taking his partner in the INDI Alliance with him just to grab media attention. There is a conflict going on between the two parties," Trivedi said in an apparent reference to the Congress and the Samajwadi party. Trivedi said Gandhi did not try to visit Sambhal out of "any sympathy" but to grab media attention and get a "better photo-op" than the leaders of his party's ally Samajwadi Party. Trivedi said Gandhi, who is the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, was required to give a prior intimation to the authorities about his visit because he has been the "highest level of security" after the Prime Minister. "Rahul Gandhi has Z-plus ASL security. ASL means advanced security liaison. This is the highest level of security after the prime minister's. Only the Home Minister and the Defence Minister have this security besides him (Gandhi)," he said. "This so-called yatra of the Congress was motivated by mutual competition among the parties in the INDI alliance to capture and get hold of the core vote. The core vote for which INDI Alliance constituents came together. Nowhere any sympathy for people is visible in it," the BJP Rajya Sabha MP added.



Lt Gen Shankar Narayan, NM, VSM, Commandant inaugurated "DEEPAK HALL" on Monday 02 and dedicated it to troops. Mrs(Dr) Shankar Narayan also graced the occasion along with other senior dignitaries. "DEEPAK HALL" is named in the memory of martyr NAIK (Nur Asst) Deepak Singh who has made the supreme sacrifice for the nation in the line of duty during Operation "SNOW LEOPARD" at GALWAN in the intervening night of 15/16 Jun 2020 and was awarded "VIR CHAKRA" (posthumously) on 26 Jan 2021.

Armyman shot dead in J and K



Security personnel stand guard on a road amid a joint operation by Indian Army and J and K Police. File photo

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

In another targeted strike on an army jawan, unidentified terrorists late Wednesday evening fired upon a soldier who was on leave in the Tral area of South Kashmir's Pulwama district. According to preliminary reports, a jawan of the Territorial Army received bullet injuries on his legs

when he was fired upon outside his residence in the Sofigund Arupal area of Tral. The residents in the neighborhood rushed the injured soldier to a nearby hospital where his condition was stated to be stable. Meanwhile, the security forces have also cordoned off the area and launched searches in the area to nab the terrorists behind the attack.

Active terror module busted...

From page 1

During preliminary investigations it was revealed the suspects/inmates were in continuous touch with the handlers / members of terrorist organisation(s) across the border thereby receiving directions and passing on to the active terrorists active in Kashmir valley. The police spokesman said the raids were conducted inside the jail premises to uncover crucial evidence, curb illicit activities, prevent the misuse of communication devices, such as mobile phones, within the security zones including the jails and dismantling the terror ecosystem in the UT by not only identifying terrorist associates/Over Ground Workers (OGWs) supporting and abetting terrorism by misusing the mobile phones but by ensuring legal action against them as envisaged by the law of the land.

Delhi boxer kills his entire family to avenge 'insult'

From page 1

Upon returning, he pretended to be shocked on seeing his family members lying dead, police said. Arjun had alerted the neighbours about finding the bodies lying in the house after he returned from a morning walk. However, an injury on Arjun's hand led to the police being suspicious of his involvement in the crime. "A PCR call was received around 6.53 am. The crime and forensics team were also called to the scene to gather evidence. Rajesh was found lying on the first floor, while the women were on the ground floor. The attacker used a sharp-edged weapon. Prima facie, there is no ransacking or stealing of articles from the house.

Further, proceedings are in progress. A case of murder has been registered at the Neb Sarai Police Station," Deputy Commissioner of police (south) Ankit Singh said. Upon sustained interrogation, the police found Arjun's versions changing, and he was unable to provide satisfactory answers. The police also analysed CCTV footage of his route. Speaking about the incident, Satish Kumar, Arjun's maternal uncle, said, "Rajesh was my brother-in-law. I received a call from my nephew (Arjun) about the incident. Rajesh had retired from the Army, and was currently working as a security officer. His daughter was a college student. I used to talk to my sister every two to three

days." Kumar suggested that a financial dispute might be the possible motive for the attack. Another neighbor said that the saddest part about the tragedy is that today also happened to be Rajesh and Komal's 27th wedding anniversary. "He was an introvert and kept to himself. None of us can comprehend the reason behind this murder," he said. An elderly woman neighbour said that the family's main door has an interlock system that can be operated from both sides. Soon after the incident, former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal launched a scathing attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Central government after three members of a family were found dead at their home

in the National Capital. Describing the incident as "extremely painful and frightening," Kejriwal, who is also the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convener, accused the Centre of allowing criminals a free hand and failing to ensure law and order in the capital. "Three murders in the same house in Neb Sarai... This is extremely painful and frightening. Every day, Delhiites wake up to such frightening news. Criminals have been given a free hand, law and order has collapsed. Homes are being destroyed, innocent lives are being lost. And those who are responsible are silently watching all this happen," he wrote in a post on X. "Will the Central Government keep quiet like this and watch

the law and order situation in Delhi collapse? Will its party still say that crime is not an issue in Delhi?" he added. The Delhi Police reports to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs. Delhi Chief Minister Atishi also launched a sharp attack on the ruling party, accusing it of failing to fulfil its responsibility of providing security to the residents. "There was a triple murder in Neb Sarai this morning. Murders are happening in broad daylight in Delhi, bullets are being fired, drugs are being sold openly. The central government has only one responsibility in Delhi, to provide security to the people of Delhi. They have completely failed in their responsibility" she said.

NCR breathes 'moderate' air after 50 days

From page 1

The primary pollutants on Wednesday were PM2.5, with levels recorded at 66.8 µg/m at 4 pm, while PM10 levels were 149.5 µg/m at the same time. These fine particles pose significant health risks as they can penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream. Meanwhile, the Decision Support System (DSS), the primary tool used to assess and estimate the sources of pollution in Delhi, has not been updated since Friday. A Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) official stated that the DSS is still undergoing development and has not yet been fully operationalised. "An evaluation committee reviewed the system and found that its data and accuracy did not meet the

terms of reference established for the model. Additionally, it was observed that some of the data and the emissions inventory being used were outdated," the official explained, seeking anonymity. According to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, (CREA) report on air pollution, Delhi ranked as the most polluted city in India in November 2024, recording a monthly average PM2.5 concentration of 249 µg/m, surpassing the daily NAAQS limit of 60 µg/m 100% of the days in the month. Delhi recorded 20 days in the 'Very Poor' (121-250 µg/m) category and 10 days in the 'Severe' (>250 µg/m) category. The November average is 2.2 times higher than the October average of 111 µg/m, when there were 5 days in the 'Satisfactory'

category, 8 days in the 'Moderate' category, 4 days in the 'Poor' (91-120 µg/m) category, and 14 days in the 'Very Poor' (121-250 µg/m) category. In November 2024, the number of cities with 'Good' (0-30 µg/m) air quality dropped significantly to 32, compared to 79 in October. Meanwhile, cities with 'Satisfactory' (31-60 µg/m) air quality decreased from 135 in October to 77 in November. The number of cities experiencing 'Moderate' (61-90 µg/m) air quality rose to 86 in November, up from 44 in October. There was also a notable increase in cities with 'Poor' (91-120 µg/m) air quality, rising from 5 in October to 50 in November, and 23 cities recorded 'Very Poor' (121-250 µg/m) air quality, compared to 0 in the previous month.

Fadnavis wins Maha musical chairs

From page 1

It did not happen then. But, this time around, Devendra Fadnavis has staged a comeback as the chief minister of Maharashtra. Earlier at a BJPLP meeting held at the Central Hall of Vidhan Bhavan on Thursday morning, senior party leaders Chandrakant Patil and Sudhir Mungantiwar proposed the name of Fadnavis as the Legislature Party leader, Pankaja Munde and Pravin Darekar seconded his name. After that, BJP's central observer Vijay Rupani declared that Fadnavis had been elected unopposed as the BJPLP leader. Congratulating Fadnavis on his election as the BJPLP leader, Union Finance Minister and party's central observer Nirmala Sitharaman said: "The 14 crore people of Maharashtra have given us a mandate for 'Vikasit Bharat'. The double engine government under PM Narendra Modi's guidance will drive Maharashtra to new heights

of growth with full fervour and strength. The promises made in the manifesto will be fulfilled." Later in the afternoon, Fadnavis, accompanied by Eknath Shinde of the Shiv Sena (ES) and Ajit Pawar of the NCP (AP), drove to Raj Bhavan and called on the Governor. Together, the three MahaYuti leaders staked a claim to form a new government in the state. The BJP, which has emerged as the single largest in the recent Assembly polls with 132 out of total 288 seats, staking claim to form a new government. Eknath Shinde of the Shiv Sena (with 57 MLAs), Ajit Pawar of the NCP-AP (with 41 MLAs) and some Independent MLAs gave letters of support in Fadnavis' name. Satisfied with the claim, the Governor invited Fadnavis, Shinde and Ajit Pawar in the swearing-in ceremony scheduled for Thursday. Earlier, speaking at the BJPLP meeting after his election as its leader, Fadnavis thanked the party's newly elected MLAs for

electing him as the BJPLP leader unanimously. "You people have elected me unopposed. With this, my responsibility has increased." "The outcome in the recent election was historic. The verdict has proved our slogan "Ek hain tho safe hain". After the Lok Sabha polls, it has once again been proved 'Modi hain toh mumkin hai'... I would like to bow before the people of the state for giving us a landslide victory in the polls. I would also like to thank MahaYuti leaders Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar on this occasion." Fadnavis thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for making an ordinary party worker like him as the chief minister of the state for the third time "We have not come into politics for big posts. Let's work for the larger interests of the people. Certain things may go in our favour, while certain other things may go against us. That being the case, let's work together in the larger interests of the people," he said.

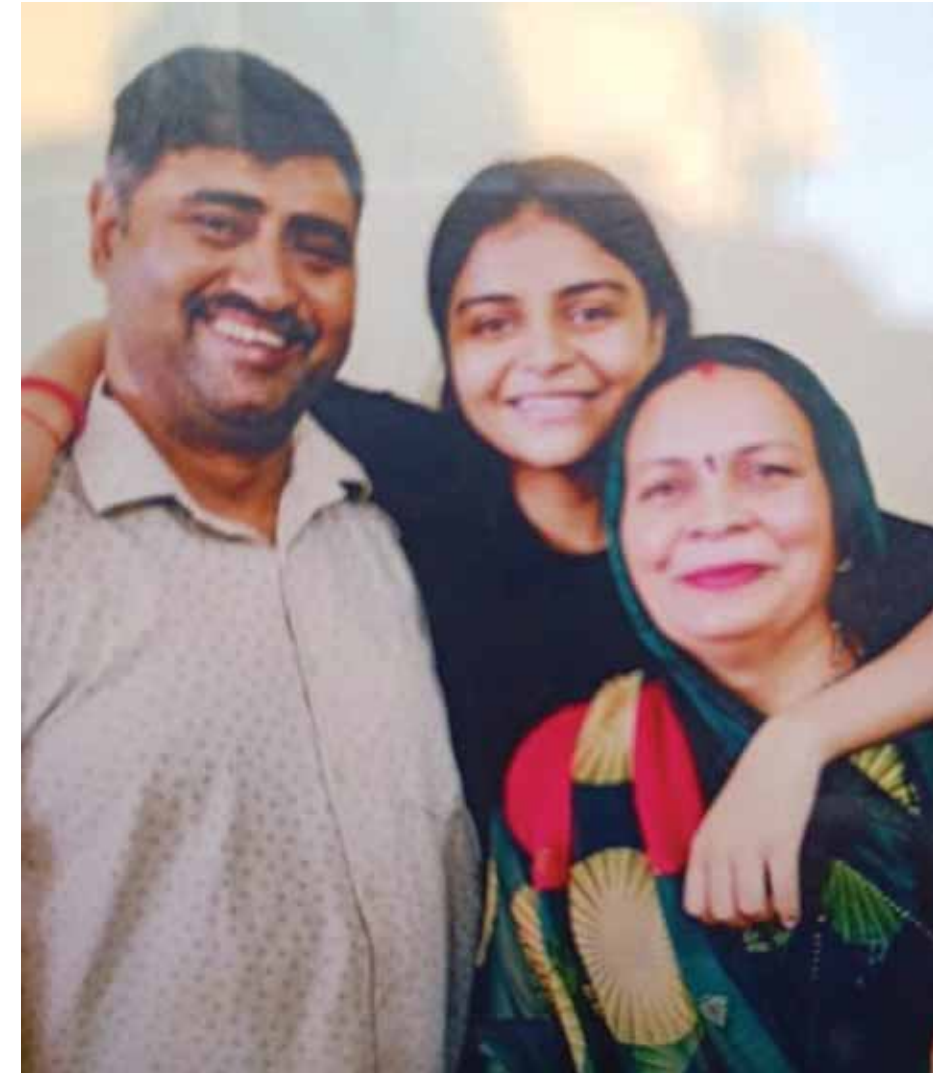
Commuters suffer, police, Cong lock horns...

From page 1

The Uttar Pradesh Police put up barricades and checked vehicles to prevent any untoward incident and Congress workers were seen attempting to climb over the barricades amid sloganeering. A scuffle broke out near the barricades. Prime facie, it seemed that some commuters and Congress workers clashed with each other at the border. With the carriageway from Delhi to Uttar Pradesh heavily congested, commuters faced a harrowing time in reaching their destinations. The other carriageway was open, but the vehicles moved at a snail's speed. Members of the Congress' youth wing raised slogans and waved the party flag as the police stopped Gandhi, citing prohibitory orders in place in Sambhal. The leaders left Delhi at around 10.15 am and reached the border at around 11 am.

However, their convoy was unable to move further. After they were blocked, Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal tweeted, "We are determined to meet the victims' families in the interest of peace and communal harmony in our country, the UP government must allow the delegation to visit Sambhal". Earlier, Ghaziabad Police Commissioner Ajay Kumar Mishra said, "We will not permit Rahul Gandhi to Sambhal as prohibitory orders have been issued by the administration there. Police will stop Gandhi at UP gate." A senior Delhi Police officer said the force has been deployed at the border to manage traffic, which is being diverted. Assistant Commissioner of Police Swatantra Kumar Singh said that they had inputs about the gathering on the highway. "We deployed security personnel to prevent any untoward incident," he said.

Changing testimonies and a bite mark helped cracked the triple murder case



Murder victims (Left to right) Rajesh (53), his 23-year-old daughter Kavita, and his wife Komal (47). Photo by RANJAN DIMRI

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A bite mark on the hand of a 20-year-old man led to the Delhi Police cracking a mysterious triple murder case, where a couple and their daughter were killed, in south Delhi's Neb Sarai area in only 10 hours on Wednesday. The national Capital was left shocked, when on Wednesday morning 51-year-old Rajesh Kumar Tanwar, his 46-year-old wife, Komal and their 23-year-old daughter, Kavita were found dead in their home. The accused, who was identified as Arjun Tanwar alias Bunty, carefully executed the plan to murder his family on his parent's 27th marriage anniversary even as he went for a jog to Sunder van park to establish his alibi. However, the police found his body language and changing statements suspicious, which led to conduct sustained interrogation. At first, the police analysed the CCTV footage around the

house. However they did not find anyone going in or out of the house at the time of the incident. "On sustained interrogation, his versions kept changing as he improvised his statements. We also inquired him about the bite mark on his finger but he could not give any satisfactory answers, which further made us more sure," a police source stated. He added that after analysing the accused's route to the park, his jog seemed very short as if trying to establish an alibi to avoid suspicion. Another one also said that he specifically chose this date, when his parent's anniversary falls, to gain sympathy. "Another clue was also that in the place of the incident, blood marks were very few, as if someone tried to clean it and there were no articles that were stolen indicating that someone known is involved," he said. The murder took place between 5 am and 7 am in the

morning, when everyone is usually sleeping. "A PCR call was received around 6.53 am. The crime and forensics team were also called to the scene to collect evidence. Rajesh was found lying on the first floor, while the women were on the ground floor. The attacker used a sharp-edged weapon. Prima facie, there is no ransacking or stealing of articles from the house. Further, proceedings are in progress. A case of murder has been registered at the Neb Sarai Police Station," Ankit Singh, deputy commissioner of police (south) said. According to the police, Arjun felt insulted by his family and was afraid that his parents will name his sister in their will. This according to the police was the intention behind the murders. "He was insulted in front of people on his elder sister's birthday on December 1, which worked as the final nail in the coffin," a police source added.

Bansuri Swaraj demands Kejriwal speak on Sukhbir shooting, Punjab law and order

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Attacking the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government over the shooting incident involving Punjab's former deputy chief minister Sardar Sukhbir Singh Badal in the Golden Temple premises in Amritsar, New Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party MP, Bansuri Swaraj demanded AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal to break his silence and held him accountable to Punjabis across the country. Swaraj directly questioned

Kejriwal and Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann, stating, "If the Punjab government cannot ensure the safety of a former deputy chief minister in the Golden Temple premises, how can it guarantee the safety of the people of Punjab? If such incidents occur in such a sacred place, what hope does the common man have?" She added that crimes against women have increased by over 10 per cent since the AAP came to power in Punjab, and the conviction rate in such cases has dropped below 20 per

cent. The Lok Sabha MP criticized AAP's track record on safety and security, stating that the Punjab High Court repeatedly reprimands the Punjab government, its police, and investigative agencies. Swaraj highlighted an incident where weapons disappeared from Punjab Police custody and criticized Kejriwal and Mann for their silence. She pointed out that on November 18, the High Court sharply commented on the nexus between Punjab Police and criminals.

Vijender Gupta accuses AAP of holding back Central funds

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Vijender Gupta, Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Delhi Assembly, on Wednesday accused the Aam Aadmi Party-led government in the Capital of not providing its share of funds for central government projects designed to benefit the people of Delhi during the final day of the winter session of the Delhi Assembly. Gupta cited a letter sent by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) to the Delhi chief secretary on November 20. He stated that the letter requested the Delhi government to release Rs 7,000 crore for the Aerocity to Tughlakabad, RK Ashram to Janakpuri (West), and Mukundpur to Majupur corridors under Phase IV of the metro project. In the letter, Vikas Kumar, managing director of the DMRC wrote, "The Phase-IV Project work is in full swing and to complete the project in time, continuous flow of funds is essential. Thus, it is earnestly requested that the funds sought under Revised Budget Estimates (RE 2024-25) for Phase-IV Project including balance three corridors, increased completion cost of



BJP leaders protest outside Delhi Assembly. Photo by RANJAN DIMRI

Phase-III project and long pending reimbursement of operating loss may please be sanctioned and approval of Delhi Cabinet may also be accorded, if required, so that the funds can be released to the DMRC smoothly. Your kind intervention in this matter is earnestly solicited to ensure the timely release of the necessary funds, which are crucial for the successful execution of the Phase-IV project and addressing the associated financial obligations. If these are not made available timely, the execution of Phase-IV would be delayed leading to cost overrun," the letter read. However, Gupta alleged that while the Delhi government

increased revenue expenditures in its revised budget estimates, it ignored the DMRC's request and did not allocate the required funds in the revised budget sent to the Ministry of Home Affairs. The LoP claimed that this indicates the AAP government does not want to provide the metro connectivity under Phase IV to Delhi residents and is deliberately obstructing the project. The BJP MLA further highlighted that the Delhi government has also failed to contribute its share of funds for the Eastern Peripheral Road being constructed by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and the Rapid Rail Project by the NCRTC.

Collision on Dwarka Expressway, one dead



A vehicle burns after a collision between two cars on Dwarka Expressway. PTI

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 36-year-old man was charred to death in a car after it caught fire following a collision with an SUV on a flyover in Dwarka Sector 21 in the early hours of Wednesday. According to the police, the deceased has been identified as Arvind Kumar, who is a resident of Faruk Nagar in Haryana's Gurugram district. Ankit Singh, deputy commissioner of police (Dwarka) said that on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday, at about 12.15 am, information about the accident and burning of two vehicles on the Dwarka Expressway was received in Sector 23 Dwarka police station. "Based on this information, the police reached the Yashobhoomi flyover and found Hyundai Creta car and Maruti Suzuki Eco van in accidental and burning conditions. The fire brigade as requisitioned reached there," he added. A Delhi Fire Services (DFS)

official said that a call regarding the fire was received at 12.20 am, and two fire tenders were dispatched to the scene. "By the time the fire tenders arrived, both vehicles were fully engulfed in fire," the official said, adding that it is suspected that the two vehicles collided head-on. "The occupants of the Creta managed to get out in time, but the person inside the Eco was trapped. His charred body was recovered from the car after the fire was extinguished," the officer added. The death of the victim happened due to the accident and fire, he said. A crime team inspected the scene, and the body was taken to the Safdarjung Hospital mortuary. An FIR under sections 281 (rash driving or riding on a public way) and 106A (causing death by negligence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita has been registered, and efforts are underway to identify the victim. "Further investigation is underway," police officials stated.

After bail, Naresh Balyan rearrested under MCOCA

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Naresh Balyan, MLA from Uttam Nagar and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader, was rearrested shortly after being granted bail in an extortion case by a Delhi court. He was rearrested under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA). Balyan was first arrested on November 30, 2024, by the Delhi Police crime branch over an audio clip allegedly involving a conversation between him and a gangster. On Wednesday, additional chief metropolitan magistrate, Paras Dalal, granted relief to Balyan on a personal bond of Rs 50,000 and one surety of like amount. The judge clarified that Balyan was arrested on Wednesday in the second case while he was in police custody. He was taken from the court to the crime branch office. During the hearing, the police urged the additional chief metropolitan magistrate to send the accused to judicial custody, while seeking his fresh arrest in another case lodged under stringent MCOCA. "We will be arresting Naresh Balyan in a different MCOCA

FIR. We will be arresting him right now," Akhand Pratap Singh, special public prosecutor, submitted before the court of magistrate. While first introduced in Maharashtra in 1999, the applicability of the Act extends to the National Capital Territory. The Delhi police had got the custody of Balyan for one day on Tuesday. The police claimed that he was non-cooperative during the investigation. The development came after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alleged that Balyan was involved in extortion and questioned why AAP chief and former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has not taken action against him. The ruling AAP, however, defended Balyan and termed his arrest illegal. The MLA also refuted the BJP's allegations and said he would file police cases against those who "spread lies" about him. Reacting to Balyan's arrest, AAP said this arrest is only to silence Arvind Kejriwal who is regularly questioning Union Home Minister Amit Shah on the failed law and order situation in Delhi. Delhi is becoming a den of gangsters and extortionists.

Longest tunnel in Phase IV of Delhi metro completed

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on Wednesday achieved a significant construction milestone in Phase-IV with the completion of the longest underground tunnel between Tughlakabad Airforce Launching shaft and Maa Anandmayee Marg on the Tughlakabad-Aerocity corridor. A statement by the DMRC read, "The breakthrough of the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) AMRIT at the Anandmayee Marg site of the Delhi Metro took place in the presence of Rajiv Dhankher, director projects and senior officials." It added that a TBM broke through this morning at Maa Anandmayee Marg Station after boring 2.65-kilometre-long tunnel. "This tunnel breakthrough was achieved using a mammoth 105-metre-long TBM. Two parallel circular tunnels for up and down movement are being constructed on this stretch as part of the Aerocity-Tughlakabad corridor," it said, adding that the breakthrough on the other parallel tunnel is expected to be achieved in January 2025.

LG appoints 1,669 home guard volunteers



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena distributed appointment letters for enrolment of home guard to 1,669 volunteers, who have been selected following due recruitment process. Significantly, of the new appointees, 19 percent are erstwhile Civil Defence Volunteers (CDVs) and 181 are women candidates, a statement from the Raj Niwas read on Wednesday. Saxena, in January this year, had cleared enrolment of more than 10,285 new home guard personnel and directed that CDVs be given preference by way of extra credits in the selection. This was done to provide alternate employment opportunities to CDVs, who were terminated at the behest of the then chief minister Arvind Kejriwal in November, 2023. The LG had issued directions to

squeeze the timeline for selection and asked for the process to be completed at the earliest. However, following the advertisement for recruitment of these 10,285 home guards, several candidates had gone to court, which resulted in appointment to 7,939 posts pending the final outcome of two court cases. Saxena had then directed for immediate appointment of 2,346 home guards, who qualified their Physical Measurement and Efficiency Test (PMET) and written test, underlining that the remaining could be filled once the court decisions came. The LG had also directed that a dedicated medical camp be organised within one-week for the medical tests of the qualified candidates and subsequently letters of appointment be handed over to them at the earliest.

Fourth BJP leader turns coat to AAP



Pravesh Ratan joins AAP in presence of party leader Manish Sisodia. PTI

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Pravesh Ratan, who unsuccessfully contested the Patel Nagar reserved constituency in the 2020 Delhi Assembly polls, joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday. Ratan, who belongs to the Jatav community, joined the AAP in the presence of senior leaders Manish Sisodia and Durgesh Pathak at the party's headquarters. Ratan has previously held key positions in the BJP and contested from the Patel Nagar Assembly constituency. This marks the

fourth major entry from the BJP to AAP in recent days. Earlier, on November 17, Anil Jha, a two-time MLA from Delhi's Kirari Assembly constituency, three-time MLA Brahm Singh Tanwar from Chhatrapur, and B.B. Tyagi, a two-time councillor, former Standing Committee Chairman, from Laxmi Nagar, also left BJP to join AAP with their supporters. The move comes months after AAP leader and former MLA from Patel Nagar Raaj Kumar Anand joined the BJP. Anand resigned as minister in the Delhi government and quit AAP in April. He was later disqualified as MLA by the Delhi Assembly Speaker. In July, Anand joined the BJP along with another AAP MLA Kartar Singh Tanwar. Ratan who contested the 2020 Delhi polls as a BJP candidate was defeated by Anand by over 30,000 votes. In the Assembly polls due in February 2025, the two leaders may be again pitted against one another as candidates of their new parties. Senior AAP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia officially welcomed Pravesh Ratan into the AAP by presenting him with the party patka and cap. Ratan, while addressing the gathering began by expressing his gratitude to Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia, whom he credited as the driving force behind his decision. Ratan said he was inspired by AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal and the way he helped people, especially those belonging to the weaker sections, save money because of free facilities provided by the AAP government. "The community from which I come has immense love for Arvind Kejriwal. I am not happy with the working style of the Delhi state BJP. I am here now and will stay here," he said.

Healthcare, finance most vulnerable to AI, deepfakes: Indian Cyber Threat Report

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The India Cyber Threat Report 2025 by the Data Security Council of India (DSCI) and Seqrite, in its report said Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven and deepfake-enabled cyberattacks are anticipated to become increasingly prevalent in 2025 with sectors like healthcare and finance most prone targets. The report spotlighted the evolving tactics of cybercriminals and the rise of AI-driven attacks as a major concern. "Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be used to develop highly sophisticated phishing campaigns utilising deepfake technology and personalized attack vectors, making them harder to detect. AI-driven malware will adapt in real-time to evade traditional security measures, while data

poisoning attacks will compromise the integrity of critical AI systems in sectors such as healthcare and autonomous transportation," the report noted. Deepfake technology will create compelling malicious content, including fake video or audio messages from trusted sources. This will facilitate more effective social engineering attacks, making it easier for cybercriminals to deceive users into executing malware or revealing sensitive information, it added. The integration of AI capabilities with vulnerabilities in supply chains will lead to new types of cyber threats. Cybercriminals will employ AI-driven methods to execute intricate attacks, taking advantage of compromised development resources and hardware manufacturing processes to insert malicious

code through corrupted libraries and embedded hardware, it said. As AI tools become more accessible, attackers can automate and scale their operations, making it easier to target a wider range of victims. The report said this trend will likely lead to a surge in ransomware attacks, where malicious actors demand payment for the restoration of compromised data. The rise of internet devices will open new avenues for cybercriminals to develop large-scale botnets. Vulnerabilities in poorly secured devices will be exploited to carry out Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attacks, which could disrupt essential services in industries such as manufacturing and healthcare that depend on edge computing, it said. "Critical infrastructure sectors

in India, including healthcare, finance, and energy, will remain prime targets for cybercriminals. These attacks will aim to disrupt services, steal sensitive data, and exploit geopolitical tensions, emphasizing the need for robust security frameworks and continuous monitoring to protect essential services," the report, which studied over 18 industry sectors, said. Furthermore, the convergence of fake government service applications and fraudulent investment platforms will create hybrid threats in 2025, it said. Cybercriminals will create advanced applications that mimic government benefit systems and investment services, using social engineering, influencer marketing, and sophisticated malware to carry out widespread financial fraud and identity theft, targeting public welfare recipients and

retail investors alike. Additionally, the rise of cryptocurrency mining will invite a surge in cryptojacking attacks, where malware hijacks computing resources to mine cryptocurrencies without the user's knowledge. The changing threat landscape of 2025 requires CISOs to fundamentally rethink their cybersecurity strategies, the report said, adding that traditional security models are becoming ineffective against emerging quantum threats and AI-driven attacks. It recommended embracing AI and ML (machine learning) for threat detection and response. "The increasing complexity of cyber threats--such as zero-day exploits, polymorphic malware, and advanced persistent threats (APTs)--requires the automation and speed that AI-driven systems provide."

Peace in border areas pre-requisite for developing ties with China: EAM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday said in the Rajya Sabha peace and tranquility in border areas is a pre-requisite for the development of bilateral ties with China and the two sides will be discussing de-escalation and effective management of activities in these areas in the coming days. He made these assertions while making a statement on India-China relations. A brief uproar was also witnessed following the statement and Opposition MPs walked out of the House after Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar, disallowed them from seeking some clarifications. Jaishankar, while making a statement on "Recent Developments in India's Relations with China", also

said disengagement has now been achieved in full in eastern Ladakh through a step-by-step process, culminating in Depsang and Demchok. He had earlier made an identical statement in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. Jaishankar, in his statement, said India was and remains very clear that the three key principles must be observed in all circumstances, he said explaining: "one: both sides should strictly respect and observe the Line of Actual Control (LAC), two: neither side should attempt to unilaterally alter the status quo, and three: agreements and understandings reached in the past must be fully abided by in their entirety". "Our relationship has progressed in many domains, but was obviously negatively affected by recent events. We are clear that the mainte-



nance of peace and tranquility in border areas is a pre-requisite for the development of our ties. In the coming days, we will be discussing both de-escalation as well as effective management of our activities in the border areas," he said. He said with the task of disengagement completed, it is now our expectation that dis-

ussions would commence in regard to the remaining issues that we had placed on the agenda. "The conclusion of the disengagement phase now allows us to consider other aspects of our bilateral engagement in a calibrated manner, keeping our national security interests first and foremost," he said. Jaishankar's detailed statement came weeks after Indian and Chinese militaries completed the disengagement of troops from two last face-off points in eastern Ladakh, effectively ending the over four-year military face-off along the LAC in eastern Ladakh. "The next priority will be to consider de-escalation, that would address the massing of troops along the LAC with associated accompaniments," he said.

Soon after the Minister completed his statement, Opposition leaders wanted to seek some clarifications. It was, however, disallowed by the Chair, leading to a brief ruckus in the House. "Time and again, I have invited your attention, indulgence, that we are being watched by the entire nation and our demeanour is causing a serious dilution of the institution, an institution meant for debate is not having it, therefore getting into irrelevance," Dhankhar said as Opposition members demanded that the minister answer their questions. "The rule on a statement is explicit. The Minister... Has taken the House in confidence. He could be as exhaustive as possible," he said. Chairman said the House rule on statements is explicit wherein no questions are

asked at the time of the making of a statement. "Even on such an issue, the kind of indecorous behaviour I saw, the kind of body language reflected, when I say it every time, it does not earn me any accolades," Dhankhar said. "I want you to kindly contribute and believe in some kind of rules. I have no doubt the statement of the honourable minister must have been seen by the entire country. They must be taking note of how comprehensively he has expressed his point of view." "Evolve some kind of consensus. There are issues of security and national importance where we need to display exemplary conduct," Dhankhar added. As the Chair did not allow questions, opposition MPs staged a walkout.

Over one lakh positions vacant in CAPFs, AR: Government

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Over one lakh positions are vacant in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) and Assam Rifles (AR), Rajya Sabha was informed on Wednesday. The total posted strength of CAPF and AR was 9,48,204 as on September 30, according to the Union Home Ministry data. Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said the government is taking steps to fill the vacancies expeditiously. It has created 71,231 new posts in the CAPFs and AR in the last five years, according to the data provided by Rai in a written response to a question. The minister said vacancies in CAPFs and AR arise on account of retirements, resignations, promotions, deaths, the raising of a new battalion, the creation of new posts, etc, and filling them up is a continuous process. The data showed that 1,00,204 posts are vacant in CAPFs



and AR with 33,730 vacancies in CRPF; 31,782 in CISF; 12,808 in BSF; 9,861 in ITBP; 8,646 in SSB and 3,377 in AR as on October 30. "The Ministry has been taking and will continue to take earnest steps to fill up the vacancies expeditiously through UPSC, SSC and the forces concerned," the minister said. He said the government has taken several steps to increase intake like a reduction in the time taken for medical examination to expedite the recruitment, lowering the cut-off marks for short-listing candidates for Constable-GD to get sufficient candidates (especially in categories where shortfalls have been observed).

The data cited by the minister shows that 42,797 CAPF and AR personnel have availed 100 days' leave in a year between 2020 and October 2024. To a question on financial assistance provided to martyred CAPF and AR personnel through the Bharat Ke Veer portal, the minister said financial assistance of Rs 25 lakh in addition to other financial entitlements is being provided to next of kin (NoKs) of martyrs through the portal. "The Bharat Ke Veer Trust ensures that NoK of martyrs get a minimum of Rs one crore from all entitlements. Parents of married martyrs are also provided financial assistance of Rs. 10 Lakh from 'Bharat Ke Veer Trust'," he said. The minister said the Bharat Ke Veer portal was launched in 2017 while the Bharat Ke Veer Trust was established in 2018 and 501 dependents of martyrs have been provided financial assistance from it so far.

Were OCCRP's Adani reports funded by US agencies?

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), which published articles on the Adani Group last year, is now under the scanner over its funding from the US government agencies. French newspaper 'Mediapart' in an investigative piece published on Monday has revealed about its ties with the US government and certain vested stakeholders. "While the OCCRP does indicate on its website that it receives funding from the US Department of State, and notably from the US Agency for International Development, USAID, it conceals the extent of the funding and the strings attached to it from its media partners, journalists and the wider public. The US government financing is never mentioned in OCCRP-produced articles," the French newspaper mentioned.

It mentioned OCCRP receives a huge share of funding from certain stakeholders from United States including US Agency for International Development (USAID). "The OCCRP has omitted from its official history the role played by the US government in its creation, only mentioning the funding by the UN. Sullivan responds to that by underlining that the UN Democracy Fund payment was indeed the first that the NGO received," Mediapart stated. Since its inception, OCCRP has received at least \$47 million from the US government, \$14 million from European countries (Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Slovakia and France) and 1.1 million from the European Union. "The OCCRP appears uncomfortable about the scale of US funding, as the amounts are not published on the NGO's website," Mediapart noted further. According to Mediapart,

OCCRP has funded a programme which uses investigations by OCCRP to prompt sanction procedures and judicial probes. "The Department of State also gave 173,324 dollars to the OCCRP for a mission of "uncovering and combatting Venezuelan corruption" - Venezuela's autocratic president Nicolás Maduro is a high-profile enemy of the US," the French newspaper revealed. In the same article Mediapart stated for a journalistic organisation to lead such activities upon the initiative and with the funding of the US, even for a just cause, raises important ethical questions. The revelations made by Mediapart come at a time when industrialist Gautam Adani is in the thick of storm over dubious allegations of bribery in US which has rocked the Parliament since day one of ensuing Winter Session.

Stalled MGNREGS funds: Centre not discriminating against Bengal, says Chouhan



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With funds under the flagship MGNREGS stalled for West Bengal for more than two years now, Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday said the Centre is not discriminating against the state, which he blamed for not complying with the Union government's directives. His comments comes a day after the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the central government clashed in Parliament over the disbursement of funds under the MGNREGS to the State, after TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee claimed in the Lok Sabha that the West Bengal government is yet to receive funds under the central scheme for the fiscal years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. The funds for West Bengal under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) have been stopped since March 2022 due to non-compliance of directives of the Central government, according to the Ministry of Rural Development. Asked what is the way forward, Chouhan told reporters at a press conference here, "We are concerned about the poor people in West Bengal as well. We have asked for certain compliances, and if the state fulfils them, we will consider it". Chouhan also said the state has been provided funds under other schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY). "West Bengal has received funds under PM Sadak Yojana

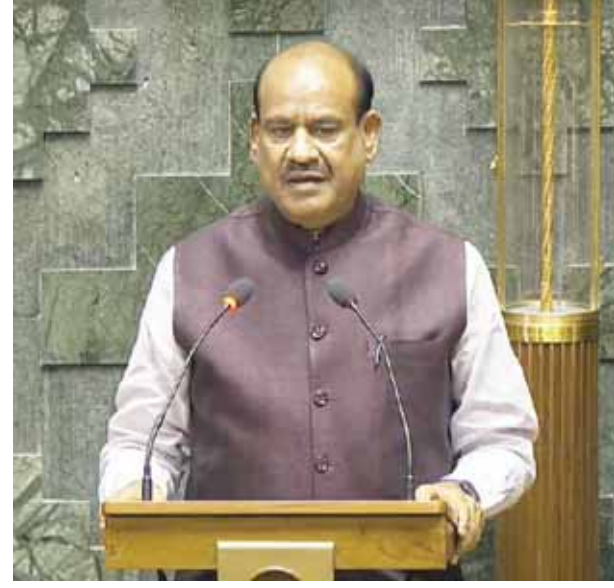
because there were no discrepancies in that. We give funds for a purpose. If that purpose is not met, if names of schemes are changed, non-eligible people are made beneficiaries, standards are not followed, should we not ask for answers? Should we keep giving money," Chouhan asked. "The Centre has the right to conduct a probe. It was done, irregularities were found, so we had to take action," he said. The minister added that action will be taken if similar irregularities are found in other states. While replying during the Question Hour in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, Chouhan strongly refuted Trinamool Congress member Kalyan Banerjee's allegation that Central funds under various welfare schemes were not released to West Bengal. Chouhan also accused the West Bengal government of diverting Central funds and making "undeserving" people beneficiaries of welfare schemes. "It has been demonstrated that non-beneficiaries have been registered as beneficiaries, and vice versa, under this scheme. The names of village development schemes were changed, which is not permissible. For instance, they committed an offence by renaming the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana as their own. Furthermore, benefits intended for beneficiaries have been given to non-beneficiaries," Chouhan had said in Parliament on Tuesday. Trinamool Congress has been repeatedly accusing the Union government of depriving the state of Central funds.

LS Speaker urges MPs not to create hindrances

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of Opposition MPs holding protests at the entry gate of Parliament House, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Wednesday urged MPs not to create hindrances as it obstructs those entering the building, especially women members. His appeal came a day after the Lok Sabha secretariat urged MPs not to hold protests in front of the gates of Parliament House, contending that such obstruction of movement could affect their safety and security. "I request all political parties not to obstruct the entry gate when others are entering the

building to attend proceedings. Women MPs have personally flagged their difficulty. I have already given directions and I request once again that if there is an issue, meet me but there should be no obstruction at the entry gate," Birla said ahead of Zero Hour. The secretariat's advisory on Tuesday came on a day parliamentarians held protests on the steps of Makar Dwar of Parliament, a gate reserved exclusively for their use and that of the officials. "Members are requested not to hold protests or demonstrations in front of gates of Parliament House as such actions cause serious hindrance to the movement of members to the Parliament Chambers



during sittings of the Houses," the advisory said. Earlier, the Speaker said Ministers should give up the habit of responding to members during the Question Hour till permitted by the Chair. This came after Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav made a comment while Union Minister Pralhad Joshi was replying to a question on solar energy and Union Minister Piyush Goyal responded to the Kannauj MP. Goyal earlier served as Power Minister. Joshi, who holds the New and Renewable Energy portfolio, was responding to supplementaries related to Pradhan Mantri-Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana (PM-SGBMY). Birla said Ministers should

not reply to members till they are allowed by the Chair. Later, the Speaker also asked members to keep their questions and answers short. He made the comments when Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia was responding to questions about BSNL. Scindia was also asked to keep his reply short. Members and Ministers should keep their questions and answers crisp and to the point so that more members can get the opportunity to ask questions during the Question Hour, Birla said. He was of the view that all 20 questions selected for oral reply through a lottery system should be taken up during the Question Hour.

UP Gangster Act appears to be draconian, observes SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday observed that the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act appeared to be "draconian". The observation by a bench of Justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan came while it was hearing a plea filed by a man who has challenged a May 2023 Allahabad High Court order dismissing his application seeking to set aside proceedings against him pending before a District Court in Kasganj in a case registered under the Act. "This Act appears to be draconian," the apex court observed. "We will consider it," the bench said while admitting the appeal. While hearing the matter in November last year, the SC had sought responses from the Uttar Pradesh Government and others on the plea and said, "By way of ad-interim order, no coercive steps be taken against the petitioner qua Gangster Act." On Wednesday the petitioner's counsel said he has been



booked in the case under the provisions of the 1986 Act on allegations of illegal mining in the Ganga river. The counsel argued that earlier, another FIR related to alleged illegal mining was registered. "They have booked me twice for the same allegation," the lawyer argued. The counsel appearing for the State referred to the provisions of the 1986 Act. "It requires consideration," the bench said, adding that a separate plea challenging the constitutional validity of certain provisions of the Act was also pending adjudication before it. Before the High

Court, the counsel appearing for the petitioner argued that he was falsely implicated in the case lodged under the Gangsters Act. His counsel had claimed before the high court that the case has been lodged under the Gangsters Act only on the basis of another case in which the petitioner has not been named. On November 29, the top court agreed to hear a separate plea challenging the validity of certain provisions of the Act and issued notice to the Uttar Pradesh government seeking its response on the petition.

970 persons rehabilitated under SMILE sub-scheme: RS told

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A total of 970 persons have been rehabilitated under the SMILE sub-scheme, which focuses on the comprehensive rehabilitation of individuals, including children, engaged in begging, the Rajya Sabha was told on Wednesday. The scheme is being implemented across 81 cities and towns in 26 States and UTs, particularly those of religious, historical, and tourist importance, where the issue of begging is more prominent. The goal is not only to rehabilitate these individuals but also to provide them with long-term opportunities for reintegration into society, said Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Dr Virendra Kumar, in a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha. This rehabilitation includes a diverse range of interventions to address their immediate and long-term needs, said the Minister adding that among the 352 children rehabilitated, 169 children were reunited with their parents while 79 children were sent to Anganwadis (early childhood care and education



centers). In reply to a written question, he further said that 33 children were handed over to Child Welfare Committees for further support and care. 71 children were enrolled in schools, ensuring access to education. In Andhra Pradesh (Tirupati, Visakhapatnam, Guntur and Vijayawada), Assam (Hojai/Doboka, Golaghat, Guwahati and Tezpur), Arunachal Pradesh (Itanagar, Namsai), Bihar (Bodh Gaya, Dharbanga, Muzaffarpur, Nalanda, Patna and Purnia), Chandigarh (Chandigarh), Delhi NCT (New Delhi), Haryana (Sonapat, Panchkula), Himachal Pradesh

(Dharamshala, Shimla), Jammu & Kashmir (Jammu, Srinagar), Jharkhand (Deoghar, Ranchi, Giridih, Jamshedpur), Kerala (Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, Kozhikode), Karnataka (Dharwad/Hubbli, Vijayapura, Mysuru), Gujarat (Vadodra, Pavagarh Mahakali, Somanath, Kevadia), Manipur (Bishnupur), Maharashtra (Trimbakeshwar, Shirdi, Naggur, Pune (PMPRI MC), Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, Jalgaon). The other States are Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, Odisha, Puducherry, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

CPI (M) at crossroads as leaders leave party in search of greener pastures

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The CPI(M) in Kerala, which is heading the ruling Left Democratic Front is facing the worst crisis since the party was formed in 1964. Many party seniors are leaving the party on their own to join either the Congress or the BJP. Interestingly, the reason given by these former comrades is that the CPI(M) has been hijacked by Islamic extremists and the party has lost its secular credentials. The latest leader to quit the party is Madhu Mullassery, an area secretary in Thiruvananthapuram district. In CPI(M) hierarchy, the area secretaries are a law unto themselves and the undisputed leaders of the area under their jurisdiction. "The party is no more the CPI(M) for which we people

toiled heard by sacrificing our youth and life. Islamic terrorists are the ones who determine the policies of the party," said Madhu before announcing his resignation of the party. In the CPI(M) leaders are not allowed to quit the party as per their whims and fancies. The party's leadership either oust the "trouble makers" or get them executed by the party appointed assassins. The case of T P Chandrasekharan, an area secretary who was murdered allegedly by the party's professional executors is proof of the CPI(M)'s justice administration system. Chandrasekharan was bold enough to question the party leadership for corrupt practices, favoritism and compromise which forced him to leave the party and form the



breakaway Revolutionary Marxist Party. The CPI(M)'s assassins murdered him in a gruesome manner by hacking him 52 times in synch with his age. The CPI(M)'s triennial State Conference is scheduled to be held at Kollam in March 2024. The branch, local, area and district meetings are being held across the State in the interregnum. These meetings see the weeding out of leaders and cadres who have become persona non grata to the Dons in the party. Many such leaders and cadres have quit the party on their own without waiting for the expulsion order issued by M V Govindan, the state secretary. What is in store for them is worth watching. There is every possibility for such rebels to get killed in mysterious circumstances,"

said P Sujathan, author and veteran scribe. Even G Sudhakaran, former minister and party's ideologist has been sidelined by the Alappuzha district leadership for criticizing Mohammed Riyaz, the minister for PWD who is also the new husband of Veena, daughter of Chief Minister Vijayan. Riyaz is certain to find a place in the central committee as well as polit bureau of the CPI(M) in the upcoming party congress to be held in Madurai Tamil Nadu in April 2025. The grapevine is the State is that Vijayan is adamant that Riyaz be appointed as the chief minister of the State after the 2026 assembly election. Though the triumvirate of M A Baby, Thomas Issac and John Brittas, the Christian faces of the party are working to torpedo Vijayan's dreams to

elevate his son-in-law to the top post, the Nair and Eezhava lobbies are against the combination of "Father, Son and Holy Spirit". The CPI(M) has internal divisions like the Travancore and Malabar lobby, the Nairs and Eezhava lobbies, the Christian cartel and finally the Islamic leaders. Elamaram Kareem and K T Jaleel head the last named group in the party. The Alappuzha district has been totally usurped by the Islamists sensing G Sudhakaran and Kayamkulam MLA Pratibha into political wilderness. But all is not lost for the comrades. Two top leaders in the BJP are waiting for the right moment to cross over to the CPI(M) with hundreds of their cadres. The year 2025 promises action packed events and shadow boxings.

President stresses need for extensive research in Ayurveda

PTI ■ PURI

President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday stressed the need for extensive research in Ayurveda as it holds remedies for many diseases. Addressing the 75th Foundation Day celebration of Gopabandhu Ayurveda College here, Murmu said a person can remain disease-free all along life by remaining connected with yoga and nature. "Research is capable of proving the scientific basis of any method. Evidence builds trust among people and trust widens the path of acceptance," the President said while calling upon Ayurveda students to undertake research. Stating that she was aware of the method of treatment prevalent among tribal people for treatment of certain diseases, Murmu said that some elder tribal people know



about various diseases and the herbs needed to treat them. "But that traditional knowledge is slowly disappearing. I hope some of you (students) will be interested in exploring the scientific basis of that treatment. By doing so, the method can be saved

from extinction and also be beneficial to the society," Murmu, who hails from Santal community in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district, said. The President said she would like to draw the attention of the students and researchers

to Odisha's palm leaf manuscripts preserved at the State Museum has many information regarding Ayurveda. Even many people have palm leaf manuscripts at their houses. "Apart from literature, there are descriptions of medical

methods in those palm-leaf manuscripts. In this direction, I hope that you will make efforts to bring our hidden treatment methods to the public by doing research," the President said. The President said that around the world people are now eager to learn Yoga and Ayurveda. "By maintaining a balanced diet, we can stay healthy. Yoga can help to keep diseases at bay," she said, adding 'Be Yoga Yukta to remain Roga Mukta' (remain connected with Yoga to be free from diseases). Stating that Ayurveda holds remedies for many diseases, the President said that the students will engage themselves in extensive research in Ayurveda. The event was also addressed by Odisha Governor Raghubar Das, chief minister Mohan Charan Majhi and others.

Prominent Muslim leader condemns arrest of Hindu monk in Bangladesh

PTI ■ KOZHIKODE(KERALA)

A prominent Sunni Muslim leader on Wednesday condemned the arrest of a Hindu monk last week by Bangladeshi police and urged the neighbouring country to ensure the safety and well-being of its minority communities immediately. In a statement, Sheikh Abubakr Ahmad, popularly known as Kanthapuram A P Aboobacker Musaliyar, criticised the recent arrest of monk Chinmoy Krishna Das by Bangladesh police on November 25, claiming that it had triggered widespread violence and heightened tensions in various parts of the country. He argued that these developments were "alarming signs of insecurity" among minorities in Bangladesh. The Sunni Muslim leader



stated that governments must refrain from "actions that provoke emotional responses among ordinary people or deepen communal divides." He urged the Bangladesh government to "prioritise peace and harmony" and "take decisive measures to restrict communalism." He also called upon the Indian government to "extend constructive support to Bangladesh in fostering stability and protecting minor-

ity rights." In his statement, Ahmad emphasised the need for collective efforts to prevent the marginalisation of minority communities and promote coexistence in the region. India has expressed concerns over attacks on minorities, especially Hindus, in Bangladesh, since Sheikh Hasina resigned as Prime Minister in August following months of student-led protests. Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das, a spokesperson for the Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote, was arrested at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport last week for alleged sedition. He was denied bail and sent to jail by a Chattogram court last week, sparking protests by his supporters. Subsequently, two more monks associated with ISKCON were detained.

Forensic team finds Pakistan made cartridges at Sambhal riot site

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Police have uncovered a troubling development in the Sambhal violence case, with a forensic team recovering six empty cartridges bearing markings from Pakistan. Superintendent of Police Krishan Kumar confirmed the discovery and stated that the National Investigation Agency (NIA) would assist in the probe. Addressing the media, Kumar said, "The forensic team unearthed the cartridges during an inspection on Tuesday. Among them, one cartridge is marked with 'POF', indicating Pakistan Ordnance Factory, while another is labeled 'FN Star'." Describing the findings as "highly concerning," Kumar emphasized that the incident warrants a deeper investiga-



tion with support from central agencies like the NIA. The SP disclosed that miscreants had sabotaged CCTV cameras near the Jama Masjid before launching their attack, which involved stone pelting and firing at the police. "The destruction of CCTV cameras was deliberate. The attackers then fired bullets, evidence of which has now been recovered," Kumar explained. Retrieving the 9mm pistol believed to have been used in the incident remains a priority for investigators, who have already begun analyzing the DVR from damaged CCTV systems to extract key evidence. Kumar assured the media that the conspiracy was premeditated, and efforts to recover the firearms and

identify the perpetrators are in full swing. The violence erupted on November 24 during a controversial survey of the Mughal-era Shahi Jama Masjid, which had reignited claims over its historical origins. The recovery of cartridges linked to Pakistan has added a sensitive dimension to the case, raising questions about potential external involvement. "The presence of these cartridges points to a serious issue. We are leaving no stone unturned in uncovering the full extent of this conspiracy," Kumar said. The investigation continues, with forensic experts and agencies like the NIA working to trace the origin of the ammunition and assess any cross-border links. Authorities are expected to provide further updates as the probe advances.

Shivankita Dixit, who was crowned Femina Miss India West Bengal 2017, became the latest victim of a sophisticated cyber fraud, losing ₹99,000 to criminals posing as Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officers. The fraudsters accused her of involvement in heinous crimes, including human trafficking and money laundering, in a chilling con job on Tuesday. Dixit, a resident of Manas Nagar in Shahganj and now a model, received a WhatsApp call around 4 PM from a person claiming that an HDFC Bank account in her name in Delhi had been used to launder ransom money tied to the kidnapping of 24 children. To make their claims convincing, the fraudsters staged a video call with individuals dressed as police officers visible in the background. The staged scene terri-

Femina Miss India falls victim to cyber fraud, loses Rs 99,000

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

fied Dixit, who locked herself in a room and stayed on the call for over two hours, following their instructions. Under psychological pressure, Dixit transferred ₹99,000 to the fraudsters' account. It was only after the call ended that she informed her father, Sanjay Dixit, about the incident. The family promptly filed a complaint with the Agra Cyber Crime



Cell. Describing the harrowing experience, Dixit said the criminals kept her on edge, forwarding her call to multiple "senior officers" while stressing the confidentiality of the so-called investigation. At one point, when she requested to leave the room for a glass of water, they reluctantly agreed, underscoring their psychological grip on her. "The entire ordeal left me shak-

en. They didn't give me a moment to think or assess what was happening," Dixit said. Experts say this scam is part of a growing trend where criminals intimidate victims through prolonged video or audio calls, exploiting fear and confusion to extract money. While such tactics lack a specific legal term, they have become alarmingly prevalent in online fraud. "Cybercriminals often target high-income individuals or those in professions such as medicine, engineering, or retired officials, believing they possess significant savings. These victims are also more likely to lose track of how their personal information might be misused," a cyber expert explained. The Agra Cyber Crime Cell has launched an investigation and is working to trace the fraudsters. Authorities have urged the public to remain vigilant against suspicious calls and immediately report any fraudulent activity.

Mysterious blast takes place outside Army camp in Surankote

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Following a mysterious blast outside an Army camp late Tuesday night in the Surankote area of Poonch, the entire security grid was alerted and massive searches were launched during the day to track down the footprints of terrorists hiding in the area. Random searches of vehicles were carried out at security checkpoints set up along the Surankote Potha bypass road. According to ground reports, a loud bang was heard late Tuesday night near the periphery wall of the Army camp in the main Surankote town. No one received injuries due to the blast. The sentry manning the security post located atop the 20-foot high boundary wall was the first respondent who raised an alarm soon after the mysterious blast occurred. In response, the security forces conducted thorough searches in the area to gather vital clues about the nature



of the blast. The police and army authorities in Poonch remained tight-lipped over the nature of the blast during the day. When this correspondent contacted a sub-divisional police officer in Surankote he too feigned ignorance about the nature of the blast. "I cannot comment on the nature of the blast. Investigations were still on", the police officer quipped before disconnecting the phone call. However, some of the media

reports claimed terrorists lobbed grenades targeting the army post on the rear portion of the army camp. Unconfirmed reports also claimed the terrorists could have triggered an Improvised Explosive Device to create a big impact and inflict maximum casualties. The twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch earlier witnessed several attacks by Pakistani terrorists on army vehicles in which several soldiers sacrificed their lives.

Shooter who fired at Badal has more than 20 cases registered against him

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AMRITSAR/NEW DELHI

Narain Singh Chaura, the shooter who fired at Sukhbir Singh Badal, had crossed over to Pakistan in 1984 and was instrumental in smuggling large consignments of weapons and explosives into Punjab, it was learnt. More than 20 cases were registered against him. In Pakistan, Chaura reportedly authored a book on guerrilla warfare and "seditious" literature. He was also accused in the Burail jailbreak case. He has already served a jail term in Punjab. In the sensational Burail jailbreak case of 2004, four inmates, including assassins of former Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh, escaped after digging a 94-foot tunnel. Chaura has been booked in around a dozen cases in Amritsar, Tarn Taran and Ropar districts. Chaura, associated with the Akal Federation, studied at the Sikh Missionary College in Amritsar and holds a



Master's degree in Political Science. He has authored several books, including his recently released work Khalistan Virudh Sajish. Chaura is also known for translating the speeches of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. He has a long history of involvement in militancy and Khalistani activities. Born on April 4, 1956, in the village of Chaura near Dera Baba Nanak (Gurdaspur), he is allegedly linked to organizations such as the Khalistan Liberation Force and the Akal Federation. Chaura is accused of aiding

the masterminds of the Burail jailbreak case by providing clothes and other supplies to the prisoners. He maintained close ties with key militants, including Jagtar Singh Hawara, Parmjit Singh Bheora, and Jagtar Singh Tara—accused in the assassination of former Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh—and visited them in jail. He was arrested on February 28, 2013, in Jalalabad village, Tarn Taran, while his accomplices, Sukhdev Singh and Gurinder Singh, were apprehended from Pandoori village.

Team from Sikkim Govt reaches Muguthang to assess impact of glacial floods

PTI ■ GANGTOK

An expedition team from the Sikkim government's Science & Technology Department on Wednesday reached Muguthang in North Sikkim's Lhonak valley to assess the impact of glacial floods and its mitigation through various measures, officials said. The team investigated whether Lhonak lake's behaviour was aligned with typical patterns of glacial floods which carry debris, sediment and boulders with massive destructive potential, officials said. The study team observed that flood water from Lhonak lake slowed down as it passed through the wide areas of the valley between Goma and Dolma Sampa sections. This natural dissipation of force caused debris deposition, reducing the flood's destructive impact downstream, the officials said. It was only below Dolma Sampa that the flood picked up momentum and debris causing

widespread devastation downstream. The team also analyzed the sub-surface geology at Dolma Sampa and measured discharge of the Lhonak River. These insights will be crucial in evaluating feasibility of a retention structure at Dolma Sampa, which could regulate floodwaters and protect downstream infrastructure. The expedition team comprised experts in geology, ecology, engineering, hydrology, and remote sensing from the Departments of Science & Technology, of Mines & Geology and the National Disaster Management Authority. The team endured freezing temperatures of minus 10 degrees Celsius and high winds while camping in Muguthang at 14,000 feet to conduct their studies. The expedition team will return to Gangtok on Thursday carrying critical data and insights that will inform future strategies for managing glacial flood risks.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

No love lost

The relations between India and Bangladesh are on the ebb and if steps are not taken now, could deteriorate further

The relations between India and Bangladesh, long characterised by cultural ties and strategic cooperation, have soured in recent months. Protests, diplomatic outrage and heightened security concerns are the latest manifestations of the growing rift between the two neighbours. The arrest of a Hindu monk in Bangladesh has sparked unrest, further straining ties that have been under pressure since the ousting of former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August 2024. The minority has historically faced discrimination and sporadic violence, often exacerbated by political upheavals. Sheikh Hasina's government, in power until her abrupt ousting in August, was seen as somewhat supportive of minorities, though her critics argue this support was inconsistent. Hasina's exit, triggered by mass protests against alleged corruption and authoritarianism, plunged Bangladesh into political instability. The arrest of Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das in Bangladesh has reignited long-standing grievances about the treatment of minorities in the country. Das was detained on charges of sedition and inciting unrest during an October protest advocating minority rights in Chittagong. His denied bail and the subsequent delay of his hearing until January 2025 have escalated tensions.



This has led to protests in India, headed by Hindu organisations and supported by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). These protests culminated in an attack on the Bangladeshi consulate in Agartala, causing significant diplomatic fallout. The vandalism at the consulate prompted sharp criticism from Dhaka,

which labeled the incident 'heinous' and demanded stringent action from India. Bangladesh also summoned Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka to show its displeasure over the incident. Meanwhile, Indian authorities, while condemning the attack and increasing security for Bangladeshi diplomatic missions, have struggled to contain public sentiment. In Dhaka, the storming of the consulate sparked counter-protests, with students and activists condemning the incident and demanding accountability from India. The situation has become a flashpoint for nationalist and religious tensions on both sides. The strained relations carry significant risks. For India, Bangladesh is a vital partner in maintaining border security and managing regional stability. The two countries share deep economic ties and cultural connections, making any prolonged estrangement costly. However, mutual trust has eroded. While Indian side urge Bangladesh to address violence against minorities, Bangladeshi officials accuse Indian media of propagating disinformation. Both nations have had good relations and they must urgently de-escalate tensions. Resolving the immediate crisis surrounding the monk's arrest, addressing minority rights concerns in Bangladesh, and curbing inflammatory rhetoric in India are critical steps.

PICTALK



Artists perform during a show of Rambo Circus, in Mumbai

Election results challenge the Opposition unity

The electoral setbacks have exposed fractures within the INDIA alliance while the BJP has emerged stronger after the recently held state elections



KALYANI SHANKAR

The aftermath of the recent election results in Maharashtra and Jharkhand has led to cracks within the Opposition coalition known as the INDIA alliance. Following these disappointing results, some partners in the INDIA bloc, such as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Trinamool Congress, are focusing on their agendas and show little interest in collaborating for the current winter session of Parliament. AAP chief Kejriwal has announced that his party will go solo in Delhi Assembly polls, ruling out tie-up with Congress. The INDIA bloc hoped to consolidate anti-BJP votes in the capital.

Still, Kejriwal's announcement signals a potential fracture in unity. Additionally, it seems unlikely that the Uddhav Thackeray coalition will work together in the upcoming civic election. Consequently, the immediate concern for these partners is to unite and collaborate effectively. However, achieving this is proving to be quite challenging. Every political party makes mistakes, but the successful ones learn and improve. The INDIA bloc aimed to defeat the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls, ultimately allowing the BJP to form a government with support from the JD(U) and the Telugu Desam Party. The Assembly polls lacked a joint strategy. Two key points stand out in the recent elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand. First is the significant victory of the BJP-led NDA in Maharashtra.

Second is the ease with which Hemant Soren retained his position in Jharkhand despite being jailed on allegations of corruption. Another important question is whether the Congress, NCP and the Uddhav faction of the Shiv Sena misinterpreted the signals on the ground. Did the BJP make errors in Jharkhand? The recent results reveal missed growth opportunities. It could have performed better if Congress had learned from past experiences and made necessary adjustments. Unlike the Pachmarhi or Shimla conclaves,



there has been a lack of post-election analysis. The Grand Old Party is entirely under the control of Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition, and his chosen associates. Rahul worked hard and campaigned, but the party could not deliver. The results suggest they have yet to learn from the recent Haryana Assembly elections, such as relying heavily on one leader, ignoring the others, and the wrong distribution of tickets despite being in a winning position.

The most crucial aspect of the Congress Party, NCP and the Uddhav faction of Shiv Sena must address is the narrative. For the Congress, the focus on caste issues, defending the Constitution, and making personal attacks on the Prime Minister has not resonated with the voters. This disconnect is a clear sign that the party needs to reevaluate its strategy and focus on issues that truly matter to the electorate, such as the bread and butter issues.

It is a pressing concern that needs alignment. Even earlier, Rahul Gandhi's Gandhi's attack on Savarkar did not garner any support for Congress; instead, it created friction between the Shiv Sena, which idolised Savarkar and Congress. These parties also did not realise the political impact of the BJP's par-



FOR THE CONGRESS, THE FOCUS ON CASTE ISSUES, DEFENDING THE CONSTITUTION, AND MAKING PERSONAL ATTACKS ON THE PRIME MINISTER HAS NOT RESONATED WITH THE VOTERS

ent organisation, RSS, which worked for the party's success. Maratha strongman Sharad Pawar must feel disheartened after losing his party and the election to his nephew, Ajit Pawar, whom he groomed. The warning signs became clear when Ajit joined the BJP, betraying his uncle to help form the government. The situation worsened when the Election Commission recognised Ajit's faction as the real Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), despite Sharad Pawar having founded and led it to power multiple times.

This decision severely undermined Pawar, so must Uddhav Thackeray, son of Shivsena founder Bal Thackeray, who succeeded his father, lost the party and elections to his rebel Eknath Shinde, who helped BJP form the government in Maharashtra in a coalition. Both must introspect about what led to their loss of popularity. On the other hand, JMM, a partner in the INDIA bloc, has demonstrated how to win despite numerous challenges. JMM Chief Minister Hemant Soren and his wife, Kalpana, faced several hardships, including a jail sentence for Soren. The results of the bye-elections after the Assembly polls show that the BJP is not invincible.

Elections in India happen almost continuously in various states, which means the election season never truly ends. The next significant event will be the Rajya Sabha elections for six seats on December 20. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is expected to win five of these six seats. At the same time, the Trinamool Congress is likely to secure one. If this prediction holds, the NDA will gain a majority in the Upper House, which could weaken the Congress Party's position in Parliament. There are currently eight vacancies: four in the nomination category and four in Jammu and Kashmir. Elections around the world highlight both victories and defeats. Each election offers valuable lessons regarding the successes and mistakes of the candidates and parties involved. These outcomes are not exclusively driven by generational change, as change is a constant process. Future generations must strive to advance their party. Ultimately, the true winner is the one who learns from their mistakes swiftly. Winners should avoid becoming complacent, while those who lose must stay motivated.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DELHI NEEDS TO BE DECONGESTED

Madam — Delhi's role as India's political capital and administrative nerve centre has created a lopsided dependence on a single city, which is becoming increasingly untenable for several reasons. Delhi is overcrowded and heavily polluted, with air quality regularly breaching hazardous levels. This is posing several health risks to its residents, particularly children and the elderly, leading to long-term implications for public health. Basic amenities like water and electricity are stretched thin. Traffic congestion and overburdened public transportation systems result in wasted time and reduced productivity. Concentrating the country's entire administrative apparatus in one city makes it vulnerable to dangers of terrorism, natural disasters and other calamities. The concentration of central government offices in Delhi, apart from inflating property prices, skews economic activity and perpetuates regional inequality.

The idea is not to displace Delhi as the national capital entirely but only to distribute its administrative load. The top-level officials of all the ministries and departments may be retained in Delhi for administrative convenience. Ministries and departments within ministries could be relocated to different cities/towns best suited for their focus areas, avoiding already congested metros like Bengaluru and ensuring balanced regional development. The government may start with a pilot involving one or two ministries, followed by an evaluation of costs, benefits, and scalability. Advances in IT and communication enable virtual conferences and seamless coordination, making physical proximity less critical. The conduct of G-20 meetings last year successfully should give the government confidence to take off in this direction. Decentralising national capital is not merely an administrative adjustment; it is also a transformative step toward equitable development and stronger governance.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

Uncertainty in Maharashtra



It is disgusting that after such a huge mandate, the Mahayuti cannot form the new government, though the results were declared on November 23. They are insulting the mandate. By rights, the chief ministerial post belongs to the leader of the party that has more MLAs than the combined total of the other two constituents. With Ajit Pawar publicly endorsing Fadnavis for chief ministership, Shinde should gracefully bow

to the inevitable and propose the BJP leader's name for heading the new government. He betrays the trust the Maharashtra voter has reposed in the Mahayuti by throwing a sulking fit and vanishing to his village, while the more urgent task of government formation awaits him in Mumbai. Such childish behaviour is unbecoming of a senior politician like him.

Decency requires that the leaders of the Mahayuti work together in the same cooperative and concerted manner with which they had worked to win the large popular mandate. Now with Fadnavis as chief minister and Shinde and Ajit Pawar as Dy CMs, they should show the same zeal and energy to resolve the myriad socio-economic problems facing the people of Maharashtra. Excessive ambition, especially unsupported by numbers in the Assembly, can be counterproductive.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

INVESTORS LOSE WEALTH

Madam— Since October, the ongoing decline in the stock market has resulted in investors losing ₹47 lakh crore in wealth. On September 27, the total market capitalisation of companies in the market was ₹477.90 lakh crore, which has now reduced to ₹430.60 lakh crore. Increasing uncertainty and apprehension in the market have driven investors back to banks. According to data released by the RBI, deposits in banks surged to ₹2.35 lakh crore in the second fortnight of October.

Before the Sensex hit a record high, total bank deposits in the second fortnight of August were around ₹215.50 lakh crore. In the first fortnight of September, there was a decline of ₹45,000 crore in total bank deposits. By the end of September, a phase of market decline began, during which bank deposits started to rise. In October, total deposits in banks reached ₹219 lakh crore. Thus, in the face of uncertain market risks, Indian banks are perceived as a safe haven by investors. For investors affected by market risks, bank

deposits are proving to be a reliable support.

Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Mumbai

MRP REGULATION NEEDED

Madam — Manipulating the MRP (Maximum Retail Price) of medicines is a significant issue in India. Pharmaceutical companies often set MRPs much higher than the production cost, burdening patients financially. Retailers further exploit this by charging inflated prices. While the government's Drug Price Control Order (DPCO) regulates essential medicines, many drugs remain outside its scope, allowing companies to set arbitrary prices. Initiatives like Jan Aushadhi Kendras, which provide affordable generic medicines, are commendable but need wider promotion. Transparency, awareness, and the promotion of generics are key to ensuring affordable healthcare for all.

R K Jain | Barwani

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The role of teachers in building positive learning spaces

A successful classroom isn't just about books and resources; it's about creating an environment where students feel valued, heard and empowered to succeed



ALKA KAPUR

A thriving learning classroom is grounded in the way the students perceive their classroom. It's not just about utilising the appropriate resources but establishing a space where students feel recognised, heard and valued. Teachers are the key catalysts in making this possible by nurturing a balanced, cohesive and well-organised environment that allows students to reach their potential. By implementing strategies to cater to individual requirements, connect thoughtfully, and commemorate milestones, educators can establish an educational atmosphere that supports progress, self-esteem, and teamwork.

Teachers can build a positive and inspiring learning space. **Develop a sense of anticipation:** Teachers should give explicit instructions and procedures to their students so that they feel comfortable. When students know what comes next, their interaction with the lesson increases and their belief in their learning abilities is enhanced, leading to a serene and concentrated mood. Address students' needs. No student is entirely



similar to another in the classroom. Instructors should appreciate academic and emotional needs and take a personalised approach to materials, attention, and motivation.

Welcome learners into the classroom First impression means a lot. A simple smiling morning wish makes students receive and look forward to the day. A welcoming environment causes active involvement and participation in the class's activities.

Interact with students Ideally, this should help prepare a powerful fondness between teachers and students. Teachers must take an active role in students' lives; they should ask questions and pay attention to the answers. This builds trust, develops reading skills, and makes students want to speak

more. **Team-building activities** Team-building activities help in practising directives and showing appreciation to others.

Be experiential Sometimes, the mistakes, failings and losses of the teachers make the learning environment comfortable and emotionally intelligent. This ensures that students are encouraged to connect and share, indicating that learning is collective and not individual.

Celebrate success and appreciate students: Recognising and celebrating students' achievements enhances their self-confidence and encourages them to try again. Teachers must reward such behaviour with verbal appreciation, prizes, or other forms of reward in the classroom.

Avoid judgement: Acceptance and open-mindedness are evident in a conducive learning environment. Judgement should not be attached to the students so that the students can feel free to explore and even commit mistakes without being laughed at.

Teachers. Keeping cool during conflicts or problems serves as a good decorum for the students' emotions and problem-solving skills, this practice leads to a learning environment that is calm and goal-oriented.

Listen to their thoughts Allowing students to express their opinions also encourages them to take responsibility for their learning. Studies suggest that teachers should nurture students to enable them to speak their minds.

Acknowledge feedback: The teachers should encourage and respond to any feedback from their students. If the students are appreciated for their response, then the atmosphere becomes interactive. Simple activities such as organising the room, attending to students, or recognising achievement encourage teachers to design a safe, friendly, and welcoming space for students. A welcoming and nurturing classroom facilitates academic achievement among learners and emotional and social development.

(The writer is principal of Modern School; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

SVABHAVNA: A PATH TO TRANSFORMATION

Our innate nature is both, a defining force in our lives and a formidable adversary



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We are born with it. Nature ('svabhava') is what we have done in earlier lives and our deep desires, which are still unfulfilled. It is part of our fate and big events, both good and bad ('parabha'). Svabhava defines us. Character, personality, behaviour, moods, attitude, opinions, faith, preferences, how we decide, how we interact and what we care about, all have links with our natures. Spiritually speaking, three modes ('gunas') constitute this. They are present in every person in different percentages. For example, a good man will have more of the goodness mode; not a good man will have more of the mode of darkness and the rest will fall in between. However, these modes always compete for supremacy. "Goodness become predominant by overpowering passion and darkness; darkness becomes predominant by overpowering even goodness and passion; and passion becomes predominant by overpowering goodness and darkness." (The Bhagavad-Geeta 14.10) This is what happens with good people.

Temporarily, their thinking and actions come under darkness, and they behave lustily, angrily, etc. Compare this with what happens with bad people, who naturally behave badly. Only when the mode of goodness gains ascendancy they behave better. Unfortunately, a common man falls in between, and he has many faults in his svabhava. What does he normally do? He wishes to enjoy his senses as much as possible; likes to avoid duties; tries to act smart, even resorts to cheating; feels superior; laughs at others; and hates suffering, whenever



it comes, blames others for it. This is not so bad as to come under negative emotions like lust, anger, greed, hate, etc. Driven by them, one acts badly and becomes deserving of punishment. For example, when lust overpowers, one crosses limits ('maryada') and does what will taint for life. A greedy person thinks nothing beyond gaining more and wastes precious human life. Anger raises its ugly head when lust is denied. (18.66) And hate, when it is uncontrolled, dooms a person. (16.19) Therefore, one has to be very careful at all times. Svabhava, which controls our thinking and surely our actions can be our worst enemy. What can be done to safeguard ourselves?

The very first thing is to introspect at all times. Are my deep desires faulty? Am I crossing social norms? Am I violating dharma? Am I avoiding duties? We will find that we are. Then, what is to be done? Can I control myself? Maybe, a little, but not fully. Am I stuck? Yes and no. Yes, because drastic change in nature is not possible, as svabhava is part of our destiny, just like big occurrences such as losing one's job will come and we cannot stop them from coming. No, as God is very merciful, He has left an opening in both cases. If one takes shelter from God sincerely, God helps one to come out of all one's troubles (18.58) As far as nature goes, God can help change it for the better if one is determined. This is tough and a slow process, but doable. What is the conclusion? We have a problem with our natures. Whether it is lust or anger or greed or hate or overinflated ego, we are well and truly stuck. Therefore, rush to God's shelter, i.e. get started to please Him now. Let God be convinced that you are determined; He will surely help. And when we do that, those around us will also begin to have some inspiration from us, rather than trying to correct one another, which is an impossibility.

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

COP29: A disappointing climate finance deal



B K SINGH

COP29, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, left developing nations frustrated over unmet climate finance commitment making chances of climate reversal bleak



UNFCCC's COP29 concluded in Baku, Azerbaijan on November 24, leaving the vulnerable countries disappointed in the deal made in climate finance. The deal was announced by the Presidency to mobilise \$300 million annually by 2035 as against the \$ 1.3 trillion target put forth by developing nations, which was also supported by India. Developed countries have abandoned the global south, and have to muster their resources for mitigation and adaptation towards the challenges of the climatic crisis.

It is more than three decades that Scientists have been constantly reminding us of the transition of our energy dependency from coal, oil and gas to solar, wind and other renewables. Burning of fossil fuels ever since industrialisation began in 2019 has caused the cumulative emission of 2400 gigabits (Gt) of CO2 equivalent greenhouse gases (CO2, methane, oxides of nitrogen and fluorocarbons - measured as CO2 equivalent). It was also added that an additional 500 Gt would warm the planet by 1.50 C above the preindustrial level leading to frequent and destructive climate events like cyclones, cloudbursts, forest fires, floods, droughts and heat waves disrupting our lives and livelihoods.

Despite such a warning, global annual emission is nearly 40 Gt of CO2 equivalent. World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has found 2023 as the warmest year in recorded history and evident from the data till September 2024 is set to register a new temperature record.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has brought all 200 countries together to review actions on their pledges in the annual conference of parties (COP). At COP29 held in Paris in 2015, countries made certain pledges to be fulfilled by 2030 about cutting dependency on fossil fuels, transitioning towards renewables and providing finance to vulnerable countries for adaptation and mitigation etc. G20 countries which contribute 80 per cent of the global emissions and also hold 85 per cent of global GDP have become rich at the cost of global warming. Except for India, none of the G20 countries is on course to fulfil NDC pledges by 2030. South Asian, African and island countries have been the most vulnerable and greatest suf-

ferers of extreme climate events and have been deprived of adequate funds for adaptation and mitigation. It was resolved at the COP held in 2009 in Copenhagen that developed nations would provide climate finance of \$100 billion to vulnerable countries annually with effect from 2020, but only \$400 million was provided till 2022. The annual \$100 billion fund committed by developed nations is set to continue till 2035 and only after that, it would be \$300 billion. Though the Paris climate deal set in 2015 called for an upward revision of the annual fund of \$100 billion in 2025, the Baku conference did not respect it and revised it only with effect from 2035.

A new collective quantified goal (NCQG) on climate finance was mandated to be set by COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, to support vulnerable and developing countries. In 2025 it was to replace the \$100 billion annual set in 2009. UN evaluation estimated \$500 billion annually, while some other projections suggested that \$1.3 trillion is needed annually. Developing countries that are at the receiving end estimate an annual requirement of \$5 trillion for the purpose. Trump is not likely to contribute, COP29 in the first week of deliberations, failed to get any solid commitment from other developed nations to contribute towards it. Big emitters like the US and China were not even represented by heads of state at Baku.

As COP29 could not take a call on NCQG in the first week, UN climate chief Simon Stiell urged world leaders assembled at Rio de Janeiro for the G20 meeting, to send a strong signal that climate action is the core business for the world's biggest economies and step up climate finance globally but they too did not make any firm commitment and failed to break the deadlock. The cumulative emission of the US since industrialization began has been 537 Gt CO2 equivalent, China 324 Gt, EU 305 Gt, Russia 184,

Brazil 122, Indonesia 101 and India 89. The cumulative figure of China has recently gone passed the EU.

At present annual emissions of China have been 14 Gt, the US 8 Gt, the EU 6 Gt and India under 3 Gt. China's cumulative emission is 213 Gt behind the US and as it closes the gap by 6 Gt every year, it would take 36 years at this rate to surpass the US's cumulative emission. Developed countries that contributed to 2400 Gt cumulative emission have announced measures and pledged to cut emissions, but their action is not visible on the ground and the emissions are rising every year. Also, there has been an expansion of oil and gas production in the EU, US, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia etc. and many fold expansion of coal in China. Developed countries that want bigger economies like China, India, Indonesia, Brazil, and Saudi Arabia should also contribute to climate finance towards NCQG. China's scuttling this move is unjustified.

At present China is contributing to warming the planet in a big way. Why should it not pay? Scott Bessent who has been picked as Treasury Secretary for Trump 2.0, has announced a "3-3-3" plan that includes 3 per cent annual growth in GDP, bringing down the budget deficit to 3 per cent of GDP and additionally producing 3 million barrels of oil and gas daily. This is bound to spike the GHG emissions globally and further the increase in temperature. The vulnerable nations at the end of COP29 argued for raising at least \$1.3 trillion towards NCQG, but amidst a hard fight, protests by a group of 77 and walk out by island nations, the developed nations agreed to provide \$300 billion annually that too by 2035 and continue with the existing \$100 billion till then. India also supported the demand of the developing nations and said that without adequate support in terms of finance, technology and capacity building the fight against climate change

would be severely impacted. The delegates from developing nations voiced anger and lambasted wealthy nations for not doing enough. The rich countries responsible for warming the planet are now leaving vulnerable countries in the lurch to face the consequences. Starting from 2005, Carbon trading has been increasing exponentially, but a lot of fraudulent accounting and greenwashing have undermined its credibility.

Rule 6 dealing with the carbon market needed some resolution and the same was pending for the last few COPs, although the funds are quite useful for climate mitigation works. COP29 cleared this long pending agreement allowing countries to trade carbon credits - certified reductions of carbon emissions at prices determined as a consequence of emission caps imposed by the countries. It has also been agreed that the operations of the carbon market would be supervised by the UN body.

Strict UN control is needed, as a project proponent in the developed nation can pay for an afforestation project to absorb 1000 tons of CO2 in a developing nation where trees fail to put in desired growth and are unable to sequester the entire quantity of carbon credited. Further, whether the countries claim credit generated across borders and also whether it can be counted in their NDC? Last year at Dubai COP 28 it was agreed to transition away from fossil fuel consumption, but none of the developed nations have demonstrated to cut the emissions. It is distressing that COP29 did not take up a review. The leading economies are consuming fossil fuels increasingly, without bothering about disastrous consequences. I recommend countries to slow down GDP growth, till renewable energy is fully developed.

(The writer is principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Head of Forest Force, Karnataka; views are personal)



EXCEPT FOR INDIA, NONE OF THE G20 COUNTRIES IS ON COURSE TO FULFIL NDC PLEDGES BY 2030. SOUTH ASIAN, AFRICAN AND ISLAND COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN THE MOST VULNERABLE AND GREATEST SUFFERERS OF EXTREME CLIMATE EVENTS AND HAVE BEEN DEPRIVED OF ADEQUATE FUNDS FOR ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION

Maharashtra villages embrace green energy, move towards zero waste, zero bills

The State is setting a benchmark for climate resilience by integrating water security with renewable energy

In a significant push towards climate resilience and sustainable development, Maharashtra is pioneering innovative solutions that combine water security with renewable energy. The state's groundbreaking initiatives are transforming rural communities while addressing the dual challenges of water scarcity and energy transition.

The Water Supply and Sanitation Department, along with the Ground Water Surveys and Development Agency (GSDA), has initiated a revolutionary automated solar-hybrid water pumping system across 69 communities. This innovative approach, supported by UNICEF Mumbai, represents a major leap in rural



SANJAY SINGH

water management technology. These systems reduce grid energy consumption by up to 80 per cent while ensuring 24/7 water availability. The hybrid technology prioritizes solar power and supplements it with grid electricity only when necessary, resulting in potential energy bill reductions of up to 90 per cent. The system's sophistication lies in its IoT-

enabled infrastructure. Digital flow meters and sensors installed at storage tanks allow Gram Panchayats to monitor and control water distribution remotely, preventing over-extraction and waste.

The technology includes an automatic solar panel cleaning mechanism, making it highly sustainable and low-maintenance. In Nagpur, the innovative "Green Project" demonstrates how integrated approaches can yield multiple environmental benefits. The project combines solar systems, rooftop rain-water harvesting, ground-water recharge and innovative cooling solutions. Early results are promising: a typical 250-square-meter rooftop can harvest approx-

imately 200,000 litres of water while reducing electricity consumption by 50 per cent. Perhaps the most inspiring success story comes from Manyachiwadi village in Satara district, which has become Maharashtra's first fully solar-powered village. Through the installation of over 100 rooftop solar panels, the village has achieved energy independence, eliminating electricity bills for its residents.

The project, funded through the Majhi Vasundhara Campaign state award money and community contributions, serves as a model for rural energy transition. Similarly, Tikekarwadi village has earned recognition under the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj



Abhiyan (RGSA) for its comprehensive approach to sustainability. The village has successfully integrated solar and wind energy, biogas plants, and reverse osmosis water treatment systems, setting new standards for rural development. These initiatives are particularly significant given Maharashtra's

vulnerability to climate change.

The state faces recurring droughts, intense heat waves, and water scarcity issues. The year 2020, tied with 2016, was recorded as the hottest year, highlighting the urgent need for cooling solutions in rural areas where air conditioning is often unaffordable.

The state's approach aligns with multiple national programs, including the Jal Jeevan Mission, Atal Bhujal Yojana, Catch the Rain Campaign, and the Majhi Vasundhara Campaign. This convergence of schemes has enabled comprehensive solutions that address both immediate needs and long-term sustainability goals. The economic viability of these

projects is particularly noteworthy.

The Green Project, with an investment of approximately INR 420,000, achieves break-even within 3-4 years while providing lasting environmental benefits. The solar-hybrid water pumping systems have a payback period of 5-6 years, generating significant long-term savings for rural communities. These innovations represent a significant shift in rural development strategy, demonstrating that environmental sustainability and economic viability can go hand in hand.

The success of these projects has caught the attention of other states, with many looking to replicate Maharashtra's model.

These initiatives are in a way unlocking significant productivity gains and strengthening the development outcomes by accessing clean and green energy for water, health, etc.

As climate change continues to pose increasing challenges, Maharashtra's integrated approach to water security and energy transition offers valuable lessons for sustainable development. These initiatives not only address immediate environmental concerns but also build long-term resilience in rural communities, proving that local solutions can have a global impact in the fight against climate change.

(The writer is chief, UNICEF Maharashtra Office; views are personal)

Oppn parties in S Korea move to impeach President

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea's opposition parties Wednesday submitted a motion to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol over the shocking and short-lived martial law that drew heavily armed troops to encircle parliament before lawmakers climbed walls to reenter the building and unanimously voted to lift his order. Impeaching Yoon would require the support of two-thirds of parliament, and at least six justices of the nine-member Constitutional Court would have to endorse it to remove him from office.

The motion, submitted jointly by the main liberal opposition Democratic Party and five smaller opposition parties, could be put to a vote as early as Friday.

Yoon's senior policy advisers and Defense Minister Kim Yong Hyun offered to resign as the nation struggles to make sense of what appeared to be a poorly-thought-out stunt. The Democratic Party on Wednesday submitted a separate motion to impeach Kim, who it alleged recommended the martial law declaration to Yoon.

In his speech announcing the abrupt order Tuesday night, Yoon vowed to eliminate "anti-state" forces and continued to criticise the Democratic Party's attempts to impeach key government officials and senior prosecutors. But martial law lasted only about six hours, as the National Assembly voted to overrule Yoon before his Cabinet formally lifted it around 4:30 am. The Democratic Party, which holds a majority in the 300-seat parliament, said Wednesday that its lawmakers decided to call on Yoon to quit immediately or they would take steps to



A National Assembly staff sprays fire extinguishers to block soldiers entering the main hall of the National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea, Wednesday.

AP/PTI

impeach him. "President Yoon Suk Yeol's martial law declaration was a clear violation of the constitution. It didn't abide by any requirements to declare it," a party statement said. "His martial law declaration was originally invalid and a grave violation of the constitution. It was a grave act of rebellion and provides perfect grounds for his impeachment." Impeaching him would require support from 200 of the National Assembly's 300 members. The Democratic Party and other small opposition parties together have 192 seats. But the rejection of Yoon's martial law declaration in a 190-0 vote included the votes of 18 lawmakers from Yoon's ruling People Power Party, according

to National Assembly officials. PPP leader Han Dong-hun and Seoul Mayor Oh Se-hoon, also a member, criticised Yoon's martial law declaration. Cho Jinman, a professor at Seoul's Duksung Women's University, said it's highly likely that lawmakers will back Yoon's impeachment motion given that some from the ruling party already voted down his edict. If Yoon is impeached, he'll be stripped of his constitutional powers until the Constitutional Court rules. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, the No. 2 position in the South Korean government, would take over his presidential responsibilities. Han issued a public message pleading for patience and calling for Cabinet members to

"fulfill your duties even after this moment." The Constitutional Court has only six incumbent justices following three retirements. That means all six must approve Yoon's possible impeachment motion for it to succeed. They include those appointed after Yoon took office, so the Democratic Party is expected to speed up the process of exercising its rights to recommend two of the three new justices. Yoon's martial law declaration, the first of its kind in more than 40 years, harkened to South Korea's past military-backed governments when authorities occasionally proclaimed martial law and other decrees that allowed them to station combat soldiers, tanks and armoured vehicles on streets or at public

places like schools to prevent anti-government demonstrations. Such scenes of military intervention had not been seen since South Korea achieved a democracy in the late 1980s until Tuesday night. After Yoon's declaration, troops carrying full battle gear, including assault rifles, tried to keep protesters away from the National Assembly as military helicopters flew overhead and landed nearby. One soldier pointed his assault rifle at a woman who was among protesters outside the building demanding that the martial law be lifted. It wasn't clear how the 190 lawmakers were able to enter a parliamentary hall to vote down Yoon's martial law decree.

Opposition leader Lee Jae-myung and National Assembly Speaker Woo Won Shik were seen climbing over walls. As troops and police officers blocked some from entering, they didn't aggressively restrain or use force against others. No major violence has been reported. The troops and police personnel were later seen leaving the grounds of the National Assembly after the parliamentary vote to lift the martial law. Woo said: "Even with our unfortunate memories of military coups, our citizens have surely observed the events of today and saw the maturity of our military." Under South Korea's constitution, the president can declare martial law during "wartime, war-like situations or other comparable national emergency states" that require the use of military force to restrict the freedom of press, assembly and other rights to maintain order. Many observers question whether South Korea is currently in such a state. The constitution also states that the president must oblige when the National Assembly demands the lifting of martial law with a majority vote. A presidential official said that Yoon decided to impose martial law as a way to resolve a political deadlock and did it in the middle of night to minimise its negative impacts on the economy. The official requested anonymity to discuss sensitive nature of the issue. Some experts say Yoon clearly violated the constitution in how he imposed martial law. While martial law allows "special measures" to restrict individual freedoms and the authority of agencies and courts, the constitution does not permit the functions of parliament to be restricted.

But in following Yoon's declaration on Tuesday, South Korea's military proclaimed parliamentary activities were suspended and deployed troops to try to block lawmakers from entering the National Assembly. Park Chan-dae, the Democratic Party's floor leader, called for Yoon to be immediately investigated on charges of rebellion over the way he deployed troops to the parliament. While the president mostly enjoys immunity from prosecution while in office, the protection does not extend to alleged rebellion or treason. In Washington, the White House said the US was "seriously concerned" by the events in Seoul. A spokesperson for the National Security Council said President Joe Biden's administration was not notified in advance of the martial law announcement and was in contact with the South Korean government. In Seoul, the streets seemed busy like a normal day Wednesday. Tourist Stephen Rowan, from Brisbane, Australia, who was touring Gyeongbokgung Palace, said he was not concerned at all. "But then again, I don't understand too much about the political status in Korea," he said. "But I hear they are now calling for the current president's resignation, so ... apparently there's going to be a lot of demonstrations. ... I would have been concerned if martial law had stayed enforced." Natalia Slavney, research analyst at the Stimson Centre's 38 North website that focuses on Korean affairs, said Yoon's imposition of martial law was "a serious backslide of democracy" that followed a "worrying trend of abuse" since he took office in 2022.

Activists file impeachment complaint against Duterte

Manila (AP): A group led by left-wing activists filed a second impeachment complaint against the Philippine vice president on Wednesday over her alleged misuse of government funds and demanded that she be permanently barred from holding public office. The impeachment complaint filed by at least 74 activists, including human rights, labour and student leaders, before the House of Representatives reflects the extent of the political hostilities faced by Vice President Sara Duterte. She did not immediately comment on the new impeachment complaint or an earlier one filed Monday. Duterte, a 46-year-old lawyer, is the daughter of also-controversial former President Rodrigo Duterte, who oversaw a bloody anti-drug crackdown while in office. The killing of thousands of suspects during the crackdown is being investigated by the International Criminal Court as a possible crime against humanity. Her No. 1 political adversary has been President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., whom she publicly threatened with death in a November 23 online news conference. Government investigators have launched a criminal investigation into her threat against the president, his wife and the speaker of the House of Representatives, a cousin and ally of Marcos. Duterte has tried to walk back her comments by saying they were not a direct death threat but rather an expression of concern for her own safety.

Jewish settlers attack Palestinian towns, clash with Israeli troops

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Jewish settlers mounted a string of attacks on Palestinian towns in the occupied West Bank overnight, burning homes and clashing with Israeli troops. There were no immediate reports of any Palestinian casualties. The Israeli military said Jewish settlers attacked the village of Beit Furik after troops arrived in the area to dismantle an unauthorised farming outpost they had built nearby. It said the settlers hurled stones, wounding two members of the paramilitary Border Police, and one group entered the village and burned property. The West Bank has seen a surge in settler violence since the start of the war.

In Lebanon, a tenuous ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah has held despite Israeli forces carrying out several new drone and artillery strikes on Tuesday, killing a shepherd in the country's south. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed keep striking "with an iron fist" against perceived Hezbollah violations of the ceasefire. Hezbollah began launching rockets, drones and missiles into Israel last year in solidarity with Hamas militants who are fighting in the Gaza Strip. The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 people hostage. Israel's blistering retaliatory offensive has killed at least 44,500 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many of the dead were combatants. Israel says it has killed over 17,000 militants,



Palestinians check the rubble of a destroyed building following an overnight Israeli strike in Deir al-Balah, Gaza Strip, Wednesday.

AP/PTI

without providing evidence. The war in Gaza has destroyed vast areas of the coastal enclave and displaced 90 per cent of the population of 2.3 million, often multiple times. Jewish settlers mounted a string of attacks on Palestinian towns in the occupied West Bank overnight, burning homes and clashing with Israeli troops. There were no immediate reports of any Palestinian casualties. The Israeli military said one group entered the village, where they threw stones and burned property. An Associated Press reporter saw a blackened home and a destroyed car on Wednesday morning. The military said Jewish settlers attacked the village of Beit Furik after troops arrived in the area to dismantle an unauthorised farming outpost they had built nearby on land privately

owned by Palestinians. It said the settlers hurled stones, wounding two members of the paramilitary Border Police. Settlers also attacked the village of Huwara, which has been the target of several previous attacks — even before the outbreak of the war in Gaza — and clashed with troops near Rujib, another Palestinian village. Israeli police and the Shin Bet security agency said in a statement that they were investigating the settler attacks. They said they arrested eight Israelis for suspected property damage and assaulting security forces. The West Bank has seen a surge in settler violence since the start of the war, which was triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack into Israel. Settlers have also raced to establish new farming outposts that rights groups say are among the biggest drivers of the violence.

The UN's humanitarian office said settler attacks on Palestinian farmers during the recent olive harvest season "at least tripled" in 2024 compared to the last three years. Israel captured the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians want all three territories for an independent state.

4 CHILDREN KILLED IN GAZA STRIKE

Palestinian medics said an Israeli airstrike on the Gaza Strip killed at least five people, including four children, on Wednesday. The Awda Hospital, which received the bodies, said the five were gathered outside of shelters in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, which dates back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation.

Relatives hunt for missing after Guinea stadium crush

Conakry (AP): A distraught Kambaly Kouroumah is searching for his teenage brother, Adama, at a local morgue in southern Guinea's Nzerekore city, where dozens of people died at a crowded stadium after chaos erupted during a soccer game. Kouroumah is one of many bereaved people searching hospitals and mortuaries for missing relatives following Sunday's tragic events during the final of a national tournament honouring military leader Mamadi Doumbouya. Official estimates say 56 people died in the crush, but the unofficial death toll is at least 135, according to the Collective of Human Rights Organisations of the Nzerekore region. More than 50 people remain missing, including Adama, 15, who was "every-

thing" to his devastated brother. "I want to see him now, dead or alive," a heartbroken Kouroumah said. The world's latest sports crowd disaster happened during the final of the tournament at the Third of April stadium in honour of Doumbouya, who overran the country's elected president three years ago and added it to the list of several West African countries hit by military coups in recent years. But for a football-loving nation hungry for its first World Cup qualification and an Africa Cup of Nations triumph, the two-week tournament in Nzerekore, almost 1,000 kilometres from the capital of Conakry, had attracted not just adults and youths, but also children. Chaos had erupted at the

crowded and open stadium after fans protested a referee's penalty call and were throwing stones towards the field, according to witnesses and local media. Security forces reacted to the disturbance with tear gas as fans poured onto the pitch, survivors said. While some fans managed to jump over the high fence to escape, videos from the scene showed many struggling to squeeze themselves through the main stadium entrance, ending up being crushed by the crowd. Desperate fans were seen shouting and crying for help, many of them being trampled as they struggled to avoid the crush. Among the dead was Jaquerine Keba Koéovogui, 15, whose father said she rarely visited the stadium and, although she loved soccer, would always

prefer to watch it on television. "My daughter was with other members of the family, mostly boys who were able to jump over the stadium walls while she tried to get out through the entrance," said Jules Koevogui, 42. Mamadou Sanoh's painful search for his 10-year-old son ended with heartbreak. "I went to the morgue and saw his body," said Sanoh. "I cannot tell you the shock I am feeling." The National Alliance for Alternation and Democracy opposition coalition said the tournament was organized to drum up support for the "illegal and inappropriate" political ambitions of the junta leader. While videos showed the stadium was filled at full capacity, Cissé Lancine, a local sports journalist, estimated there were between 20,000 and 30,000 spectators.

'Trump was joking when he said Canada could become 51st state'

AP ■ TORONTO

Toronto (AP): President-elect Donald Trump was joking when he suggested Canada become the 51st US state during a dinner with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, a Canadian minister who attended their recent dinner said Tuesday. Fox News reported that Trump made the comment in response to Trudeau raising concerns that Trump's threatened tariffs on Canada would damage Canada's economy. Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc, who attended the Friday dinner at Trump's Mar-a-Lago club, said Trump's comments were in jest. "The president was teasing us. It was, of

course, on that issue, in no way a serious comment," LeBlanc told reporters in Ottawa. LeBlanc described it as a three-hour social evening at the president's residence in Florida on a long weekend of American Thanksgiving. "The conversation was going to be light-hearted," he said. He called the relations warm and cordial and said the fact that "the president is able to joke like that for us" indicates good relations. On Tuesday, Trump appeared to continue with the joke, posting on his Truth Social platform an AI-generated image of himself standing on a mountain with a Canadian flag next to him with the caption "Oh

Canada!" "If I were President Trump, I'd think twice before invading Canada. The last time the US tried something like that — back in the War of 1812 — it didn't exactly end well. Canada even burned down the White House," former Quebec Premier Jean Charest joked on X. Earlier last week, the Republican president-elect threatened to impose a 25% tax on all products entering the US from Canada and Mexico unless they stem the flow of migrants and drugs. Trudeau requested the meeting in a bid to avoid the tariffs by convincing Trump that the northern border is nothing like the US southern border with Mexico.

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UK issues terror threat warning in travel advisory

London (PTI): The UK government has updated its travel advisory for Bangladesh to caution against travel to the country where "terrorists are likely to try to carry out attacks". The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) reviewed the "Safety and Security" section of its advisory for Bangladesh on Tuesday evening. The update adds to its overall standing advice against "all but essential travel" to the South Asian nation. "Terrorists are likely to try to carry out attacks in Bangladesh," reads the updated FCDO travel advisory. "Terrorist attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places visited by foreign nationals, such as crowded areas, religious buildings, (and) political rallies.

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Rishi Sunak, Akshata Murty plan new UK office

London (PTI): Former British prime minister Rishi Sunak and his wife, Akshata Murty, are believed to be in talks to set up a new private office in the new year to make a positive contribution to Britain, according to a UK media report on Wednesday. The Times' newspaper reports that Sunak and Murty, both 44 and with a combined estimated fortune of around GBP 500 million, are to fund the so-called "Office of Akshata Murty and Rishi Sunak" themselves. While the couple are still deciding on the focus of the new ini-

tiative, both are said to be passionate about education and likely to incorporate that among its goals. "Rishi Sunak and his wife, Akshata Murty, are in talks about setting up an office next year to pursue initiatives that they believe will make a positive contribution to Britain," claims the newspaper report. "The former prime minister has elected not to take the GBP 1,15,000 a year allowance to which he is entitled after leaving No. 10 [Downing Street]. They are being supported by Coulson Partners, a PR firm set up by Andy

Coulson, a former No. 10 adviser and newspaper editor," it adds. Sunak, who stepped down as Conservative Party leader in the wake of a bruising electoral defeat in July, is now a backbench member of Parliament for Richmond and Northallerton in Yorkshire. Back in October, he addressed his final Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) as Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons to make way for his successor — Kemi Badenoch. Alluding to some media specu-

lation around his family's relocation plans to California, Sunak had stated that he will be spending more time in his constituency while continuing to raise issues of concern from the backbenches. "I am happy to confirm reports that I will now be spending more time in the greatest place on earth, where the scenery is indeed worthy of a movie set and everybody is a character — that's right, if anyone needs me, I will be in Yorkshire," he said, amid laughter from his parliamentary colleagues. Last month, Britain's first prime minister of

Indian heritage received a rockstar welcome at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's annual Diwali gala in London — where he joined Akshata and her mother Sudha Murty as the guest of honour. During her time at 10 Downing Street, Akshata Murty — daughter of Infosys co-founder N R Narayana Murthy — held a regular "Lessons at 10" programme to provide children from across the UK an opportunity to see behind the scenes of the famous black door — the office and residence of the British PM in London.

Trump team signs agreement with Justice Department for background checks

Washington (PTI): The transition team of President-elect Donald Trump has reached an agreement with the Department of Justice, paving the way for the department to conduct background checks and start the security clearance process for Trump administration nominees and appointees. The Memorandum Of Understanding was signed on Tuesday and comes amid controversy over some of Trump's

picks for top positions in the government. This is the next step in the ongoing preparation of senior administration officials for the purpose of serving in President Trump's administration, a press release said on Tuesday. "This agreement with the Department of Justice (DOJ) will ensure President Trump and his team are ready on Day 1 to begin enacting the

America First Agenda that an overwhelming majority of our nation supported on Election Day," Susie Wiles, President-elect Trump's Chief of Staff. Ultimately, this will afford the transition process additional insights, and it facilitates our agency landing teams gaining access to the information they need to prepare for leadership of the federal agencies and departments, the press statement said.

'Hasina destroyed everything' Will hold election after ushering in reforms: Yunus

Bangladesh interim government's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has said the Sheikh Hasina regime 'destroyed everything', as he pledged to hold general elections only after ushering in constitutional and judicial reforms...



two neighbours have deteriorated ever since the ouster of Sheikh Hasina as prime minister in August with India expressing concern over Hindus and other minorities being targeted in Bangladesh and aggravated further with the arrest of the Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das last week...

appeared for him and his supporters later claimed that his advocates are under threat. Yunus in the interview said Bangladesh's interim government has established several commissions to promote reforms in areas such as the electoral system, constitution and judiciary...

Nepal, China sign BRI cooperation agreement

Beijing/Kathmandu (PTI): Nepal and China on Wednesday signed the much-awaited Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) cooperation framework...

Central Asia, Russia and Europe. Though Nepal and China signed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) agreement in 2017, not a single project has so far been implemented under the framework...

include the phrasing "aid and technical assistance" in relation to project execution in Nepal, the paper said. The word "aid" adds ambiguity and marks a step back from the Nepali Congress' position of clearly specifying grants...

WB:China still Pak's top bilateral creditor

Islamabad (PTI): With almost USD 29 billion in loans, China continued to be Pakistan's largest bilateral creditor while Saudi Arabia emerged as the second largest bilateral lender...

'No consensus on inviting Ukraine to join NATO'

Hungary's foreign minister said a meeting of his counterparts from NATO member countries in Brussels on Wednesday had produced "no consensus" on the prospect of inviting Ukraine to join the transatlantic military alliance...

such moves risked escalating the conflict. He warned that bringing Ukraine into NATO's ranks "would be tantamount to initiating World War III."

Trump has criticized the billions the Biden administration has spent in supporting Ukraine and has said he could end the war in 24 hours, comments that appear to suggest he would press Ukraine to surrender territory that Russia now occupies...

Russia by sending it more weapons. Consensus among all NATO countries is required for admitting new members. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has recently suggested that extending alliance membership to territory now under Kyiv's control could end "the hot stage" of the almost three-year war...

No-confidence vote could topple French govt for first time since 1962

Paris (AP): France's far-right and left-wing forces are expected to join together Wednesday to oust Prime Minister Michel Barnier's government in a historic no-confidence vote prompted by budget disputes...

believe politics. "I'm here because I've been elected twice by the French people," Macron said. He was also reported as saying: "We must not scare people with such things. We have a strong economy," Macron said.

wing leaders have echoed similar criticisms, demanding more robust social spending. The National Assembly said the no-confidence motion requires at least 288 of 574 votes to pass. The left and the far right count over 330 lawmakers — yet some may abstain from voting...

I, Hemant Goyal S/o- Hansraj Goyal, R/o- Flat No-102, Plot No. 7 & 8, Sai Niketan Appt., Chandra Park, Kakrola, Dwarka, Delhi- 110078, declare that in my Class 10th Certificate & old Passport (No. M6132397), my Father's name is written as Hansraj whereas his correct name is Hansraj Goyal, both names pertain to one and same person, i.e. my Father.

Syrian forces battling insurgents north of strategic city of Hama

Beirut (AP): Syria said Wednesday its counteroffensive has pushed back insurgents attempting to advance to the strategic central city of Hama, while the insurgency says it captured more Syrian troops and Iran-backed militants in fierce battles...

government-held Hama, Syria's fourth largest city, as government troops backed by Russian airpower entrenched themselves in the outskirts. Fierce fighting has raged for days as Damascus fears that the insurgents will make their way into the city like they did over the weekend into Aleppo...

I, Ramkishor S/o Sh. Prabhu Dayal R/o Near Main Market Mohna (204) Faridabad, Haryana-121004 declare that my name has been wrongly written in my LIC Policy as Mangat Ram Gupta. My correct name is Ramkishor. Hence Ramkishor and Mangat Ram Gupta both are same and one person.

I, Mrs. Manisha W/o Shri Surendra Singh R/o Village Garih Balb Tahsil Kalanaur Distt Rohtak Haryana declare that my name has been wrongly mentioned in my LIC Policy as Munesh Devi. My correct name is Manisha. Hence Munesh Devi and Manisha both are same and one person.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Be it known to all concerned that the original Possession letter, Allotment cum Demand letter, C&D Form, with correspondence file with DDA regarding property No. B-39 Janakpuri, New Delhi, has been misplaced/lost and is not traceable...

PUBLIC NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that my client Pankaj Jain is in process to purchase the First Floor (without right) in property bearing No. 116/150, Plot No. 26, area measuring 117 sq. yards in 97.92 sq. mtrs. out of Khara No. 343, 354, 356, situated in the abadi of village Sikdarpur...

CHANGE OF NAME: I, Hemant Goyal S/o- Hansraj Goyal, R/o- Flat No-102, Plot No. 7 & 8, Sai Niketan Appt., Chandra Park, Kakrola, Dwarka, Delhi- 110078, declare that in my Class 10th Certificate & old Passport (No. M6132397), my Father's name is written as Hansraj whereas his correct name is Hansraj Goyal...

NOTICE: HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED. REGD. Office: Ramon House, HT Parekh Marg, 169, Block Station Reclamation, Churchgate, Mumbai - 400020.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Known to all that my client Smt. Sumitra Devi owner of the Plot No. 21, AREA 25 SQ. YDS. HANSA NO. 3/9, VILLAGE RAZARPUR KHURD, VIKAS KUNJ, WEST BLOCK, VIKAS NAGAR, UTTAM NAGAR, NEW DELHI and Smt. Sumitra Devi purchase property from Sh. Krishna Thakur vide Notarized G.P.A. AT&S and will dated 26.06.2024...

AD REM LEGAL NOTICE: Ch. No. 760 - Dwarika Court Sector-10, Dwarika, New Delhi-75 Mobile - 9999013918

PUBLIC NOTICE: Plot No. 76, Sector 6 IMT Mansarovar measuring 1012.5 Sq.Mtr was allotted by the corporation to M/S Regent Air Products (P) Ltd wide regular allotment letter No. 15856 Dated 8-12-2000. RLA has been lost. The corporation is in the process of re-issuing the said plot in the name of Smt. Vandana Sehgal...

PUBLIC NOTICE: Notice is hereby given on behalf of SQUIMYA VASHISTH who is purchasing Flat No. B-14, on 1st Floor, Block B, having covered area 1431 Sq. Ft., in The Shree Arisht C.G.H.S. Ltd. situated in Sector-56 Gurugram, Haryana...

PUBLIC NOTICE: This is to inform the Public at large that (1) Mrs. Susena Sapra W/o Late Mr. Rajan Sarda; (2) Mrs. Apseka Kakkar D/o Late Mr. Laiti Kumar Kishan; (3) Mrs. Shweta Kakkar W/o Late Mr. Rajan Sarda; (4) Mrs. Shweta Kakkar W/o Late Mr. Rajan Sarda; (5) Mrs. Shweta Kakkar W/o Late Mr. Rajan Sarda...

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AD REM LEGAL NOTICE: Ch. No. 760 - Dwarika Court Sector-10, Dwarika, New Delhi-75 Mobile - 9999013918

EXTENSION OF SHORT CSL LINES INTO FULL CSL: E-TENDER NOTICE NO. EL TRD_16_24-25. Dated: 02-12-2024. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Tender No: EL TRD_16_24-25. Name of work: Singhabad-Extension of short CSL lines into full CSL at Singhabad station.

PROVISION OF SPORTS LIGHTING SYSTEM: Tender Notice No. Dy.CE/PS/MLG/HQ/34/24-25/R. Dated: 25-11-2024. E-tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Tender No. DYCE/PS-MLG-HQ-34-24-25/R.

ENGINEERING WORKS IN ALIPURDUAR DIVISION: E-Tender Notice No.: 106/W-2/APDJ. Dated: 02-12-2024. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Tender No.: 49-AP-2024 (Two Packet); Name of Work: New Coochbehar work of site development in connection with SA-I - Railway National Centre of excellence - New Coochbehar.

DR/M/L, Alipurduar Junction (NORTHWEST FRONTIER RAILWAY): Serving Customers With A Smile

DR/M/L, Alipurduar Junction (NORTHWEST FRONTIER RAILWAY): Serving Customers With A Smile

PUBLIC NOTICE: This is for notice of the general public that a political party is proposed to be registered by the name of JANTA PRITI NIDHI MANDAL. The office of the party is located at Gt-48, G.T. Karnal Road Industrial Area, Delhi-110033.

PUBLIC NOTICE: On behalf of M/S MAXHEIGHTS TOWNSHIP & PROJECTS PVT. LTD having its registered office at 408/4H floor, RG Trade Tower, Netaji Subhash Place, Pitampura, New Delhi-110034, the general public is hereby informed that on the basis of application/documents submitted by Sh. Harpreet Singh Sethi S/o. Late Sh. Harbhajan Singh Sethi S/o. Late Sh. Harbhajan Singh Sethi, a qua allotment of Flat No. E-094, 9th Floor, Maxheights Metro View Apartments, Sector-35, Sonapat Haryana:

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Bank of Baroda: Regional Office, Kanpur Dehat Region: 118/330, 2nd Floor, Gumti No. 5, Kaushalpur, Kanpur-208 012 - Ph. : 8317087726 e-mail : recovery.kanpurdehat@bankofbaroda.co.in

20 per cent cybercrimes involve dark web usage by attackers says report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
At least 20 per cent of cybercrimes in India involve attackers using dark web, according to a report by cyber security firm Lisianthus. The dark web is a platform on the internet that can be accessed using special tools. It is usually very difficult to trace the identity and location of a dark web user. "At least 20 per cent of cybercrimes in India involve the usage of the dark web by online attackers," the study conducted by Lisianthus Tech said. The attackers used the dark web for cybercrimes like data breaches, hacking, phishing, ransomware, identity theft, sale and



purchase of banned products like narcotics and weapons. The study is based on a detailed analysis of several cases of cybercrime reported across the country, said Khushhal Kaushik, founder and CEO of Lisianthus Tech. The study was conducted on a sampling basis over a period of two months which concluded last week, he said. "Study was completed using several samples of crime data taken from state police, National Crime Records Bureau and other relevant portals reporting cyber crime

and analyzing these in detail with industry experts, cyber security consultants and law enforcement representatives," Kaushik said. Recently a man was arrested for cultivating cannabis in his rented flat and selling it off through the dark web. Attackers had also used the dark web for ransomware attacks on AIIMS in Delhi last year, he said. Gurugram-based Lisianthus Tech is into cyber-security audits and conducting security assessments. As per the report, the usage of dark web has grown two-fold in the past decade and to avoid being a victim of this, users must not give permission to any online notification seeking access to their phone book and other applications.

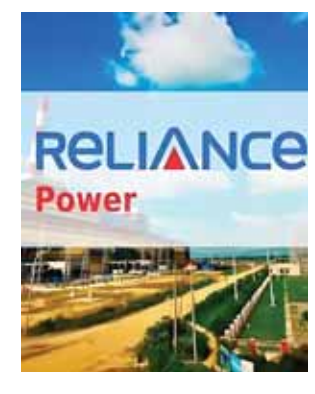
Sebi notifies rules on uniform standards for nomination facilities across securities markets

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Markets regulator Sebi has notified rules on nomination allowing nominees to act on behalf of incapacitated investors. Additionally, it notified the rule mandating every participant to provide beneficial owners with the option to nominate a person to whom their securities will transfer upon their death. "Every participant shall provide an option to the beneficial owner to nominate, in the manner as may be specified, a person who shall be authorised to conduct transactions on behalf of the beneficial owner in the event of the incapacitation of the beneficial owner," Sebi said in a notification. The new rules are aimed at enhancing investor convenience and introducing uniform standards for nomination



facilities across the Indian securities market. In the case of joint ownership, the owners can collectively nominate a person to receive the securities in the event of death of all the joint beneficial owners. Further, the depository and participant will not be held liable for any action based on the nomination provided by the beneficial owner. To give this effect, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has amended Depositories and Participants Regulations that became effective from November 28.

Reliance Power shares jump five per cent



PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Shares of Reliance Power jumped 5 per cent on Wednesday after Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) said it has withdrawn the debarment notice issued to the company enabling the Anil Ambani-led firm to participate in future tenders of the public sector entity. The stock climbed 4.98 per cent to Rs 41.07 - its upper circuit limit - on the BSE. At the NSE, it surged 4.98 per cent to hit the highest trading permissible limit for the day.

SECI, which serves as the implementing agency for renewable energy projects, had on November 6 debarred Reliance Power Ltd and Reliance NU BESS Ltd from participating in any of its tenders for three years for allegedly submitting "fake documents". On November 13, SECI had also slapped a show cause notice on Anil Ambani-run Reliance Power, asking why criminal proceedings should not be initiated after a fake bank guarantee was submitted by its unit. In the latest statement on Tuesday, SECI said the withdrawal of its debarment notice is without prejudice to its right to take all actions in accordance with the law. Following the legal proceedings related to this matter, the debarment notice issued to Reliance Power Ltd has been withdrawn with immediate effect, SECI said. Meanwhile, Reliance Power in a stock exchange filing said with the withdrawal of SECI's debarment notice, "the company and its subsidiaries, except Reliance NU BESS Ltd (formerly known as Maharashtra Energy Generation Limited), are eligible to participate in all tenders issued by SECI".

Sensex advances 110 points in choppy trade, banks gain ahead of RBI policy

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Benchmark Sensex advanced 110 points in a choppy trade on Wednesday, extending its gains to the fourth day in a row helped by buying in HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and fresh foreign fund inflows. The 30-share barometer rose by 110.58 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 80,956.33 with 14 of its constituents ending with gains and 16 stocks with losses. During the day, it jumped 399.64 points or 0.49 per cent to 81,245.39 and dipped to a low of 80,630.53. The NSE Nifty rose marginally by 10.30 points or 0.04 per cent to 24,467.45 as gains in IT, realty and banking shares were offset by profit-taking in auto and FMCG shares. From the 30-share Sensex pack, HDFC Bank, Bajaj Finserv, NTPC, Titan, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance and ICICI Bank were the biggest gainers. Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors,

climbed 0.83 per cent and smallcap index went up by 0.68 per cent. Among sectoral indices, realty jumped 2.13 per cent, followed by financial services (1.19 per cent), bankex (0.91 per cent), consumer durables (0.69 per cent), industrials (0.59 per cent), capital goods (0.55 per cent), IT (0.52 per cent), Focused IT (0.44 per cent) and healthcare (0.27 per cent). Telecommunication, utilities, metal, oil & gas and services were among the laggards. Among Asian markets, Tokyo settled higher while Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading mostly higher. US markets ended mostly in the positive territory on Tuesday. India's services PMI slipped to 58.4 in November while employment in the segment recorded robust growth, a monthly survey said on Wednesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude firmed up by 0.34 per cent to USD 73.91 a barrel.

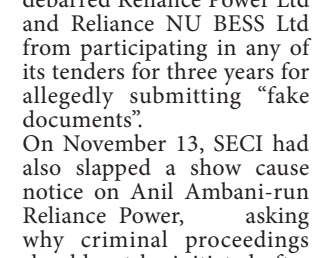
Adani Defence delivers second Drishti-10 drone to Navy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Adani Defence and Aerospace has delivered a second Drishti-10 Starliner surveillance drone to the Indian Navy, boosting India's maritime forces' capabilities to monitor shipping lines and mitigate piracy risks. Following the handover of the first Drishti-10 to the Indian Navy earlier this year, the induction of the second unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), a version of the Israel's Hermes 900 medium-altitude long-endurance UAV, into naval maritime operations was initiated at Porbandar in Gujarat, sources aware of the matter said. Drishti 10 Starliner drone, manufactured by Adani Defence and Aerospace, a part of the conglomerate helmed by billionaire Gautam Adani, at its Hyderabad facility, is an advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) platform with 36 hours endurance and 450 kg payload capacity. The only all-weather military platform, with NATO's STANAG 4671 (standardized

agreement 4671) certification for the UAV system's airworthiness, is cleared to fly in both segregated and unsegregated airspace. Sources said the platform provides over the horizon, persistent multi payload, fully autonomous capabilities and Satcom-based operations. The Drishti 10 is a force multiplier providing the Indian Navy with the ability to monitor vast maritime territories and unparalleled situational awareness. This marks the first-ever integration of such an advanced payload suites onto a MALE platform, enabling the Indian Navy with differentiated capabilities to dominate maritime surveillance, they said. MALE stands for Medium Altitude Long Endurance, and is a type of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) that can fly at altitudes of 10,000 to 30,000 feet. MALE UAVs are typically used for surveillance and reconnaissance, and can have a flight endurance of 24 to 48 hours. Adani Defence had previously delivered the Drishti-10 Starliner to the Indian Army

as well. The first Drishti-10 Starliner was delivered to the Indian Navy in January this year and the second to Army in June. The Indian Army, which has ordered two such drones, will deploy the first at its Bhatinda base in Punjab from where it can keep an eye on the entire western border with Pakistan. Drishti 10 has reached significant milestones through its flight operations in Porbandar and Bhatinda by the Indian Navy and the Indian Army, exemplifying a new era for India's indigenous defence capabilities. Drishti 10, India's only indigenous UAV operating reliably above 32,000+ feet with large payload carrying capacity and distinctively long endurance, is not only endured in harsh conditions but excelled, proving its resilience over the challenging terrains and climates of the Himalayas, sources said, adding this performance reinforces India's capacity for innovation and strength under pressure, serving as a testament to our country's unwavering resolve to protect and advance our strategic interests. Moreover, the Drishti 10 Starliner embodies more than a single achievement - it reflects a larger vision for India's defence future. In less than three years, Adani Defence has achieved what traditionally takes five to six years in the industry, delivering MALE UAV capabilities to both the Indian Army and Navy. During a recent visit to the Porbandar base, Rear Admiral Janak Bevil, VSM, Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff (Air), reviewed the ongoing operations and engaged with the Adani Defence team, led by AVM KVR Raju, VM (Retd.), Technical Head, UAVs & Missiles. The induction, sources said, marks a defining moment in India's journey toward self-reliance in defence technology, a testament to the seamless collaboration between Adani Defence and the Indian Navy, driven by a shared commitment to safeguarding maritime interests.

Antler India plans to invest ₹211 Crore in 50 start-ups in 2025: Company



PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Venture Capital firm Antel India is planning to invest USD 25 million, or about Rs 211 crore, in 50 startups in 2025, the company said on Wednesday. The venture capital firm has invested in 30 startups in 2024 through its maiden USD 75 million fund. "Antler plans to ramp up investments further in the next year and make 50 investments in 2025. We plan to invest USD 25 million in the 50 companies," Antler India Partner Rajiv Srivatsa told PTI. The company's 2024 investments include a wholesale marketplace for fashion retail Bizup, aluminium-air fuel cell technology company Meine Electric, open mobility

platform Namma Yatri, personal loan facilitator firm Keeper, which uses paid leaves as digital assets for salaried employees, AI-powered dashcam provider Cautio, etc. "Our investment pace reflects both the quality of the founders we're meeting and our conviction that the next wave of global technology companies will emerge from India. We have invested in 30 companies this year, many of which were born in our Residency program, where founders had the opportunity to validate their ideas, build strong teams, and get early customer traction before raising their first check," Srivatsa said. Antler's next Residency cohort in India is scheduled to commence in February 2025.

Rubrik unveils Annapurna: Single API service for building generative AI applications

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rubrik, Inc. (NYSE: RBRK) on Wednesday announced Rubrik Annapurna, a single API service for customers building generative AI (Gen AI) applications, which will integrate with Amazon Bedrock. Rubrik Annapurna is designed to enable fast access to secure data embeddings from Rubrik Security Cloud, which spans enterprise-wide data and metadata across on-premises, cloud, and SaaS. Rubrik Annapurna's powerful and secure data retrieval capabilities will work with Amazon Bedrock, enabling customers to access a broad selection of high-performing foundation models (FMs) to build enterprise-grade generative AI applications. Creating generative AI applications customized to an organization's proprietary knowledge is a priority for the C-suite. However, AI development teams not using the cloud must first locate and extract enterprise data from dozens of applications, filter on permissions and sensitivity, embed this data into vector



databases for retrieval, and then build data pipelines to their large language models (LLMs). "Organizations are faced with significant complexity when developing AI applications due to challenges around data access and sensitive data permissions. This could lead to applications that lack relevant knowledge or don't adhere to access controls," said Bipul Sinha, CEO, Chairman, and Co-founder of Rubrik. Annapurna's integration with Amazon Bedrock aims to advance organizations' AI innovation with fast API-first secure data access. Out-of-the-box, application aware embedding engine, seamless mobilization of data and

avoid shadow datastores and more intelligent customer support expert for every representative. "Rubrik is simplifying complex data environments while prioritizing security and compliance continues to give us confidence as we explore new opportunities to innovate and scale with AI. Today's announcement of Rubrik Annapurna and the integration with Amazon Bedrock is a true testament to Rubrik's focus and vision to help customers securely connect enterprise data and metadata to build compelling and AI applications," said Ted Balagtas, SVP, Chief Information Officer at Bankwell Financial Group.

DRI officers seize 8,224 kilogram contraband and 1,319 kilogram gold in FY24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

DRI officers have seized about 8,224 kg of contraband in the 2023-24 fiscal worth Rs 2,242 crore, with the seizure of cocaine seeing an increase over the past five years. During the 2023-24 financial year, I has seized 1,319 kg of gold and smuggling through India's porous eastern borders, particularly with Bangladesh and Myanmar, has also emerged as a major concern for law enforcement agencies. The Smuggling in India Report released by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) on its 67th foundation day said in recent years, law enforcement agencies have observed a "troubling increase" in the circulation of 'Yaba', a potent drug tablet that combines methamphetamine and caffeine, mostly produced in Myanmar. Yaba, meaning crazy medicine, has evolved into a recreational drug infamous for its severe addiction potential and devastating health effects, leading to significant seizures

across the region. The data on narcotics seizure by the I showed that during FY24, officers seized 107.31 kg cocaine worth Rs 974.78 crore in the illicit market. During the year, about 49 kg heroin valuing Rs 365 crore was seized, followed by 136 kg of Methamphetamine worth Rs 275 crore. 7,349 kg ganja worth Rs 21 crore was seized during the last fiscal. During the financial year 2023-24, I seized 1,319 kg of gold. Additionally, I has shared actionable intelligence with Customs field formations, leading to significant gold seizures by those units as well. This is part of the 4,869.6 kg of gold seized by the CBIC, including by Customs officers, in 2023-24. 1,922 persons were arrested by the CBIC during the year. It said India has become a major destination for illicit gold imports, with gold and silver predominantly originating from Gulf states such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia, where these metals are sourced and available at lower prices.

₹15 Lakh Crore required for adding power generation capacity in 2022-27

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

About Rs 15 lakh crore fund is required to add electricity generation capacity during 2022-27, which includes expenditure for projects to be commissioned in 2027-32, a power ministry statement said. The projected electrical energy requirement and peak electricity demand on all-India basis is estimated as 1908 BU (billion units) and 277 GW, respectively for 2026-27. The projections were made

during a Meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of Members of Parliament for Ministry of Power here last evening. Union Power Minister Manohar Lal chaired the meeting. As per 20th Electric Power Survey (EPS) report published by the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), the peak demand and energy requirement is pegged at around 366 GW and 2474 BU by 2031-32, it stated. Energy Storage capacity is an important aspect in achieving the targets of NEP.

Energy storage capacity of 16.13 GW/82.37 GWh with PSP (pumped storage) based storage of 7.45 GW capacity and 47.65 GWh storage and BESS based storage of 8.68 GW/34.72 GWh is required by 2026-27. The projections of total capacity addition are in line with the target of the country to achieve a non-fossil based installed capacity of 500 GW by 2029-30, it stated. The ministry said that the total fund requirement for the period 2022-2027 is estimated to be Rs 14,54,188 crore, which

also includes the likely expenditure during 2022-27 for advance action for the projects expected to get commissioned during 2027-32, it stated. The average emission factor is expected to reduce to 0.548 kg CO2/kWh in the year 2026-27 and to 0.430 kg CO2/kWh by the end of 2031-32, it stated. The share of non-fossil-based capacity is likely to increase to 57.4 per cent by the end of 2026-27 and may further increase to 68.4 per cent by the end of 2031-32 from around 46.5 per cent as

on October 2024, it stated. Members of Parliament provided several suggestions concerning various initiatives and schemes. They commended the plan for its ambitious green energy goals and achievements in electricity generation capacity. The meeting also included discussions on issues related to storage, renewable energy generation, and compensation for farmers. He further directed officials to take appropriate actions to incorporate the suggestions made by

Members of Parliament and prioritize the welfare of the people. Emphasizing India's commitment to achieving carbon net-zero, he stated that the focus would remain on non-fossil-based energy sources. The Union Minister also stressed the importance of enhancing storage capacity to ensure affordable and reliable power for everyone. He also emphasised that state and central governments need to work in coordination to achieve the targets. Minister of State for Power Shripad Yesso Naik said that

India is energy transition as per the NDCs and is on path of achieving SDGs. He said that the National Electricity Plan (NEP) is a short-term framework of five years while giving a 15-year perspective. The fourth NEP prepared by Central Electricity Authority includes a review of the period 2017 -22, detailed capacity addition requirement during the years 2022-27 and Perspective Plan projections for the years 2027-32. Installed generation capacity as on October 31, 2024 was 454.5 GW comprising of 243.1 GW thermal, 8.2 GW Nuclear, 203.2GW Renewables including large hydro of 46.97 GW. The peak demand has grown at a CAGR of 16 per cent from 2013-14 to 2023-24 while energy requirement has grown at a rate of 5 per cent during 2013-14 to 2023-24. The peak not met and energy not supplied is very minimal over last five years and was on account of factors other than lack of generation capacity in the country.

Big test for India's batters against Australia in three-match series

PTI ■ BRISBANE
India will aim to address their batting inconsistency and finalise their combination ahead of the Women's World Cup next year when they take on the mighty Australia in the three-match ODI series, starting here Thursday. The Indian team has landed Down Under after securing a 2-1 home ODI series win over New Zealand. However, it was fairly evident that India's batting was not in top shape. As a result, they have dropped out-of-form opener Shafali Verma from the squad in an attempt to try a different combination. The Harmanpreet Kaur-led side would know that it has a huge task cut out against Australia who have historically dominated them in 50-overs cricket. Their record Down Under is dismal, with just four wins out of sixteen WODIs. In the last series in 2021, Australia defeated India 2-1.

The series will give skipper Kaur and coach Amol Majumdar a perfect opportunity to bolster their preparations for the ODI World Cup at home next year. Australia will be without regular skipper Alyssa Healy, who is nursing a knee injury. Additionally, the hosts have not played in this format since March and will be aiming to shake off the rust. "(India) have got superstars ... Always hard-fought and crucial key moments in every game, and while we're at home we're expecting a lot of India support," Australia captain Tahlia McGrath said. For India, Smriti Mandhana will bear the responsibility of providing a solid start with the bat. Besides two single digit scores, the flamboyant opener has been in fine form this year, scoring 448 runs at an impressive average of around 75 in her last six ODIs. Kaur's form will be a significant concern for India, as she has struggled with



consistency this year. With much at stake, her captaincy and batting have come under scrutiny following India's early exit from the T20 World Cup. Additionally, she will face increased pressure after failing to score in double figures in the last ODI series against Australia. The likes of Jemimah Rodrigues and Deepti Sharma will also be keen to get big scores. The Indian team will miss

wicketkeeper-batter Yastika Bhatia, who suffered a wrist injury during the Women's Big Bash League. Young Uma Chetry, who has been included in the team in her place, will want to make an impression in her debut ODI series. Big-hitting wicketkeeper-batsman Richa Ghosh has returned to the team as have Harleen Deol, Titas Sadhu and Minnu Mani. Deepti bowled at an economy rate of 3.6 against New Zealand and she would like to continue this performance. Radha Yadav too had a good series against the Kiwis and would want to continue in the same vein. Aggressive fast bowler Saima Thakor, who made her debut against New Zealand, will also be desperate to leave a mark with her performance. McGrath will be captaining the national side for the first time in a full series. "This is the first time I've had a full series as captain - previously I've stepped into the role at the end of a series or a tournament. I like to put my own spin on it," McGrath said. Batter Georgia Voll has been given her debut in place of Healy, while veteran Elise Perry will be eyeing the 4,000-run milestone in ODIs, as she is just 42 runs away. The weather is expected to be hot and humid and there is also a possibility of light rain. Squads: India: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana (vc), Priya Punia, Jemimah Rodrigues, Harleen Deol, Uma Chetry, Richa Ghosh (wk), Tejal Hasabnis, Deepti Sharma, Minnu Mani, Priya Mishra, Radha Yadav, Titas Sadhu, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh Thakor, Saima Thakor Australia: Tahlia McGrath (c), Ashleigh Gardner (vc), Darcie Brown, Kim Garth, Alana King, Phoebe Litchfield, Sophie Molineux, Beth Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Megan Schutt, Annabel Sutherland, Georgia Voll, Georgia Wareham.



Bangladesh beats West Indies by 101 runs in Jamaica

AP ■ KINGSTON
Bangladesh won a test in the Caribbean for the first time in 15 years by beating the West Indies by 101 runs inside four days at Sabina Park. Bangladesh set West Indies 287 to win in five and a bit sessions and the West Indies managed to bat less than two sessions, all out for 185. The Bangladeshis had lost their last seven tests in the Caribbean, including the first one of this series in Antigua last week. They have tied the short series. "This was enjoyable," Bangladesh stand-in captain Mehdi Hasan Miraz said. "We were not thinking negatively. The boys bowled especially well. Nahid (Rana) in the first innings, Taskin (Ahmed) and Hasan Mahmud. Second-innings specialist Taijul (Islam) got five wickets. He was excellent. He has been very good for the last 10 years, more than 200 wickets for us." On a pitch offering some grip and the odd low bounce, spin came into play and left-arter Taijul took advantage with 5-50, his best overseas figures in 2 1/2 years and his best figures in the West Indies since his test debut on the same ground in 2014. As West Indies wickets began to tumble - the last six for 42 runs - Jaker Ali's innings for Bangladesh grew in importance. Jaker made a career-best 91 and was last man out in the visitors' second innings just before lunch. That gave West Indies a target of 287, which was gettable, but on a ground where the highest

successful run chase was 212. That record remains. "The batting group needs consistency," West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite said. "Consistency in hard work as well. I believe we have the talent." Hodge offers hope Brathwaite led a positive start to the chase but couldn't sustain a partnership. Mikyle Louis fell to Taijul on the stroke of lunch, and Keacy Carty nicked Taskin behind. Brathwaite, with just one half-century in 18 months, reached 43 off 63 balls when he was out defending against Taijul. The ball grazed his glove and Mahmudul Hasan Joy made a diving close-in catch. Taijul then bowled Alick Athanaze through the gate and West Indies hopes were resting on Kavem Hodge. Hodge reached tea on 49 and West Indies was still in the chase at 133-4, needing 154 more. Hodge, who debuted in January, achieved the West Indies' first half-century of the test, 50 off 64 balls, but just when the chase was half done he was out. Taijul struck again. Hodge played back to a ball coming in from outside off and was pinned for 55 off 75. Still needing 144 more runs, the West Indies fell over from there. Taskin, Hasan Mahmud and first-innings destroyer Nahid Rana got among the wickets, while Taijul got his 15th career five-for when he trapped Joshua Da Silva. Jaker dominates The morning was all about Jaker. He scored 62 of Bangladesh's 75 runs.

Odisha FC eye home hat-trick against Mumbai City despite Roy Krishna's absence

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR
Coming on the back of successive wins, Odisha FC will look to maintain their winning momentum when they face a tricky Mumbai FC test in the Indian Super League here on Thursday. The Kalinga Warriors defeated former champions Bengaluru FC in their previous encounter to jump to third place in the ISL standings with 15 points from 10 matches as they would aim for a hat-trick of wins, while the Islanders would be keen to extend their unbeaten run against Odisha FC. Odisha have scored in each of their previous 10 home ISL contests, and a goal in this game will allow it to equal its record of scoring in 11 successive home fixtures, set between December 2019 and December 2022. The team faces a significant setback as their ace marksman Roy Krishna sidelined for the season due to injury. Confirming the news, head coach Sergio Lobera said, "It's sad news for the team. Roy is



not just an incredible player but also a fantastic human being. "We'll miss him on the pitch, but I'm sure he'll continue to support us off it. He's one of the best professionals I've worked with, and I wish him a speedy recovery." Despite this loss, the team remains focused and ready for the challenges ahead. Mumbai have been unbeaten in its earlier six clashes versus Odisha, having been successful on four occasions and drawing twice. Only against FC Goa (13 games) and Chennaiyin FC (9 games) does the side have a

longer active streak. Meanwhile, Bipin Singh possesses a great record in this tie, contributing to nine goals (7 goals and 2 assists) -- the highest by any player from the Islanders against a single opponent in the event's history. Considering their head-on engagements, in 11 ISL outings, MCFC has prevailed in six encounters, whereas OFC has been triumphant thrice, while two meetings have resulted in a draw. Lobera further said they would stick to its playing philosophy and not get swayed by Mumbai's strengths. "We know our style of play. We know our strengths, and we have to play according to that," Lobera said. "If we don't do that, we won't be strong. The team is ready for tomorrow's game." On the other hand, the Islanders' boss, Petr Kratky, hinted that they will have to be robust with their back-line to stop the juggernauts from finding the back of the net in this match. "Odisha FC have scored 10 goals in their last two matches. We need to find a way to stop this," Kratky felt. "Because they (OFC) have found a way to out-score the oppositions. We have to stay true to our style of play too." Odisha's Diego Mauricio has been involved in five goals in his previous two ISL contests, posing a potent threat versus Mumbai, having been instrumental and contributing to three goals in his last three starts against the latter, registering multiple goal involvements in his last two games.



IOC official open to back-to-back World Cup in Saudi Arabia

AP ■ GENEVA
Scheduling the 2034 World Cup in Saudi Arabia back-to-back with the 2034 Salt Lake City Winter Games would pose "no risk" to the Olympics, a senior IOC official said. "We don't see at this stage a major issue. On the contrary, it is a lot of sport in the time frame," Christophe Dubi, the International Olympic Committee executive director for the games, said at an online briefing after a board meeting, suggesting two major sports events close together would be "a real feast" for fans. Dubi's comments suggested January 2034 is surprisingly open for FIFA and Saudi Arabia to stage soccer's marquee event despite a near-clash with the Salt Lake City Olympics that aims to have an opening ceremony on Feb. 10 that year. Playing a World Cup in January 2022 was not option when FIFA and future tournament host Qatar - in the planning stages a decade ago - needed to find cooler months to avoid the searing Middle East heat in June and July. Before deciding in 2015 to play in Qatar in November-December 2022, FIFA understood from Olympic officials it would be unacceptable to move too close to the 2022 Winter Games. Those Olympics eventually were hosted in Beijing, opening on Feb. 4. Saudi Arabia will be confirmed next week by FIFA as host of a 2034 World Cup that cannot realistically be played in summer months when temperature routinely exceeds 40 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit). The new 48-team, 104-game World Cup format takes 38 days to play. Asked if the IOC wants January and early February to be off limits for FIFA in 2034 to protect Salt Lake City, Dubi said: "I think that the risk of having those two in parallel is immensely limited." "From all standpoints, including a commercial one, we have actually virtually no risk," he said. "This is going to be for sports fans a real feast during a period of whatever it is, three, four months, where you are going to have these two events." Saudi Arabia currently has excellent relations - politically and financially - with FIFA and IOC to resolve the scheduling issue. FIFA president Gianni Infantino has built a close working relationship over several years with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and the IOC this year sealed a 12-year deal for the kingdom to host the new Esports Olympics.

National Karate Federation felicitates six players who won medals at International Karate Competition

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM
The national karate federation felicitated six players from Sai Karate Academy of Gurugram who have won medals at the International Karate Competition held at Stadium Titivangsa Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The players from the academy won 6 medals including 1 gold and 1 silver and brought laurels to Gurugram. On this occasion, national federation President Hansi Bharat Sharma said, "play your game with consistency and hard work and set big goals." "Children have started paying more attention to making their future in sports. Due to this awareness, today our country is registering victory in every competition," he added. "Around 2,500 players from 20 countries participated in this competition held from 29 November to 1 December 2024. In which 6 players from Gurugram of Haryana participated and won 1 Gold, 1 Silver and 4 Brown medals." Coach of Sai Karate Academy, Sunil Saini said. For the successful program, Sports Karate Association General Secretary India



Technical Director Shihan Sunil Saini said that all the players impressed everyone with their excellent performance and brought glory to Gurugram. General Secretary Saini assured that the team will bring glory to Gurugram with better performance in future as well. Apart from this, preparations have started for the championship to be held in England recently, he said. Despite tough competition, Indian athletes demonstrated extraordinary skill and determination. Young talents Aditya Dahiya and Kavya Bhardwaj won bronze medals in the sub-junior category Kumut event, while experienced athlete Geeta Godara won a silver medal in the veteran category Kata event and a bronze medal in the veteran category Kumut event. Shalu Hari won gold in the veteran category Kata, and Rinki Goyal won a bronze medal in the veteran category Kata. "Ansha Godara is a very good player in the team. We hope that next time she will represent our India and will do very well and in a great way," he added.

Lewis Hamilton faces emotional end to amazing Mercedes journey before joining Ferrari in F1

AP ■ LUSAIL
Lewis Hamilton is looking back on an "amazing journey" and the most successful partnership in Formula 1 history as he prepares to bid farewell to Mercedes this week and join Ferrari. The move offers a new start for the 39-year-old Hamilton, who's had a difficult end to his last Mercedes season. Ferrari's first task next year might be to get him back on form. "I don't think we're going to end up on a high," Hamilton said Sunday after finishing 12th in Qatar in another tough race which saw him get penalties, a puncture,

and even ask Mercedes for permission to retire the car. Two days earlier, he said he was "definitely not fast any more" after struggling again in qualifying. Hamilton's last race for Mercedes at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on Sunday will bring down the curtain on a 12-year stay with the team. He won six of his seven world titles with Mercedes, the most by any F1 driver with a single team. As an all-time great and the sport's only Black driver, Hamilton's influence extends far beyond the F1 grid. Hamilton shook F1 with the shock announcement in February that he would join Ferrari in 2025 - a decision

he even kept secret from his parents - and the prospect of leaving Mercedes has overshadowed this season. "I've had all year to think about it, so there's been those highs and lows through the year. I can't predict how I'm going to feel next Sunday after the race, or the days to follow, or at Christmas time," Hamilton said last week. Hamilton said he would miss the "family" atmosphere at Mercedes and will leave with warm memories, including of Niki Lauda, the former F1 champion who played a key role in bringing him to the team and who died in 2019. "There's many, many great moments. Moments with



Niki, amazing conversations, arguments," Hamilton said. "It's been an amazing journey together, one that I've genuinely loved." The last time Hamilton switched teams, he found it hard to stay away from his old employer. Hamilton recalled the incident in 2013 when he mistakenly drove into McLaren's pit at the Malaysian Grand Prix, in his second race after leaving for Mercedes. "I remember when I joined this team it was strange driving past my old team in the pit lane, to the point that I stopped at theirs at one point," he said. After an emotional victory at his home British Grand

Prix in July ended a 945-day wait for a win, Hamilton took another win at the Belgian Grand Prix when his teammate George Russell finished first but was disqualified. Since then, though, Hamilton has placed behind Russell in 10 of 12 races, including sprints. Qualifying has been Hamilton's biggest problem, forcing him to try to make up places on race day. "When you're always back where I am (on the grid), it makes it very hard, almost impossible, to be competing for wins," he said last week. Hamilton is missing one potential chance to drive the Ferrari this year in the

testing session after the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. He said it's not possible under his contract with Mercedes but he didn't want to start his Ferrari career that way, anyway. Hamilton will likely get to take the wheel behind closed doors at Ferrari's famed Fiorano test track early next year. "I know (Ferrari team principal) Fred (Vasseur) wanted it to happen. For me, I was in two minds. Driving the red car for the first time in Abu Dhabi does not excite me. In a perfect world you'd get to drive and not be seen and do the first rollout next year," he said.

Indian team is a group of superstars, we are not focussing just on Bumrah or Kohli: Lyon



Kaun banega next BCCI secretary?

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With Jay Shah taking over as International Cricket Council's youngest chairman on December 1, the role of secretary in the mighty BCCI lies vacant and as officials wonder who the replacement might be, they have time to figure out the next course of action.

Following the constitutional amendment in 2022, the secretary is the most influential office-bearer in the BCCI, having "all powers in relation to cricketing and non-cricketing matters" with the CEO working under his supervision.

Shah was elected unopposed for the ICC top position in August and the stakeholders have been wondering ever since how the transition process will take place.

Gujarat's Anil Patel and current BCCI joint secretary Devjit Saikia could replace Shah in the BCCI. The name of DDCA president Rohan Jaitley was also floated but remained just speculation.

"We don't know what is happening. Everyone (BCCI officials and state units) is quiet on the matter. Most likely joint secretary (Saikia) will be interim for the time being," said a BCCI administrator.

"There are issues that need to be dealt with on a day to day basis and anyone who comes in, needs to have a bit of knowledge on how the BCCI is run," he added.

From the time an elected office-bearer resigns, the board has 45 days to call for a Special General Meeting and choose his successor.

If one calculates the 45 days from the day Shah took charge of ICC, the board has time till mid-January to fill up the position.

The BCCI also needs to appoint an electoral officer at least four weeks prior to the election, as per the constitution.

A senior state unit official said the board had ample time to complete the transition.

"Transition should have been complete by now. The secretary has to sign majority of documents. This matter should have been taken up at the AGM (in September) but nobody questioned at that time," said the official.

"There is a power vacuum right now at the BCCI, the most powerful cricketing body in the world," added another office-bearer of a state unit.

With the current three-year term of officer-bearers coming to end in September next year, the incoming secretary will be in charge for close to one year.

There is also no word yet on who the new BCCI representative in the ICC board would be.

Shah held that position too and Board president Roger Binny is in the list of alternate directors.

IPL chairman Arun Dhumal is India's representative in the ICC's Chief Executives' Committee.



in India's playing XI in Perth with the tourists opting to play all-rounder Washington Sundar as the sole spin option.

"More than surprises me. But the quality of Indian cricketers that they got in that squad, don't they? You've got Ashwin with 530 odd wickets and then you got Ravindra Jadeja over 300 wickets or whatever it may be.

"So it's pretty remarkable to see the quality of player that are sitting on the bench. But I can't control with who they run out, but it would be a good challenge, no matter who they bring out," Lyon said.

Debutant Nitish reddy displayed his attacking instincts by taking on the Australian off-spinner, hitting him for several boundaries in Perth. However Lyon wasn't surprised.

"I wasn't surprised. But yet again, here for boundaries, it provides opportunities for me to hopefully take a few chances along the way," he added.

solely on any one player, that's for sure.

"We have nothing but respect for every Indian cricketer who takes the field on Friday. That doesn't mean we're not going to compete. We respect them, but we're determined to play our brand of cricket and compete hard against a quality side. India is one of the best teams in the world," he added.

Seasoned India off-spinner R Ashwin, who has 536 Test wickets, could not find space

Ollie Pope stays as stand-in wicketkeeper for England in second Test against New Zealand

AP ■ WELLINGTON

England has kept Ollie Pope as its stand-in wicketkeeper for the second Test against New Zealand starting Thursday.

After Jordan Cox broke his thumb ahead of the series opener in Christchurch last week, Ollie Robinson was called up as wicketkeeping cover and was in contention to make his maiden international appearance in the second Test at Wellington's Basin Reserve.

However, England kept faith with the same team that won by eight wickets on the fourth afternoon of the first test at



Hagley Oval, meaning Pope retained the gloves and Jacob Bethell stayed at No. 3. Pope was solid behind the stumps and hit 77 after moving down to No. 6 in the batting order. Bethell was also impressive on his debut,

hitting 50 not out in the second innings.

"They always say when you don't notice a keeper, he's done a good job and Ollie certainly did that," England fast bowler Chris Woakes said. "To step up at short notice like that and do the job he did was fantastic. For him to score runs just shows his character, putting his hand up for the team without any fuss and cracking on."

England: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Jacob Bethell, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Ollie Pope, Ben Stokes (c), Chris Woakes, Gus Atkinson, Brydon Carse and Shoaib Bashir.



Yashasvi is standing exactly where I was 10 years back: KL Rahul

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

KL Rahul sees shades of himself in 22-year-old Yashasvi Jaiswal, who on his first trip Down Under, seems to be in a similar position like he was on his maiden Australia tour 10 years back.

In the 2014-15 series, the then 22-year-old Rahul, batting at No. 6, had scores of 3 and 1 on debut at the MCG but came back strongly as an opener in the very next game with a eye-catching 110 in Sydney.

He also faced nerves but during the second innings in Sydney where he scored 16, he batted for an hour with Murali Vijay which eased him a lot.

Rahul is trying to play a similar role with Jaiswal what Vijay, the former opener and his national team senior had done to him back then.

Rahul and Jaiswal shared an Indian record opening stand of 201 in the second innings in Perth where Jaiswal scored a classy century but Rahul played his part with a very useful 77.

"I saw a bit of myself in him how I was 10 years ago, opening the batting for the first time, lots of doubts, lot of nerves and you keep doubting your own game and a lot that happens in your head, and so all you can do is try and slow things down, try and take a few deep breaths," Rahul replied when asked about his conversations with Indian cricket's next 'pin-up' boy.

"That's what was passed on to me by my fellow opening partner (M Vijay). I just passed that on to him," Rahul remembered his Test hundred in Sydney, which was his second game of his career.

Having said that, Rahul doesn't deny that self doubts could creep in time and again but he has tried to preach Jaiswal what he practices.

"I am not saying I don't have all these thoughts, I do. But having been there, I know what I need to do to get past those doubts and thoughts you have in your head. And so whatever I told Jaiswal was what I have myself practiced," he said.

Rahul felt that once he had played around 40 balls, Jaiswal seemed more and more confident about his game.

"Once he got past those first 30-40 balls, he started feeling more confident, he was seeing the ball really well and batted beautifully," he said.

Spin expected to play a role in the second Test: Adelaide Oval's head curator

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Spin is expected to play a role in the second Test between India and Australia, but the Adelaide Oval's head curator Damian Hough has also promised a 6mm grass cover to ensure that the ball doesn't wear out early during the day-night game here.

Hough said the grass will assist the pacers early on with the spinners coming into play as the match progresses.

"History suggests that it is hard to bat under lights in Adelaide. The pitch will have 6mm of grass. We're trying to allow all facets of the game to shine at some stage during the game," Hough told media ahead of the second Test starting Friday.

"What we're trying to do is have a coarse mat grass -- thatchy type of grass that's dry and hard. And the reason

we do that is we're trying to get as much pace and bounce out of the pitch as what we can get for us, for Adelaide, which is a lower clay content," he added.

The opening Perth Test, which India won by a record 295 runs, lasted four days with batting becoming easier as the game moved ahead.

Hough has similar plans for the pink-ball game.

"Spin normally plays a role so it can get a good bite or purchase out of that grass and it normally gets good bounce. So that's a game plan. Hopefully, as the ball gets older, the batters can cash in and if there's a partnership out there, they cash in and go from there."

While spinners didn't have much to do in the Perth Test, Hough said the tweekers will have more assistance at the Adelaide Oval.



"Spin always plays a role in Adelaide. You need to pick a front-line spinner. There should never be a question of 'do we, don't we?' It should always be 'do,'" Hough said highlighting the role of spinners in Adelaide.

"From my side, always pick a spinner. The idea of leaving that extra bit of grass and that matty grass is for the spinner to be able to get purchase out of that mat and get it to bite, grip, and bounce," he added.

"We want spin to play a role at Adelaide. We might not be able to get as much as other places around the world, but spin traditionally plays a role."

He reiterated that the aim is

to have a good, balanced contest.

"Normally the quicks should be able to get some assistance throughout the game. And we know the quicks can. Spin can come into it in that night session. Under lights, if they can get hold of a new ball in that night session, normally is quite entertaining.

"We're trying to get that balance right...We're trying really hard to ensure that the balance between bat and ball is there and we can allow the batters to shine strategically throughout the course of the game."

Potential thunderstorms are forecast for the opening day of the match, which is unusual for Adelaide at this time of the year.

"I am not sure exactly on the timing of those storms coming through, but we're expecting to pull covers a bit on Friday. Hopefully it clears out on Saturday morning... Then it should be good for the remainder of the Test."

Hough said weather has a huge role to play in the movement of the pink ball.

"The ball hooping around has got nothing to do with the pitch. Under right conditions, right weather, the ball will move."

It will be India's first pink-ball Test in Australia since they were famously bundled out for 36 at the same venue back in 2020 but Hough maintained there were no demons in the pitch even back then.

"On the morning of day three, no one would have expected that Test match to finish in three days. That was just really good bowling from Australia...I don't think the pitch played a part in that," he said.

Rishabh Pant has taken to Test cricket like a duck to water, says Rahul Dravid

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The void left by MS Dhoni's retirement in Indian cricket lineup was quickly filled by Rishabh Pant, who embraced Test cricket like a "duck to water", feels former head coach Rahul Dravid.

The flamboyant wicketkeeper-batter, who returned after surviving a horrific car crash in December 2022, scored a match-winning 89 in the fourth Test at the Gabba and contributed 274 runs throughout the series, playing a key role in India's historic 2-1 triumph in the 2020-21 tour.

"It's hard to imagine that, after Dhoni left, you felt there might be some time for someone to come in and replace him," Dravid told Star Sports.

"I'm not saying he's replaced him, but certainly in Test cricket, his performances have been absolutely sensational, an incredible performance."

"Watching Rishabh there and chasing to get 89 to win that Test match at the Gabba, with everything on the line and such a depleted side, to put in that kind of performance under that kind of pressure -- truly sensational... What a special cricketer he's been. He's just taken to Test cricket like a duck to water. It's just phenomenal."

Pant's heroics that included two fifties at 68.50 in five innings helped India become the first Asian side to win successive Test series wins Down Under.

In the ongoing five-Test series, the 27-year-old scored a vital 37 off 78 balls in the first innings of the Perth Test, including a remarkable six that lifted India's spirits, helping them recover from 59/5 to 150 all out.

The Jasprit Bumrah-led team then bowled out Australia for 104 and won the match by 295 runs to take a 1-0 lead going into the Adelaide Test beginning on Friday.

While India have dominated Australia lately, Dravid's knock of 233 during the Adelaide Test in 2003 still remains a fan-favourite.

Nostalgia and regrets

Reflecting on his knock, Dravid admitted that he still

regrets not winning the series. "I'm grateful for it, but I wouldn't have voted for myself, put it that way.

Probably, I've got a lot of recency bias as well," he continued.

"I think the way India has



performed in Australia over the last two series in particular -- winning series there -- that counts for a lot.

"However great my performances or India's performances were, we couldn't actually win that series. We came close, but we couldn't get the wickets on the final day in Sydney that we needed."

"The last two teams that have gone to Australia have done that, and that's a fantastic achievement -- a terrific achievement -- and there have been some absolutely sensational performances right through those."

Dravid was joined by VVS Laxman when India were reeling at 85/4, especially after the hosts had posted a

mammoth 556 in just a day and a half.

Ganguly run-out: My mistake

The 51-year-old reflected on the incident where he had accidentally run out his captain Sourav Ganguly and admitted it was his "mistake".

"I was thinking, I've got the captain run out. I better do something meaningful. It was totally my mistake getting Sourav (Ganguly) run out. I will own up to that one -- it was my mistake."

"But, I think you're just trying to bat, you're just trying to build a partnership, you're just trying to get to the target. The thing with Laxman and me is that we had batted together a couple of really big partnerships before that. We did it once in Kolkata in 2001 and even in a domestic game when we first played South Zone against West Zone."

"So, we had kind of batted a lot together and built this partnership. Not that we were thinking about that when we got out there, but I think the idea was really just to bat and try and build partnerships, stitch something together."

"It's always nice batting with Laxman as well... Because he's just a beautiful player to watch and such a lovely player."

"He really attacked back, which, in some ways, complemented me quite well in how we went about our innings," he recalled as Indian won the Adelaide Test by four wickets but the series ended in a 1-1 draw.