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INSIDE

MONEY 10
FPIS RETURN TO INDIAN EQUITIES
WITH ₹24,454 CRORE INFLOW IN
DECEMBER FIRST WEEK

LUCKNOW, MONDAY DECEMBER 9, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

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ASSAD FLEES, SYRIA JUBILATES

AP ■ DAMASCUS

Syrians poured into streets echoing with celebratory gunfire on Sunday after a stunning rebel advance reached the capital, putting an end to the Assad family's 50 years of iron rule but raising questions about the future of the country and the wider region. Joyful crowds gathered in central squares in Damascus, waving the Syrian revolutionary flag in scenes that recalled the early days of the Arab Spring uprising, before a brutal crackdown and the rise of an insurgency plunged the country into a nearly 14-year civil war. Others gleefully ransacked the presidential palace and the Assad family residence after President Bashar Assad and other top officials vanished, their whereabouts unknown. Russia, a close ally, said



Syrians celebrate the fall of Bashar Assad's government in the town of Bar Elias, Lebanon, near the border with Syria. AP/PTI

Assad left the country after negotiations with rebel groups and had given instructions to transfer power peacefully. Abu Mohammed al-Golani, a former al-Qaida commander who cut ties with the group years ago and says he embraces pluralism and religious tolerance, leads the biggest rebel faction and is poised to chart the country's future direction. The end of Assad's rule deals a major blow to Iran and its allies, already weakened by over a year of conflict with Israel. The rebels now face the daunting task of healing bitter divides in a country ravaged by war and still split among different armed factions. Turkey-backed opposition fighters are battling US-allied Kurdish forces in the north, and the Islamic State group is still active in some remote areas.

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Police shower protesting farmers with petals before lobbing teargas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

Agitating farmers on Sunday afternoon suspended their "Dilli Chalo" foot march for the day after some of them suffered injuries in tear gas shelling by Haryana police, the protesting farmers will decide on the next course of action on Monday. After the farmers started the foot march on Sunday, they were halted by the multilayered barricading erected by the Haryana Police at the entry point to Haryana from Punjab. A heated argument took place between protesting farmer 'jatha' and security personnel. Haryana Police asked the farmers to show them the requisite



Police personnel shower flowers on farmers agitating at Shambhu border, in Patiala district. PTI

permission to take out the foot march. The police claimed they had a list with names of 101 farmers, provided by farm unions, but the names of the protesting farmers were not as per the list. As the confrontation escalated, tear gas shells were lobbed and water cannons were aimed towards the farmers to disperse them, injuring several protestors.

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Delhi gets colder, its air turns 'very poor'



Photo: Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital recorded its second-lowest daytime temperature of the winter season so far on Sunday at 23.7 degrees Celsius, with some parts of the city receiving thundershowers in the evening. The minimum temperature was recorded at 8 degrees Celsius on Sunday morning, two degrees below the season's average. While the air quality took a downturn again into the 'very poor' category with an AQI reading of 302 after having improved to the 'moderate' level at the start of December. The maximum temperature was recorded at 23.7 degrees Celsius, a notch below normal, compared to 25.4 degrees Celsius on Saturday, according to the weather department. The lowest maximum temperature of the season so far was recorded on November 18, when it dropped to 23.5 degrees Celsius. IGI Airport, Vasant Kunj, Hauz Khas, Malviya Nagar, Kalkaji, Mehrauli, Tughlaqabad, Chhattarpur, IGNOU, Aya Nagar and Deramandi, as well as NCR areas (Noida, Gurugram and Manesar) and Farukhnagar (Haryana) received light rainfall in the evening. According to the India Meteorological Department

(IMD), Delhi is set to experience a sharp dip in temperatures, with the mercury expected to plummet to around 3°C from December 10. This significant drop marks the onset of a cold wave that will grip not only the national capital but also the entire northern belt, including Punjab, Haryana, and Western Uttar Pradesh, until December 14. IMD has also warned of dense fog across parts of northern India on December 9 and 10, potentially reducing visibility and impacting transportation. IMD advised that fog may affect some airports, highways and railway routes in the areas of met-sub-division. "Chances of Tripping of Power lines in the very dense fog routes," it said. However, the chilling conditions are predicted to intensify due to a combination of factors, including snowfall in the northern hills and the influence of a Western Disturbance, which could bring light showers to the plains. These rains, expected on December 8 and 9, may exacerbate the cold spell further. The IMD has forecast very light rain or drizzle for Monday and moderate fog conditions from Monday to Wednesday. The fog intensification will then reduce as shallow fog is forecast for Thursday.



Black Sunday for Indian Cricket

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

It turned out to be a forgettable day on Sunday for Indian cricket as each of the three national teams -- senior men's, women's and Under-19 men's sides -- suffered humiliating defeats in their respective games. While the Rohit Sharma-led side suffered a 10-wicket defeat against Australia in the second Test of the five-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Adelaide, the Indian women lost by a huge margin of 122 runs against Australia in the second ODI to hand their rivals a 2-0 lead in the three-game series in Brisbane. The Border-Gavaskar Trophy is now levelled at 1-1 after

India won the series opener in Perth by 295 runs. The third Test will be played in Brisbane from December 14. It was a tale of two shoddy batting efforts with the two senior-most players Rohit and Kohli looking well past their best. Jasprit Bumrah gave it all but lacked a potent bowling partner at the other end. For Rohit Sharma, things are getting increasingly difficult as he now has lost the last four Tests that he has captained. In his last six Test matches, he has batted in 12 innings with just one half-century in Bengaluru. The only other innings where he crossed 20-run mark is the 11-ball-23 cameo in Kanpur against Bangladesh.

Continued on page 8

Samridh Narishakti, Viksit Bharat

BIMA SAKHI YOJANA'S

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Bomb hoax keeps city police on toes

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A hoax call received by Dial 112 emergency service that bombs had been planted at three major commuter stations in the city kept police on their toes.

The police sprang into action after the unidentified caller claimed the presence of bombs at Hussainganj Metro Station, Charbagh Railway Station and Alambagh Bus Station. After the call was received around 8 am on Sunday, the police and security forces were alerted and teams of bomb disposal experts and dog squads

were dispatched to the sites. "The police teams, along with the bomb squad, conducted a thorough search of the stations. No suspicious objects or explosives were discovered at any of the sites," Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police Manisha Singh said.

"No explosives or dangerous materials were found, and the public was assured that there was no threat to their safety," Singh said.

The police are still in dark about the mischief monger behind the call originated from Bihar. The call came from a number in Bihar and the caller

indicated the presence of bombs in bags and disconnected the call. When a call was made to the same number, the phone was switched off.

The police are tracking the phone number from which the hoax call was made and efforts are on to arrest the caller, the ADCP said.

Earlier, too threats have been made to blow up Charbagh railway station and Alambagh bus stand with a bomb. Additional Commissioner of Police Vikas Jaiswal said that checking was being done every two hours by the Metro security force.

Vintage car rally showcases elegance and history

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow's streets turned into a moving museum on Sunday, with a fleet of vintage cars cruising through the city to celebrate the beauty of bygone eras.

Organised by the Oudh Heritage Car Club, the vintage car rally was supported by the Tourism department and HDFC Bank, and featured around two dozen vintage cars. The 'Chandrika Devi Heritage Drive' covered a 60-kilometre route from the Tourism department's Paryatan Bhawan in Gomti Nagar to Captain's Farm about 30 kilometres away.

UP Tourism Principal Secretary Mukesh Meshram emphasised the broader impact of such events, saying, "This vintage car rally connects the younger generation with our transportation history. It also fosters interest among citizens in preserving our heritage."

"UP Tourism supports these events and we are planning similar rallies in the Bundelkhand and the Chambal regions to promote tourism there," Meshram told PTI.

The rally included a fleet of rare cars such as the 1928 Austin (Austin 7), Jaguar Mark IV, Fiat Spider, and the Volkswagen Beetle.

Some of the vehicles driven during the rally were almost a century old.

Oudh Heritage Car Club president Pradyuman Singh said, "This is the fourth time UP Tourism has sponsored us. These events are part of our heritage, and we aim to promote vintage cars by driving them and showcasing them to



DG UP Tourism Mukesh Meshram and filmmaker Muzaffar Ali flag off a vintage car rally, in Lucknow, Sunday

PTI

the public." While the rally faced some last-minute dropouts, reducing its strength to 22-24 cars from the expected 30, Singh remained optimistic.

"It's still a decent number for today's drive. These cars, some from the 1940s and 50s, covered a fair distance of 60 kilometres, which is a good run for such vintage machines," he said.

A highlight of the rally was the 1928 Austin 7, owned by Dr Akhilesh Maheshwari.

Oudh Heritage Car Club treasurer Amit Gujral highlighted the challenges of maintaining such classics.

"Maintaining these cars takes time and passion. We often visit markets in Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad or even import

parts. Regular maintenance is essential; we start the car at least once in 15 days to keep the engine in shape," he said.

Filmmaker Muzaffar Ali, the event's chief guest, reflected on the cultural significance of vintage cars.

"Cars are an important part of our cultural and historic landscape. Understanding their restoration and preservation is crucial," he remarked.

Ali recalled Lucknow's rich history of vintage cars and rallies. "The Raja of Tirwa was a pioneer in this movement, and my father owned a 1928 Isotta Fraschini. Such cars were symbols of elegance and passion among the talukdars of Lucknow. They had a penchant for it. Hispano-Suizas, Packards

— but now they are all gone," he noted.

Among the cars that stood out was Sandeep Narain's Volvo Amazon (1967), celebrated for introducing the revolutionary three-point seat belt.

"Volvo didn't patent this innovation because it believed safety should be universal. Today, this system is used worldwide in all cars," Narain said.

He also showcased his Fiat Spider (1958), a stunning red convertible, highlighting the blend of style and functionality that defined automotive design in its era.

Nitin Kohli drove his 1951 Morris Series II, which he said was made in England. "I have a private mechanic for this who comes probably every seven or

15 days. I go on a drive religiously every Sunday in this car." "This does require maintenance for sure but is low on it. It performs efficiently and gives us a good, safe drive," the upbeat Kohli, who matched his car with a red cap, told PTI.

The rally concluded at Captain's Farm at Kathwara village in the Bakshi ka Talab area of Lucknow amid admiring glances from the participants and spectators.

Meshram reiterated plans for expanding such initiatives across Uttar Pradesh to regions rich in history, such as Bundelkhand.

"These events not only draw tourists but also connect them with the state's heritage," he added.

Police clueless about SI's death

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Five days after the recovery of a sub-inspector's beheaded body from railway tracks in Sushant Golf City police station area, the police are yet in a fix to conclude if the deceased was murdered or he committed suicide.

The body of SI Dhyan Singh was recovered on Wednesday and was identified on Thursday, 24 hours after the recovery of the body. He was residing in Sushant Golf City police station area along with his wife who is also in police services. The couple was posted at police headquarters in Lucknow under

Sushant Golf City police station area. Singh was transferred to Jalaun recently and he had to join the duty on Thursday. He had left the house for getting a shave at a barber's shop and later he went to his under construction house in Khurdahi in Sushant Golf City police station area and talked to the workers there. According to the workers, he had a heated exchange with a man before he left his under construction house for another unknown destination.

Police recovered the body of the deceased from that part of the railway track where one cannot reach easily. Police have obtained the call

details record of his mobile phone which is still missing. The police have intensified the investigation to find out whether the death of SI Dhyan Singh was a murder or a suicide. The police said that a railway loco pilot had informed about a man who jumped in front of the train on the day of the incident.

However, the police are unable to explain the reason for the disappearance of the SI's mobile phone and his motorcycle. The body of Dhyan Singh (39), a native of Saini Bareth Bagh in Kaushambi, was found near the railway track on Wednesday. His head was severed.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I am Manorma Devi wife of Army No 2702984A Rank Havaldar Name Veer Pratap Singh R/o Village Tikri, Post Naobasta, P.S. Sultanpur Ghosh, District-Fatehpur (UP). My correct name is Manorma Devi but in service records of my husband by mistake my name was mentioned as Manorma. My correct name Manorma Devi is recorded in service records of my husband.

NOTICE

I INFORM THAT ARMY NO. 14374376L RANK EX (HAV) SURENDRA CHANDRA S/O GAYA PRASAD R/O VILLAGE GOSAI KI SARAY PO. CHHIVLAHA TAHSIL KHAGA DISTRICT FATEHPUR (U.P.) PIN 212650. I DECLARE THAT IN MY MILITARY RECORDS MY DAUGHTER'S NAME IS BINA KUMARI WHICH IS WRONG IN MY DAUGHTER'S SCHOOL RECORDS CORRECT NAME IS BEENA KUMARI. PLEASE READ AND NOTE THIS.

NOTICE

Notify that i have changed my name from Ikra to Ikra Saad (as per adhar card) for all purposes & records. Ikra Saad W/o Mohd Saad R/o 217/30 Imbaraba Aagha Baqar Victoria Street, Chowk, Lucknow

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Umesh Chandra to Umesh Chandra Gupta, for all future purposes. Umesh Chandra Gupta S/o Raghuvver Sahay Gupta Ramkrishna Nagar, Dibiyapur, District- Auraiya Uttar Pradesh - 206244

NOTICE

I No 6936 431 Y Havaldar ACP NB Subedar Rajesh Kumar Vill & Post Umramau, Tehsil- Dalmau, District- Raebareilly My daughter's name is my Army records, PRIYA and educational name of Kumari Priya, please my daughter correct name Kumari Priya in my Army records.

NOTICE

It is informed to the general public that my name is mentioned as Sail Singh son of Nachhattar Singh and Shail Singh, Jasmel Singh Khosa son of Nachhattar Singh and Jasmel Singh son of Nachhattar Singh in other records. Sail Singh, Shail Singh, Jasmel Singh and Jasmel Singh Khosa all four names are mine and there is no other person. Please note Affiant: Jasmel Singh Khosa son of Nachhattar Singh Pipri (Srinagar) Tehsil Lakhimpur Kheri.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Nidha Wakar to Nida Waqar D/O Viqar Ahmed R/O Flat No B-1202, JS S The Address Premises No. 97 & 120 A, Chandra Nagar, Kanpur Nagar, I will be known and recognised by this name in future.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from SIDDHARTHA GUPTA to SIDDHARTHA GUPTA ROSE Hereinafter I shall be known & identified with this name. Add - Flat no 1602, 1701, & 1702 Tower-1 Emerald Garden 7/102 Swarup Nagar Near Raina Market, Kanpur

NOTICE

My correct name is Aishwarya Gupta S/o Mahesh Gupta which is mentioned in all govt. Records by mistake L.I.C my name is mentioned in policy no-233066062 as priyanshu Gupta which is my house hold name. In future I will be known as Aishwarya Gupta R/o - 68/117 lokman mohal kanpur nagar - I have completed all legal formalities regarding the above by me.

सूचना

इसने नगर निगम संख्या-474/012/1ए (7ए/1) का नाम (पुराना नं- 474/7ए-1) बहाल मूलाखण्ड, रिकॉर्ड 1984 वर्गीकृत यानि 184.386 वर्गमीटर, किराना-बुन्दल नगर, वार्ड ककम रसूल, लखीमपुर व जिला-लखनऊ का विक्रय दिनांक 15.10.2024 को क्रेता मोहम्मद करीम सिद्दीकी पुत्र खलील अहमद निवासी-536/193, मदनगंज, खदरा, लखनऊ, उ.प्र.-226020 के पक्ष में कर दी है। उपरोक्त समिति का मूल बैकनामा दिनांक 19.05.1980 का अधिन उपर (पुराना 60) कर्ही खो नाम है। अधिकार में कोई भी मूल बैकनामा को लेकर कोई भी कानूनी कार्य नहीं करे। इस उक्तरी सिद्दीकी समिति (सो।) आदेशा खतिया पत्नी स्व. खालिद नगर, एमएन खालिद मूल स्व. खालिद नगर नं-474/7ए-1, सीमापुर रोड, सिद्धा पीठी कालेज के पास, खलीमन, निवाला नगर, लखनऊ व श्रीमती अश्लील नगर पत्नी अखतर खान नि-3, पहियन टोला, जिला उन्नाव।

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Sadia Qureshi to SADIA D/o Mohd. Shariq R/o 5/23, K D A Colony, Jajmau Shiwans Tereary Kanpur, for all future purpose

NOTICE

I have changed my name from SHARIQ Qureshi to Mohammad SHARIQ S/o Hazeem Mohammad Siddiq R/o 5/23, K D A Colony, Jajmau Shiwans Tereary Kanpur for all future purpose



Uttar Pradesh's Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak meets Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to invite him for his dignified presence in the Maha Kumbh 2025, in Mumbai, on Sunday

Several cars reduced to ashes in fire

Lucknow (PHS): Several cars were reduced to ashes after fire broke out in a workshop located at Tara Ka Purwa in Chinhat area of Lucknow on Sunday. Seeing the flames, the employees informed the Fire Brigade and police who rushed to the scene with two fire tenders and controlled the fire in 30 minutes.

According to the Fire Brigade personnel, it is not known how the fire started; however, nine vehicles were burnt in the flame. CFO Mangesh Kumar said that the fire was controlled in time and this saved other vehicles and prevented major loss. No one was injured in the incident, he added.

Girl blackmailed by FB friend

Lucknow (PHS): A Facebook friend of a girl student pursuing law studies got hold of her mobile, edited her photo and started blackmailing her. He also swindled nearly four lakh rupees from her. He also started harassing her by making her obscene video.

Troubled by the friend's behaviour, the student stopped going to school. Due to his constant pressure to meet her alone, the victim attempted suicide twice. The Gosaiganj police has registered an FIR on the complaint of the victim's father and have started investigating the case.

The father of the law student, a resident of Gosaiganj, said that his daughter was studying law in 2018-19. During this time, she became friends with Pranavesh Pranav Jha, a resident of Ramgarhwa, Champaran, Bihar, on Facebook. He alleged that the accused borrowed Rs 10,000 from his daughter for his father's treatment and after some time returned Rs 4,000. During this time, the accused started talking to his daughter on the mobile phone. After this, he took some pho-

tos of the girl from her mobile phone and edited them and started sending obscene messages. He also made some videos of the girl through video calls and started harassing her by threatening to make them viral. Along with this, he also asked the girl to transfer three lakh rupees to his account.

"When my daughter started working, he started sending messages to the principal," the father of the victim said. He said that his daughter started teaching in a private school along with continuing her studies. On this, Pranavesh harassed her by messaging and calling the principal there. Due to this, she had to leave her job. Not only this, he sent her obscene photos and videos to the principal of the law college and since then, she is not going to college.

The victim said that Pranavesh had created many fake IDs in her name on Facebook and Insta and chats with people of the village through them to defame her.

The Gosaiganj police said that information about the accused was being gathered.

Road crash leaves two dead

Lucknow (PTI): A pickup vehicle rammmed into a stationary truck on the Lucknow-Sultanpur highway on Sunday, leaving two persons dead and two others injured, the Amethi police said.

The incident occurred around 5 am near the Nageshwar Ganj canal. Two passengers in the pickup — Asgar Ali (40) and an unnamed individual — died on the spot.

Two others, identified as Razi Ahmed and Aftab, sustained injuries in the crash and were rushed to the Community Health Centre in Musafirkhana, Station House Officer (SHO) of Musafirkhana Police Station, Vivek Singh, said.

The bodies were sent for post-mortem. Two people died while another

2 men arrested in Sambhal violence case: Police

Sambhal (PTI): Two men were arrested in connection with the November 24 Sambhal violence based on CCTV footage, police on Sunday said.

The accident occurred in Fatehpur tehsil area on Saturday night when Umakant Singh (45) and Rajesh Kumar (55) were travelling and crashed into Ankit's (25) motorcycle, they said.

The injured were taken to Community Health Center Suratganj where doctors declared Singh and Kumar brought dead, the police said.

Meanwhile, Ankit has been referred to the district hospital, they added.

Circle Officer Anil Kumar Singh said that the bodies have been sent for post-mortem and further investigations are underway.

Harihar temple earlier. Violence broke out on November 24 when the mosque was being surveyed again.

Four people died and scores of others were injured in a clash between protesters and police. According to police, 29 police personnel were injured in the flare up.

Meanwhile, a 20-year-old man was arrested on Sunday for allegedly kidnapping and raping a 15-year-old girl in Maharajganj last month, police said. ASP Atish Kumar Singh said that the incident occurred on November 3, and identified the accused as Hridesh. He said a case was registered under sections of the BNS and POCSO Act based on a complaint filed by the minor's father.

Ruckus at Meerut restaurant after chicken served to vegetarian family

Meerut (PTI): A family who ordered vegetarian food at a restaurant here created a ruckus after they were served roasted chicken, alleging that the staff belonging to other community intentionally tried to "corrupt" their religion, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place at Romeo Lane restaurant in the Down Town Complex in Ganganagar, Meerut on Friday evening, they said.

The family had ordered a vegetarian dish, but they were served roasted chicken. As the family realised that it was a non-vegetarian dish, they created a ruckus in the restaurant.

A purported video of the incident has gone viral on social media. The family has filed a complaint at Ganganagar police station, alleging that the Muslim staff at the restaurant intentionally tried to "corrupt" their religion by serving non-vegetarian food.

Superintendent of Police (Rural), Rakesh Kumar Mishra, said that the matter is under investigation.

"An First information report will be registered following the preliminary investigation, and strict action will be taken against the accused accordingly," the police officer said.

5 COPS SUSPENDED FOR NEGLIGENCE, INDISCIPLINE

Five local policemen were suspended on charges of "gross negligence, inefficiency, and indiscipline" in their duties, an officer in Ballia said Sunday.

They were posted at the Jai Prakash Nagar police post in the Baira Police Station area, located on the Bihar border in the district.

SP Vikrant Vir identified the suspended cops as Sub-Inspector Guru Prasad Singh, and constables Sachin Kumar, Brijesh Singh, Chandan Rajak, and Abhay Singh. "They were suspended late Saturday night following a review of their performance and conduct," he added.

Corporate and Services Department, Star House, Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Zonal Office, Lucknow-226010, Ph. No. : 0522-2306039

Bank of India BOI

Requirement of Premises For Opening of Jagdishpur Branch

Detailed Notification inviting offers for Premises required for Opening of New Branch Jagdishpur, Lucknow Zone (within the radius of Jagdishpur Town Area, Dist- Amethi) is available on our web site www.bankofindia.co.in. Prescribed format for submission of offer may be obtained from our Office at Bank of India, Star House, Gomti Nagar, 1- Vibhuti Khand, Lucknow- 226010 OR may be downloaded from our Website www.bankofindia.co.in.

Last date for submission of offer is up to 16.12.2024 up to 4.00 PM.

Deputy Zonal Manager Lucknow Zone

Date : 09.12.2024

यूनियन बैंक ऑफ इंडिया Union Bank of India

Branch Office : 13/386, Parmat, Kanpur
Regional Office : 117/H-1/240, Pandu Nagar, Kanpur
Head Office : 239, Vidhan Bhawan Marg, Nariman Point Mumbai

POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property)

Branch : Parmat, Kanpur

Whereas The undersigned being the authorized officer of Union Bank of India, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice calling upon borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors of account to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being of dues with contractual rate of interest within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower/guarantor having failed to repay the amount in full, notice is hereby given to the borrower/guarantor and public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him u/s. 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said rules. The borrower/guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with property and any dealing with the property will subject to the charge of Union Bank of India, for an Amount and Interest thereon.

We also wish to draw kind attention of all concerned towards section 13(8) of the Act in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

Name and Address of Borrower/Guarantor & Description of Mortgage Property and O/S Amount as per Demand Notice/Demand & Possession Notice Date

Borrower : Smt. Vandana Chaurasiya W/o Shri Sushil Chaurasiya and Shri Sushil Chaurasiya S/o Shri Ram Babu Chaurasiya, Both R/o : H-655, World Bank Colony, Barra, Kanpur.

Demand Notice Date: 02-05-2024 • Date of Constructive Possession: 06.12.2024

Property: Residential Land and Building at House No. 8, Constructured over Private Plot No. 8, Part of Arazi No. 551/1, Mauza Arra, Kanpur Nagar. **Owner of Property :** Smt. Vandana Chaurasiya W/o Shri Sushil Chaurasiya, **Area :** 50.12 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded-North:** Plot No. 7, **South :** Plot No. 9, **East :** Plot No. 3, **West :** 18 Ft. Road. **O/s Amount as per Demand Notice: Rs. 11,27,513.08 + Intt. + Others Charge**

Date : 07-12-2024 Place : Kanpur Authorised Officer, Union Bank of India

Youth can transform challenges into opportunities: Yogi

PNS ■ KANPUR

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, while addressing the third convocation of Rama University, inspired the youth by highlighting the exemplary lives of iconic figures such as Lord Ram, Sri Krishna, Lord Buddha, Adi Shankaracharya, Maharana Pratap, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Guru Gobind Singh, Rani Lakshmbai and others. He emphasised that the youth possess the passion and ability to overcome challenges and transform adverse situations into opportunities. Citing examples from history, including revolutionary leaders like Pt. Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaq Ullah Khan, and visionaries like Louis Braille, Einstein and Newton, the chief minister urged youths to embrace innovation, research and awareness of societal and national dynamics to lead the way forward. During the event, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated the Dr BS Kushwaha Institute of Medical Sciences and congratulated graduating students and their families. He also addressed a workshop for the university management, offering suggestions to enhance areas such as education, health-



CM participating in third convocation of Rama University

care, innovation, and research. He also participated in a tree plantation drive as part of his commitment to environmental conservation. Chief Minister

Yogi Adityanath said that respect for teachers, parents and elders was essential for acquiring true knowledge. He urged students to seize life's

opportunities wisely, adapt to challenges and approach learning with devotion and discipline. Praising Rama College, Chief Minister Yogi highlight-

ed its remarkable growth over four decades. He noted that what began as a seed in a semi-developed area of Kanpur has now flourished into a universi-

ty, serving as a hub for education, healthcare, technical knowledge, innovation, research, investment, and employment.

He commended the institution's efforts in driving progress and development, stating that educational establishments can play a key role in societal change.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated that following the path of religion must align with truth and righteous conduct. He explained that Indian sages viewed religion as a vast concept beyond worship practices, focusing instead on duty, morality and values. Highlighting the inclusive nature of Sanatan Dharma, he stated that being Hindu transcends belief in specific deities or scriptures, as it embodies a way of life rooted in duty and good conduct for the betterment of society.

Chief Minister Yogi encouraged students to cultivate the habit of writing and embracing technology, stating that societies resisting reform and science fail to progress. Reflecting on India's technological journey, he highlighted how reforms since the 1990s brought innovations like mobile phones and smartphones to millions of people. The chief minister acknowledged the challenges and opportunities brought by new technologies, such as AI, ChatGPT, cryptocurrency, and digital advancements. However, he also cautioned students about

technological challenges like deepfake misuse and the importance of adopting ethical practices and cross-verification to address these concerns.

Chief Minister Yogi emphasised that both institutions and users must adopt protective measures and ethical practices to combat these issues, with cross-verification playing a vital role. He urged students to become knowledgeable, well-behaved, and disciplined to navigate the digital age responsibly.

The chief minister discussed the rapid changes spurred by emerging technologies and their transformative role in sectors like agriculture, medicine and innovation. However, he underlined the importance of institutions and individuals being vigilant about technology's ethical use and societal impact.

The event was attended by key dignitaries, including speaker Satish Mahana, Higher Education Minister Yogendra Upadhyay, MSME Minister Rakesh Sachan, State Minister Pratibha Shukla, Mayor Pramila Pandey, Chancellor Dr Suraj BS Kushwaha, Vice-Chancellor Janardan Amarnath, Chief Patron Rama Kushwaha, Director Dr Pranav Singh, Prateek Singh and others.

Akhilesh slams ban on strike by employees

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav has criticised the Uttar Pradesh government for imposing a six-month ban on strikes by state government employees, public sector workers, and those employed in government-aided institutions. He described the state government's move as a clear indication of the worsening situation in Uttar Pradesh, emphasising that the government had resorted to invoking the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) to enforce the ban. According to Yadav, this order reflects growing dissatisfaction among state employees, with the government fearing that protests could erupt at any moment. Yadav further accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of excelling at forming governments through manipulation and rigging, but failing to govern effectively due to corrupt practices and policies. He argued that the ban on strikes and restrictions on state employees were a manifestation of the government's recognition that significant unrest exists among the workforce. In his remarks, Yadav claimed the government is pressuring state employees to align with the ruling party and its corrupt policies. He asserted that workers across various departments and government and semi-government institutions, both in Uttar



Pradesh and across the country, are being coerced into supporting the BJP's corrupt agenda, which has led to widespread discontent. Referring to the government's decision to ban the strike as a "desperate" measure, Yadav suggested that the BJP government is fearful of the growing resentment among employees. On 6 December, the Uttar Pradesh government invoked the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA), prohibiting government employees from striking work for the next six months. The order, which applies to all officers and employees in government services, was issued in the public interest. This development follows a strike threat issued by employees of the Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Limited (UPPCL) and its subsidiaries. The power sector workers are protesting the state government's decision to operate the Purvanchal and Dakshinchal Distribution Corporations on public-private partnership (PPP) model.

Rai attacks state govt over farmers, power privatisation

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee chief Ajay Rai, on Sunday, launched a scathing attack on the Yogi Adityanath government over the issue of farmers and privatisation and also expressed his displeasure over dividing the people on religion and castes basis. Addressing a press conference here on Sunday, Ajay Rai said that the government was taking

away the rights of farmers by giving them false assurances. "The amount of fertiliser has been reduced to 45 kg and now 40 kg per sack from 50 kg. Also, farmers are being arrested and suppressed if they try to raise their voices against the government's unjustified actions," he said. Ajay Rai said that Congress was with the farmers in their struggle. He accused the government of ignoring the demands of the

farmers and adopting a repressive policy. **Blood donation camps:** Ajay Rai said that blood donation camps would be organised across the state on the occasion of Congress leader Sonia Gandhi's birthday on Monday (December 9). He described it as an initiative to strengthen mutual brotherhood among all religions. Rai said, the blood given by the people would go into the bodies of all religions.

The Congress leader accused the government of conspiring to end mutual harmony. Rai said that the Congress delegation was being prevented from going to places like Gorakhpur and Sambhal. He alleged that even permission to go to the home district was not given in the hour of grief. On the move to privatise power distribution companies in UP, Rai said that Congress would strongly oppose it. He said that

privatisation of discoms would increase economic burden on the public and it was harmful for the common man. On the statement of Samajwadi Party leader Ram Gopal Yadav over the INDIA bloc unity, Rai said the whole country was standing with Rahul Gandhi. He also targeted Bahujan Samaj Party supreme Mayawati and said that she was speaking the language of Bharatiya Janata Party.

Stubble-burning drops in UP with crop residue mgmt

Lucknow (PNS): The Uttar Pradesh government has marked significant progress in agricultural and environmental management, achieving a remarkable decline in stubble-burning incidents over the past seven years. In 2017, UP recorded 8,784 cases of burning stubble, a figure that dropped to just 3,996 cases in 2023, showing a reduction of 4,788 (over 50 per cent) cases. This success stems from policies that encourage farmers to utilise stubble as a source of income rather than burning it, resulting in economic benefits for farmers and advancements in environmental protection. Following Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's directive, Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh recently reviewed the stubble management efforts in the state. The review revealed that UP annually generates 2,096 crore metric tons of stubble, of which 34.44 lakh MT is used as fodder and 16.78 lakh MT for other purposes. Additionally, 1.58 crore MT of crop residue are managed through in-situ and ex-situ methods, significantly reducing stubble-burning and its associated pollution. This strategic management has improved air quality and created new revenue streams for farmers through the industrial and domestic use of crop residues.

Woman killed in road accident

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A woman was killed while her husband, a LDA contractor, sustained critical injuries after their SUV collided with a truck at Lucknow-Ayodhya highway in BBD University police station area on Sunday morning. The injured contractor, Ravi Pratap Singh, is battling for his life at a hospital. The deceased woman was identified as Khushboo Singh. The police had to cut the body of the badly mangled SUV to extract Ravi and Khushboo from the vehicle. The accident took place near Tiwari Ganj on Sunday morning. The couple was returning from Gorakhpur to Lucknow in a Scorpio. According to police, Ravi Pratap Singh (48) and his

wife Khushboo Singh (45) hail from Khajni Harni village in Gorakhpur district. There was a traffic jam on the highway after the accident. As per reports, Ravi Pratap Singh, a resident of Ganga Apartment in Gomti Nagar Extension in Lucknow, was going to Gorakhpur by his Scorpio at night to attend a wedding ceremony. On the way, he got information about an inspection of a park behind Palasio Mall in Gomti Nagar where he was doing some development works and decided to return to Lucknow mid-way without joining the wedding ceremony. When his Scorpio reached near Tiwari Ganj crossing, a truck collided with it. The truck involved in the accident is being identified through CCTV footage.

Gorakhpur to get country's first integrated waste management centre by Sept 2025

PTI ■ GORAKHPUR

Gorakhpur is set to establish the country's first Integrated Waste Management City-cum-Learning Centre by September 2025, aimed at making the city garbage-free and promoting sustainable waste management through circular economy model. Spread across 40 acres in Suthni village, Sahjanwa, the ambitious project will process various types of waste while generating charcoal and Bio-CNG, Gorakhpur Municipal Commissioner (GMC) Gaurav Sogarwal said. The initiative is expected to create jobs, boost revenue and serve as a learning hub for technical expertise, he said. Sogarwal said that the model has been presented by him in Vishakhapatnam and Delhi and it will be showcased by the Ministry of

Environment at the National Chief Secretaries' Conference in Delhi from December 13 to 15. Inputs from the Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad, are being incorporated to enhance its innovative quotient, he said. The centre will process a wide range of waste types, including biomedical, e-waste, battery, tyre, terracotta, vehicle scrap, plastic, domestic hazardous, industrial, and organic waste, the municipal commissioner said. It will also serve as a learning centre and it will provide technical expertise, he added. According to Sogarwal, three dedicated plants are planned, a Dry Waste Plant with a capacity of 500 tons per day and it will produce charcoal. A memorandum of understanding has been signed with

Corporation (NTPC), with an investment of Rs 300 crore, ensuring revenue generation and employment opportunities, he said. The second plant is a Wet Waste Plant which will be a 200 ton-per-day facility producing Bio-CNG under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model, potentially saving the GMC an estimated Rs 12-15 crore monthly on vehicle fuel costs, he said. The final is a Hazardous Waste Plant, a separate facility which will process domestic hazardous waste using environmentally friendly methods. Sogarwal said. The project will not only manage Gorakhpur's waste, but will cater to the needs of eight neighboring urban local bodies (ULBs), marking a significant stride toward regional sustainability, he said.

Netra Kumbh to offer eyetests, surgeries for visitors

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

MAHA KUMBH 2025

Crores of devotees are set to gather for the world's largest religious event, Maha Kumbh, beginning on January 13, 2025, on the holy banks of Sangam in Teerthraj Prayagraj. Alongside prioritising the convenience and safety of pilgrims, the Yogi Adityanath government is placing a strong emphasis on their health through the establishment of Netra Kumbh, a special initiative dedicated to eye care. Spread over nine acres, Netra Kumbh targets to examine the eyes of more than five lakh devotees and distribute three lakh pairs of glasses simultaneously. Furthermore, for the first time, eye patients identified during these examinations who require surgical interventions will be able to undergo free operations at hospitals located near their homes. This will be possible thanks to agreements signed with over 150 hospitals across the country. Netra Kumbh organising committee chairman Kavindra Pratap Singh, emphasised that for the first time in the history of Maha Kumbh, patients referred by doctors for eye surgeries will be able to receive free operations at a hospital in their district or home. "After examination, patients

will receive referral cards, one of which will be sent to the respective hospital while the other will go to Saksham, the organising body of Netra Kumbh. Patients or Saksham workers can coordinate the surgeries based on convenience, both during and after the (Maha Kumbh) fair," he added. Singh described Maha Kumbh as a "symbol of social harmony" and highlighted that Netra Kumbh represents a "mass eye treatment mahayajna" aimed at addressing vision-related issues among devotees. He confirmed that doctors from the Indian Army would also volunteer their services free of cost, offering free examinations, medicines and refreshments to eye patients. Netra Kumbh was first organised in 2019 and since then it has grown substantially. During the 2019 Kumbh, the event entered the Limca Book of World Records by providing glasses to 1.5 lakh people and examining three lakh patients. This year, the scale of Netra Kumbh is expected to break the previous records, becoming the largest event of eye examinations and glasses distribution in any religious or medical event world-

wide. Netra Kumbh media coordinator Dr Kirtika Agarwal said that the initiative would be set up in the Mela area near Nagvasuki temple in Sector 6. Netra Kumbh will run daily from January 12 to February 26, excluding the main bathing festival. Dr Agarwal noted that the event seeks to raise awareness about vision-related health challenges and provide services to individuals who have lost their sight due to a lack of awareness. She added that approximately 150 doctors from outside the region will provide their services throughout the 45 days of Netra Kumbh, supported by 400 additional medical professionals. On any given day, 40 doctors will operate the Outpatient Department (OPD) from 8 am to 2 pm, with an extension up to 4 pm if needed. In addition to the 40 doctors in the OPD, there will be more than 500 optometrists, out of which 100 will provide services daily. This combined team of 200 medical professionals and volunteers will be available to examine and treat eye patients daily throughout the fair.

Government to introduce AI in ICUs to enhance patient care

Mahakumbh Nagar (PNS): Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, state-of-the-art arrangements are being meticulously planned for the upcoming Maha Kumbh to welcome devotees from across India and abroad. Among the latest initiatives, the government is set to introduce artificial intelligence (AI) in Intensive Care Units, aiming to enhance the quality of patient care and ensure a superior healthcare experience during the event. Being deployed for the first time within the Mela grounds, the advanced AI messaging flow system is capable of interpreting and conveying the concerns of patients from any part of the country or the world to doctors. Additionally, in case of any critical deterioration in a patient's condition, the system will instantly alert the medical team, enabling swift action to ensure proper care. The move seeks to fulfill the dream of a 'Healthy Maha Kumbh' and 'Digital Maha Kumbh'. This groundbreaking technology, aligned with Chief Minister Yogi's vision, marks a significant step toward integrating digital innovation with healthcare dur-

ing Maha Kumbh, setting a new standard for event medical management. Preparations are underway at an unprecedented scale in the Maha Kumbh fair area to accommodate approximately 45 crore devotees. Alongside a 100-bed Central Hospital, ten additional hospitals, including those in Jhansi and Arai, are being established to ensure comprehensive healthcare for devotees and saints. Specialist doctors are being deployed extensively to provide top-tier medical services. In line with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision of showcasing Uttar Pradesh as a global model of excellence, innovative measures in healthcare are being implemented for the Maha Kumbh. For the first time, artificial intelligence (AI) is being utilised to monitor the health of devotees, with a particular focus on ICU management. Senior Medical Officer in-charge of the Central Hospital and Nodal Officer for Maha Kumbh Dr Gaurav Dubey shared that a 10-bed ICU equipped with cutting-edge AI technology will be available at the Central Hospital in Mahakumbh Nagar.

He said, "Special AI-enabled microphones will be installed near each patient, capable of instantly translating 22 regional and 19 international languages into Hindi or English. This will bridge language barriers, enabling seamless communication between doctors and patients for effective treatment." He added, "Additionally, advanced AI-enabled cameras will be installed throughout the ICU to monitor patient conditions in real-time. These cameras, overseen by three senior specialists, will assess patients' health and immediately alert the medical team if emergency intervention is required. The system will automatically message the team leader directly, ensuring prompt medical assistance within seconds." The ICU will also feature telemedicine facilities, allowing patients to consult online with specialist doctors from Medanta Hospital when necessary. These experts can assess the patient's condition remotely and provide crucial guidance to the on-site medical team, enhancing the quality and speed of care during the Maha Kumbh.

UP maintains its dominant position in milk production

Lucknow (PNS): Uttar Pradesh has maintained its dominant position in milk production. As per the Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2023-24, India's total milk production has reached 239.30 million tons, with UP leading the nation by contributing approximately 16 per cent of the total output — the highest among all states. Following UP are Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Punjab. This data highlights UP's continued supremacy in milk production. A key reason for UP's continued dominance in milk production is the steps taken for the welfare of the cattle farmers at both the state and district levels. The government has introduced awards such as Nand Baba and Gokul awards to honour progressive cattle farmers. Recently, the Australian government expressed its willingness to collaborate with the UP government to boost milk production through breed improvement. To support this effort, the Yogi Adityanath government is implementing sex selection technology, which boasts a 90 per cent likelihood of producing female calves. Additionally, the upcoming Government Veterinary College in Gorakhpur is expected to play a significant role in strengthening the breed improvement initiatives. The slogan 'Prosperity Through Cooperation' is the

government's guiding principle, highlighting the transformative potential of collaboration in the dairy sector. The success of Amul, the world's strongest dairy brand, stands as a testament to the power of cooperation, and the government is focusing on implementing this model. Recently, the UP's Pradeshik Cooperative Dairy Federation (PCDF) presented its plan to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. During the presentation, the chief minister emphasised setting clear work targets and establishing accountability at every level within milk unions. He underlined the need to enhance milk collection capacity while improving milk quality testing processes. The chief minister further directed that employees associated with these committees must receive proper training and essential quality testing equipment. Additionally, he supported fostering healthy competition among milk committees and strengthening communication with cattle rearers. These steps are expected to boost dairy union productivity, improve milk quality and enhance farmers' income. Most cattle rearers are small landholders or landless farmers, with their milk animals serving as a reliable source of livelihood. Any positive step in the field of animal husbandry directly benefits these farmers, who remain a top priority for the Yogi government.

Rly all set to provide best services to devotees: Vaishnaw

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the Indian Railways (IR) is all set to provide best services to the devotees during the forthcoming Prayag Maha Kumbh-2025. He said about 1.5 crore devotees are expected to travel to Prayagraj through various trains during the Maha Kumbh. The minister arrived here on Sunday and later conducted a window trailing inspection from Varanasi to Jhusi railway stations. He said about 13,000 trains from different parts of the country will be run during 45 days duration of Prayag Maha Kumbh-2025. Talking to reporters here Vaishnaw said during the Maha Kumbh the railway services from Prayagraj to Varanasi and Ayodhya will be improved as the work of a major railway bridge on Ganga river between Jhusi and Prayagraj Rambagh has been

completed. Besides, waiting rooms and holding areas at major stations are being developed so that the devotees do not face any inconvenience during the Maha Kumbh. The railway minister was accompanied by Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Railway Board Satish Kumar, Executive Director of Railway Board Sanjeev Kumar, General Manager of North Eastern Railway Saumya Mathur, Chief Administrative Officer (Construction) of NER Abhay Kumar Gupta, Divisional Railway Manager (Varanasi Division, NER) Vineet Kumar Srivastava, Managing Director (RVNL) Pradeep Gaur along with senior officers of headquarters and division. Later, after reaching Major Bridge on Ganga river between Jhusi and Prayagraj Rambagh, the minister walked there to see everything minutely and asked about the details from officers concerned. This important bridge

MAHA KUMBH



Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw inspecting arrangements at Jhusi station on Sunday.

has 24 girders of 76.2 metres span and its length is about 2 km. Bridge construction work has been completed. Girder launching work through the duct has been completed at both ends and 100 per cent formation work has been completed in the Jhusi-Prayagraj rail section. It is to be noted that a total of 113.59 km of doubling from Banaras to Jhusi has been completed with electrified lines, the remaining Prayagraj Rambagh to Jhusi (7.36 km) is to be opened on

December 11 after completion of CRS inspection with this important bridge, after which this entire rail section will be doubled.

Every year a large number of pilgrims come to the Magh Mela apart from Ardh Kumbh and Maha Kumbh bathing festivals held at Prayagraj Sangam. After bathing in Sangam, these pilgrims definitely come to visit Kashi Vishwanath temple, one of the 12 famous Jyotirlingas of India. In view of the increasing traffic on the Banaras-Prayagraj rail section, the Railway Ministry had approved the doubling of the Banaras Prayagraj section. The doubling work of Banaras-Jhusi (120.96 km) along with electrification of this doubling project has been completed at a cost of Rs 1600 crore. This doubled rail line with electrification is located in Varanasi, Mirzapur, Sant Ravidas Nagar and Prayagraj district. This project was

completed in seven phases. With the completion of this project, the line capacity will increase and running of additional trains will be possible as per the aspirations of the people. The pressure on Prayagraj-Naini-Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay Junction railway route will be reduced. During Kumbh Mela-2025, it will be easy to run more fair special trains at a faster speed than before, which will greatly facilitate the movement of fair passengers. Construction of this double line along with electrification has promoted environmental conservation, economic, social and cultural activities have increased in the area and the area is rapidly progressing towards development. Earlier, when the railway minister arrived here he was warmly welcomed by the senior Railway officers and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders. Some organisations also presented mementos to the minister.

Development works inspected



Railway Board Chairman Satish Kumar inspecting Maha Kumbh preparations along with NER GM Saumya Mathur on Saturday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Railway Board Satish Kumar along with General Manager (GM) North Eastern Railway (NER) Saumya Mathur conducted a trolley inspection of the important under-construction bridge on the Ganga river between Jhusi-Prayagraj Rambagh for the convenience of the devotees coming to Prayagraj Maha Kumbh-2025 on Saturday. He also inspected the development works for the convenience of fair passengers at Prayagraj Rambagh and Jhusi stations.

On the occasion, ED of Railway Board Sanjeev Kumar, Chief Administrative Officer (Construction) of NER Abhay Kumar Gupta, Divisional Railway Manager (DRM/Varanasi) Vineet Kumar Srivastava, Managing Director (RVNL) Pradeep Gaur along with senior officers of NER Headquarters and Varanasi division were also present. The Railway Board chairman conducted a thorough inspection of Jhusi and Prayagraj Rambagh stations to provide convenience and proper passenger facilities to the devotees coming to the upcoming Maha Kumbh Mela-2025 to be held at Prayagraj Sangam and reviewed the passenger facility expansion works going on at the stations in the context of preparations for the Kumbh Mela. He expressed satisfaction over the progress of the work. He directed the officers concerned to complete the remaining development works within the stipulated time frame.

He assessed the safety, speed and operational arrangements of all the stations and their railway tracks falling in the fair area, including Prayagraj Rambagh and Jhusi and safety, security and facilities of the passengers. He also conducted a thorough inspection of Prayagraj Rambagh station and inspected the newly constructed passenger reservation centre, unreserved ticket counters, temporary food and water

stalls, waiting rooms, additional entry and exit routes, permanent and temporary platforms, passenger sheds, RCC benches, foot over bridge, temporary waiting rooms, CCTV surveillance, boundary wall and control room for proper crowd management and passenger facility development works for the convenience of fair passengers during Kumbh Mela and expressed happiness on the timely completion of all the works. During the inspection, the Railway Board chief inspected the important rail bridge number 111 being constructed under doubling on the Ganga river between Jhusi-Prayagraj Rambagh by motor trolley and reviewed the work with senior officials and engineers of Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL). This important bridge has 24 girders of 76.2 metres span and its length is about two km. The bridge construction work has been completed. Girder launching work through the duct has been completed at both ends and 100 per cent formation work has been completed in Jhusi-Prayagraj rail section.

Satish Kumar also thoroughly inspected the passenger waiting room, boundary walls, high mast lights, temporary toilets, approach roads for night movement built in the circulating area of the newly constructed second entry at Jhusi station. After this, he checked the completeness of all the works, including station building, foot over bridge and construction work on platform. A total of 113.59 km of doubling from Banaras to Jhusi has been completed with electrified lines and the remaining Prayagraj Rambagh to Jhusi (7.36 km) will be opened on December 11 after completion of CRS inspection with an important bridge and then this entire rail section will be doubled and the line capacity on this rail section will increase, which will make it possible to run more passenger trains at high speed and reduce travel time.

He assessed the safety, speed and operational arrangements of all the stations and their railway tracks falling in the fair area, including Prayagraj Rambagh and Jhusi and safety, security and facilities of the passengers. He also conducted a thorough inspection of Prayagraj Rambagh station and inspected the newly constructed passenger reservation centre, unreserved ticket counters, temporary food and water

Raids to prevent black marketing of fertilisers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In order to provide fertilisers to farmers at reasonable prices, to prevent black marketing and maintain the quality of fertiliser, to verify the stock available at the sales centres and the stock displayed in the POS machines, under the district-wide checking campaign, a joint team of fertiliser inspectors and other department officials was formed and on Saturday raids were conducted at the sales centres/warehouses of the district's resource cooperative societies, PCF sales centers, IFFCO Service Centre, IFDC C, Horticultural Committee and private fertiliser sellers. The team was formed by District Magistrate S Rajalingam. In sequence of the orders of the DM, Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal constituted the teams. The Team-1 included District Agriculture Officer Sangam Singh, District Horticulture Officer Subhash Kumar, Senior Technical Assistant Group-1 Rohit Kumar Singh who was allotted Tehsil- Sadar while Team-2 included District Agriculture Protection Officer Brijesh Kumar Vishwakarma and District Disabled Empowerment Officer RP Singh who was allotted Tehsil-Pindra and Team-3 included Sub-Divisional Agriculture Extension Officer-Sadar Nirupama Singh, Project Officer- NEDA who was allotted Rajatalab tehsil. During the raids, a total of 35 sales centres were inspected by the nominated fertiliser inspectors and 11 fertiliser samples were taken for quality testing. The chief development officer said this

campaign will continue against those involved in illegal trade and black marketing of fertilisers. In Rabi 2024, a target has been set to distribute 16,538 MT of phosphatic fertiliser (DAP/NPK/MOP) till the month of December, against which, till Saturday, 14,114 MT has been distributed among the farmers of the district through cooperative societies and private fertiliser sales centres through POS machine, which is 85 per cent against the target set for the month of December. On Saturday according to the IFMS portal, 1,713 MT of DAP, 1,508 MT of NPK, 10,083 MT of urea fertiliser is available in the district at private sales centres / cooperative centres / buffer warehouses/wholesale fertiliser sellers. The racks of phosphatic fertilisers DAP and NPK of IFFCO, HURL, NFL and IPL companies will be received in the district soon (between December 9 and 15) due to which there will be sufficient availability of phosphatic fertilisers in private and cooperative sectors. He said the farmers can get fertilisers by putting their thumb in the POS machine as per their crop/holding. They do not need to worry about fertilisers in any way. Farmers are to be informed that for good crop production, the ratio of nitrogen, phosphorus and potash should be 4:2:1, but due to continuous use of DAP today, this ratio is 28:9:1, which is not suitable from a scientific point of view. In this regard, farmers are appealed to use NPK instead of DAP so that the crop gets balanced quantity of all three nutrients. This will have a positive effect on crop production and increase the quality of the produce.

Knp Metro completes installation of escalators at five stations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Metro has completed the installation of escalators at five stations from Chunniganj to Kanpur Central (Chunniganj, Naveen Market, Bada Chauraha, Nayaganj and Kanpur Central). The installation of lifts at these stations is also underway. All escalators and lifts have been manufactured in India as part of the 'Make in India' initiative.



A total of 23 escalators have been installed across five stations of Kanpur Metro, from Chunniganj to Kanpur Central. Four escalators have been installed at Chunniganj, Naveen Market and Bada Chauraha stations, five at Nayaganj station and six at Kanpur Central station. After installation, the load testing of these escalators is now underway. In addition to the escalators, lift installation is progressing swiftly across all stations. Out of the 15 lifts planned, 11 have already been installed at these five stations. All escalators and lifts used in the Kanpur Metro Rail project are manufactured in Chennai under the 'Make in India' initiative. A key feature of the escalators being installed is their environmentally friendly design. They automatically shut off after a period of inactivity to conserve energy. These escalators are equipped with crawling modes and offer two-speed settings. For passenger safety, they feature three emergency stop buttons that

can halt the escalator immediately in case of an emergency. The escalators provide automatic announcements, advising passengers to hold onto the handrails. The station control rooms are equipped with a remote monitoring and control system to oversee and manage escalator operations. Managing Director of Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Limited (UPMRC), Sushil Kumar, said, "The Kanpur Metro team is fully committed to launching passenger service from Motijheel to Kanpur Central. The installation of escalators from Chunniganj to Kanpur Central Station has been completed and the load testing process is also nearing completion. In the coming days, a trial run of the metro will be conducted from Motijheel to Kanpur Central. Our underground metro route passes through some of the busiest areas of the city and the expansion of

metro services will significantly improve travel within the city, making it smoother and more convenient." Currently, Kanpur Metro passenger services are operating on a nine km section of the Priority Corridor (IIT-Motijheel), which is part of the approximately 24 km long Corridor-1 (IIT-Naubasta). In addition to the balance section of Corridor-1 from Chunniganj to Naubasta, construction work on both sections of Corridor-2 (CSA-Barra 8) spanning approximately 8.60 km, is progressing rapidly. SUIKIDE: An elderly couple committed suicide by consuming poisonous substance in the Muskara police station area of Hamirpur on Saturday night. Their kin took them to the district hospital where the doctors declared dead. Station House Officer Muskara Yogesh Tewari said he will initiate action after investigation in the matter.

AK Srivastava assumes charge as NTPC Auraiya project head

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Abhay Kumar Srivastava, Chief General Manager (Commercial), EOC Corporate Centre, Noida, assumed charge as Head of Project, NTPC Auraiya recently. He replaces Jayadev Parida, Chief General Manager (CGM) who has been transferred to the thermal project of NTPC Tanda as head of project. With an illustrious career spanning several decades Srivastava brings a wealth of experience to his new leadership role. He commenced his journey with NTPC Ltd on August 27, 1987, as Executive Trainee (Operation). He has made significant contributions to various key NTPC projects, including those at Korba, Kaniha, ER-1, Patna and ER-II, Bhubaneswar and New Delhi. His broad expertise encompasses operations, technical services and commercial functions demonstrating his capability to tackle complex



New head of NTPC Auraiya Project Abhay Kumar Srivastava.

challenges in the energy sector. NTPC Auraiya anticipates his leadership in driving operational excellence and furthering NTPC's commitment to powering India in a responsible and sustainable manner. On his arrival at NTPC Auraiya, he was welcomed by Tanmoy Dutta, Head of HR, SK Ballian, AGM(O&M) and Vedprakash Pandey, AGM (Contracts) besides senior officials.

Resolve cases within stipulated time: SIC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

State Information Commissioner (SIC) of Uttar Pradesh Rakesh Kumar held a review meeting with the Public Information Officers (PIOs) / First Appellate Officers of all departments in the Circuit House Auditorium here on Sunday regarding the speedy disposal of pending cases under the Right to Information Act-2005 in the district. The SIC instructed the officials that old pending cases have been resolved quickly at the commission level, but due to lack of awareness at the district level, many cases are not resolved, which creates doubts in the minds of people, which needs to be removed. Therefore, do not keep cases pending without reason and ensure that the cases are resolved within the stipulated time, he added. He gave detailed information about the RTI Act and made the officials aware of the legal aspects of the Right to Information. He also explained in detail the difference between appeal and

complaint to the PIOs from various departments. He instructed the officials to take interest and maintain coordination among themselves to ensure the settlement of cases at the primary level itself. The SIC said that there should not be unnecessary delay in providing information and information should be provided within the stipulated period of 30 days. He said that public information is the right of the public and it is responsibility of the officers concerned to provide information to the people on time. Along with questioning the officers about Section 8,9, he said that all the PIOs/First Appellate Officers should have name plates on their tables. He further said that the officers should pay attention that the information for which the answer cannot be given, they should also inform about the refusal and mention it clearly. "If the information is related to some other department, then clearly transfer it to the other department and write that it is not related to my department. Never keep RTI pending and its answer

should be given within 30 days. If the information is detailed or needs to be reviewed, then a time should also be fixed for that", he added. The SIC said that while giving the information sought by the plaintiff, the same feeling should be kept which one would have in the expectation of receiving the information sought by oneself under this Act. He said that one should always think by staying in the plaintiff's place and answer the information without delay. He said that the officers should have the basic knowledge of the Right to Information Act. "Public interest should be given priority regarding information sought under RTI and there should not be unnecessary delay in providing information. If there is delay, then clear reasons for the same must be given", he said, adding that complete information regarding information sought under RTI when the information was received, subject of the information, status of the information etc should be kept in a register.

BHU convocation on Dec 14

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Academic Council (AC) of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in its special meeting approved the medals, degrees and cash awards to be awarded during the 104th Convocation of the university to be held on December 14. The meeting was held in Mahamana Auditorium of the Institute of Science on Saturday under the chairmanship of Vice-Chancellor (V-C) Prof Sudhir Kumar Jain and in the presence of Rector Prof Sanjay Kumar and Registrar Prof Arun Kumar Singh. The V-C called upon the faculty members to take advantage of the schemes implemented to upgrade the level of academic and research excellence in BHU and pave the way for the progress of the students and the institute. Faculty members also shared their suggestions in this regard. Directors of institutes, faculty heads, department heads etc were present in the meeting. STUDY: The Nicobar Islands are situated in the eastern Indian

Ocean and south of the Andaman Islands. The archipelago consists of seven large islands, including Car Nicobar and Great Nicobar, and numerous smaller ones, characterised by flat topography, coral reefs and sandy beaches. Nicobarese people are estimated to be approximately 25,000. A recent genetic study has revealed new insights into the genetic origin of the Nicobarese. A group of researchers from nine institutions co-lead by Prof Gyaneshwer Chaubey, BHU, Varanasi and Dr Kumarasamy Thangaraj, CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad, conducted a detailed genetic analysis, using DNA markers that are inherited exclusively from mothers and fathers respectively and those from both the parents. This helped them to explore the ancestry and genetic affinities of the Nicobarese with South and Southeast Asian populations. The findings of this pioneering study have been recently published in the European Journal of Human

Genetics. "Previous theories suggested that the linguistic ancestors of the Nicobarese settled in the Nicobar archipelago during the early Holocene, about 11,700 years ago. However, our new genetic research on Nicobarese, involving 1,559 individuals from South and Southeast Asia, indicates a significant ancestral connection of Nicobarese shared with Austroasiatic language-speaking populations across South and Southeast Asia. But, our studies also suggest that the Nicobar islanders settled there approximately only 5,000 years ago," said Dr Thangaraj. "Among these Austroasiatic populations, the study notably highlighted the genetic affinity of the Htin Mal of mainland Southeast Asia with the Nicobarese people. However, the Htin Mal community has maintained remarkable ethnic distinctness over time, exhibiting a pronounced genetic drift from the Nicobarese," said Prof George van Driem, the renowned linguist from Bern University Switzerland.

A brilliant confluence of intellect & inspiration

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

In a brilliant confluence of intellect and inspiration, the Christ Church College here resonated with the essence of Bengali literature as it hosted the fifth installment of its celebrated lecture series. Aparajita Sahitya ke Avismarniye Stree Charitra. The session, titled 'Ashapurna Devi aur Bengal Sahitya ki Aparajitayen', organised by the Literary Activity Club, was a beacon of literary brilliance and cultural enlightenment. Graced by Principal of Christ Church College, Professor Joseph Daniel and led by the convener of the Literary



Club, Awadhesh Mishra, head of the Literary Club, delved into the works of Chandrabali, highlighting her masterpiece Sita Katha, which offers a profound reimagining of Sita's side story in Ramayana. His insights bridged the narratives of women's strength across regional and cultural spectrums. The event concluded on a triumphant note, with the audience lauding the session as an extraordinary tribute to the "Aparajitayen" of Indian literature. The synergy of intellect and inspiration left an indelible mark on all present, affirming the lecture series' role as a torchbearer of literary excellence. With such impactful events, Christ Church College continues to carve a niche in fostering cultural dialogue and intellectual growth, leaving the audience eagerly awaiting the next chapter of this prestigious series. SPORTS COMPETITION: Under the aegis of Kendriya Vidyalaya IIT Kanpur, the Annual Sports Competition was held at the school, showcasing the talents of students across various events. The chief guest, Dr Indrashekhar Sen, Chairman of the Sports and Physical Education Committee, IIT Kanpur, inaugurated the event with a flag hoisting ceremony, lighting of the torch, and releasing of balloons. The occasion was graced by special guest Anjali Dubey, Principal Ravish Kumar Pandey, along with all the teachers and students of the school. For primary section — frog race, balloon race, sack race and lemon race competitions were conducted. For secondary and senior secondary sections there were house-wise competitions such as races, tug-of-war etc. In the overall standings, Shivaji House secured the first position, Tagore House stood second while Raman House third. Principal Ravish Kumar Pandey awarded prizes to the winning participants.

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Tractor killed in accident

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A tractor driver was killed while his friend was seriously injured when their vehicle loaded with paddy suddenly overturned into a deep nullah in Rampur village under Sheoli Kotwali police area of Kanpur dehat late on Saturday night. On hearing about the incident, kin and villagers rushed to the spot and after rescuing both the youths took them to Sheoli CHC where the driver was declared dead by the doctors. Narendra Rajput (30) of Rampur, Sheoli, after loading paddy on his tractor, was returning with friend Jitendra. However in front of Ramautar's

house near the village the speeding uncontrolled tractor suddenly fell into a nullah and overturned. As a result both the youths sustained serious injury. Their kin and villagers rescued them and took to Sheoli CHC where Dr Sinduja Singh declared Narendra Rajput as brought dead. After the first aid, injured Jitendra was discharged. On hearing about the death of Narendra Rajput, his wife fell unconscious while parents and brothers became distraught. Police sent the body for an autopsy. Kotwali incharge Harmit Singh said the incident took place after the tractor overturned into the nullah.

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BJP-Congress war of words over Soros escalates

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday alleged that former Congress president Sonia Gandhi has links to an organisation financed by the George Soros Foundation and which has backed the idea of Kashmir as an independent nation. This association shows the influence of foreign entities in India's internal affairs, the ruling party said in a series of posts on X.

Meanwhile, notwithstanding the US' dismissal of BJP's allegations that it is backing attempts to destabilise India, party MP Nishikant Dubey said he would pose 10 questions to Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi in the Lok Sabha on the issue. He said media portal Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) and Hungarian-American businessman have colluded with the Opposition to ruin India's economy and defame the Modi Government. The BJP claimed that Sonia Gandhi, as the co-president



of the Forum of the Democratic Leaders in Asia Pacific (FDL-AP) Foundation, is linked to an organisation financed by the George Soros Foundation. "Notably, the FDL-AP Foundation has expressed their views that treat Kashmir as a separate entity," the party said.

"This association between Sonia Gandhi and an organisation that has backed the idea of Kashmir as an independent nation expresses the influence of foreign entities on India's internal affairs and the political impact of such connections," it said. The BJP further claimed that Sonia Gandhi's

chairmanship of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation led to a partnership with the George Soros Foundation, "displaying the influence of foreign funding on Indian organisations". "Rahul Gandhi's press conference on Adani was live telecast by George Soros-funded OCCRP, which

Gandhi used as a source to criticise Adani. It shows nothing but their strong and dangerous relationship and highlights their attempts to derail the Indian economy. "Congress MP Shashi Tharoor has publicly acknowledged George Soros as an 'old friend'. It's something truly noteworthy," it said.

The BJP's allegations come after it claimed on Thursday that the US "deep state" colluded with OCCRP and Rahul Gandhi to damage India's image. The US on Saturday rejected BJP's allegations that organisations funded by its State Department and elements in the American "deep state" were behind attempts to destabilise India through targeted attacks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and business tycoon Gautam Adani. A spokesperson at the US embassy described the allegations as "disappointing" and asserted that the US government has been a champion of media freedom around the world. Reacting to

the US embassy's statement, BJP MP Dubey said, "Yesterday I read the statement of the US embassy officials again and again. They admitted that the US government funds OCCRP and Soros' foundation also funds it." The job of OCCRP and Soros is to ruin India's economy and defame the Modi government in connivance with opposition leaders, he said in his post on X in Hindi. "After yesterday's statement, I will have to ask Rahul Gandhi my 10 questions in the Lok Sabha. The opposition is trying to suppress my voice in Parliament. Lok Sabha Rule 357 gives me the right to ask questions. Waiting for tomorrow," the MP said.

The BJP has cited Gandhi's use of OCCRP reports to attack the Adani Group and accuse it of having closeness with the government. "It's disappointing that the ruling party in India would make these kinds of accusations," the US embassy spokesperson said on Saturday.

Tharoor responds to BJP after US rejects allegations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Sunday slammed the BJP after the US rejected the ruling party's allegations that elRamesh claimed that this clearly refers to the so-called "buffer zones" to which our troops and livestock herders are "denied access" that they previously had. "These statements taken together suggest that the MEA is accepting a settlement that does not return the LAC to the April 2020 status quo as desired by the Army and the nation. Elements in the American "deep state" were behind attempts to destabilise India and said this "attack-dog" behaviour is an embarrassment to India. Reacting to Tharoor, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju accused Tharoor is in the payroll of Soros. In a post in X, Tharoor said, "It's clear the BJP neither understands democracy nor diplomacy. They are so



blinded by petty politics that they forget the value of a free press and vibrant independent civil society organisations in a democracy, and they are oblivious to a ruling party's responsibilities in maintaining good relations with key foreign countries." "This attack-dog behaviour is an embarrassment to India," the former Minister of State posted.

PM Modi hails elevation of Indian priest George Jacob Koovakad as Cardinal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian priest George Jacob Koovakad being elevated as a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Catholic Church by Pope Francis is a matter of great joy and pride for India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday. He said George Cardinal Koovakad has devoted his life to the service of humanity as an ardent follower of Jesus Christ. "A matter of great joy and pride for India! Delighted at His Eminence George Jacob Koovakad being created a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Catholic Church by His Holiness Pope Francis," Modi said in a social media post. "His Eminence George Cardinal Koovakad has devoted his life in service of humanity as an ardent follower of Lord Jesus Christ. My best wishes for his future endeavours," the prime

minister said. In a grand consistory held in the Vatican on Saturday, 51-year-old Koovakad was elevated to the rank of cardinal by Pope Francis. The ceremony, held at the famous St Peter's Basilica and attended by clergy and dignitaries from around the world, witnessed the induction of 21 new cardinals from various countries. The ceremony began at 8.30 pm (IST) marking a procession with 21 cardinal-designated to the altar of St Peter's Basilica. Later, the Pope addressed the gathering and handed over the ceremonial cap and ring to the cardinal-designate, followed by a certificate accompanied by prayers. Koovakad's appointment brings the total number of Indian cardinals to six, further strengthening the country's representation at the Vatican.



Railway and Information Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Sunday inspected the to be commissioned 2.2 kilometres double line New Railway Bridge over Ganga in Prayagraj where the Mahakumbh is scheduled early next year. The Old bridge was single line and of more than 100 years which will be decommissioned shortly. The work for the New Ganga Bridge started in October 2020 and will be commissioned soon by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Railways also announced that it will run 13000 trains for the Mahakumbh between early January 2025 till February 2025. Pioneer Photo

Congress slams BJP over its statement in Parliament on India-China tie

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Criticising the government over its statement in Parliament on India-China ties, the Congress on Sunday claimed that the Modi government has agreed to a 'new normal' over the 'old normal' prevailing before April 2020 which was unilaterally disturbed by China. It also demanded that Parliament be allowed to debate the full gamut of the relationship between the two countries. Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said a discussion in Parliament on the India-China relationship should focus on both strategic and economic policy, especially since our dependence on China has increased economically, even as it unilaterally changed the status quo on our borders over four years

back. In a statement, Ramesh said the Congress has studied the recent suo motu statement made by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in both Houses of Parliament titled "Recent Developments in India's Relations with China". It is unfortunate, but typical of the Modi government, that MPs were not permitted to seek any clarifications, he said. While "fully appreciating" the sensitive nature of many aspects of India-China border relations, he said the Congress has four pointed questions on the statement issued by the Modi government. Ramesh noted that the statement claims that "the House is well aware of the circumstances leading up to the violent clashes in Galwan Valley in June 2020", and pointed out that it is an

unfortunate reminder that the very first official communication to the nation on this crisis came on June 19, 2020, when the PM provided a clean chit publicly to China and falsely stated "Na koi hamari seema mein ghus aaya hai, na hi koi ghusa hua hai". "Not only was this an insult to our fallen soldiers but it also weakened India's position in subsequent negotiations. Whatever prompted the PM to make this assertion?" Ramesh said. "On October 22, 2024, Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi restated India's longstanding position: 'As far as we are concerned, we want to go back to the status quo of April 2020... Thereafter we will be looking at disengagement, de-escalation and normal management of the LAC'.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri to raise concerns over attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri is expected to raise with Dhaka India's concerns over attacks on Hindus and other minorities as he embarks on a day-long visit to Bangladesh on Monday, in the first high-level trip from New Delhi after a massive uprising ended deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year rule in August. Misri is scheduled to hold wide-ranging talks with his Bangladeshi counterpart Md. Jashim Uddin and meet the country's de-facto foreign minister Mohammad Touhid Hossain. It is learnt that the Indian foreign secretary is also likely to call on Bangladesh's interim leader and Nobel Peace laureate Muhammad Yunus during his nearly 12-hour visit to Dhaka. On its part, Bangladesh is likely to convey its concerns over India continuing to provide shelter to Hasina. Last month, Yunus said his government will seek Hasina's extradition from India, people familiar with Misri's visit said. The close ties between India and Bangladesh came under severe strain after Hasina

was forced to leave the country in the face of a massive anti-government protest in August. Yunus came to power days after Hasina took shelter in India. The relations deteriorated further in recent weeks over attacks on Hindus and the arrest of Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das. There have been spate of incidents of violence against Hindus and other minorities as well as attacks on temples in the neighbouring country in the last few weeks that triggered strong concerns in New Delhi. "Our position on the matter is very clear -- the interim government must live up to its responsibility of protecting all minorities," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on November 29. "We are concerned at the surge of extremist rhetoric, increasing incidents of violence and provocation. These developments cannot be dismissed only as media exaggeration. We once again call upon Bangladesh to take all steps for the protection of minorities," he said. India also hoped that the case relating to Bangladeshi monk Chinmoy Krishna Das, arrested on a charge of

sedition, will be dealt with in a just, fair and transparent manner. In the meetings, the Bangladeshi side is also likely to raise an incident of storming of its mission in Agartala on Monday by a group of protesters. Subsequently, Bangladesh foreign ministry on Tuesday summoned the Indian envoy to Dhaka Pranay Verma and lodged a protest over the incident. West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura witnessed protests in the last few days over the persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh and the arrest of Das. Das was arrested at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport last month in connection with a sedition case. India on Friday announced that Misri is travelling to Dhaka to attend a meeting under the framework of Foreign Office Consultations. "The foreign secretary is scheduled to visit Bangladesh for Foreign Office Consultations on December 9. This is part of our structured interactions with the Bangladesh side," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in brief remarks.

VP Jagdeep Dhankhar urges collective efforts for Viksit Bharat by 2047, warns against anti-national forces

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said that "Viksit Bharat" is no longer a dream, but a target that has to be achieved with the collective efforts of the citizens, keeping the message of the Bhagavad Gita in mind. He also warned people about forces that want to hurt India. "We have chosen the path of Viksit Bharat in 2047. Viksit Bharat is no longer a dream, but a target before us. To achieve it, we will have to keep the message of the Gita in mind... Like Arjuna was focused on his target, we will have to have the same vision, the same determination, the same concentration," Dhankhar said. Addressing an event in Haryana's Kurukshetra during the ongoing International Gita festival, the vice president said he has no doubt in his mind that the target of a developed India will be achieved with the collective efforts of the people of the country by 2047 or even before that. He talked about the rapid progress India has made in the last few years and expressed hope that the



country, which is currently the world's fifth-largest economy, would soon leave Germany and Japan behind. The vice president cautioned people, saying there are some forces in the country and abroad, which on the basis of money power and by using mechanisms, want to hurt India, its economy and make its institutions dysfunctional. "Their sinister design, pernicious object is to taint, tarnish and diminish our constitutional institutions, to

run down our growth trajectory. Such forces cannot be ignored now. "Our culture says that there are occasions when such forces have to be crushed, they have to be crushed... And we understand all this from the Gita," he said. "I want to give a message from this land that the nation is supreme for us. There is nothing to be measured in this love for the nation, it will be pure, it will be 100 per cent.

We will always keep the nation first," he said. "We have to remember, we are Indians, Indianness is our identity and we are citizens of such a great country that there is no other country like this in the world, so will we allow our Mother India to be hurt?" Dhankhar asked the gathering. Referring to the Centre's free ration scheme, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) that covers 80 crore poor people,

the vice president, without naming anyone, said it is "perverse" thinking that this means the government has accepted that 80 crore people in the country are poor. "Some people are a recipe for chaos, they can only be critics, they cannot think in a positive way. My message to them is that they should understand the essence of the Gita, the message of the Gita," he said. The PMGKAY was launched in April 2020 to help the poor amid the COVID-19 pandemic for three months but extended later. Under the scheme, poor families get five kg of foodgrains each month for free. The vice president talked about the technological advancement the country has made in various fields and said India's digital penetration is a matter of envy for the rest of the world. "World leaders tell me that we want to learn from India in digital penetration, technological application," he said. Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and Gita Manishi Swami Gyananand, were present on the occasion, among others.

Centre urges states to submit action plans for effective implementation of menstrual hygiene policy for school girls

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has urged states to submit action plans for effective implementation of the menstrual hygiene policy for school girls to ensure their access to low-cost hygiene products and gender-responsive sanitation facilities in public and government-aided schools. The Union Health Ministry's letter to all states comes after the Supreme Court on November 12 stated that the effective roll-out of the policy would require comprehensive



action plans tailored to the specific needs and contexts

of each state and UT. The Centre had last month

informed the Supreme Court about the 'Menstrual

Hygiene Policy for School Going Girls,' which was approved by the Union Health Ministry on November 2. The policy aims to mainstream menstrual hygiene within the school system of the government to bolster change in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour among schoolgirls, overcoming the barriers of low awareness that often restrict their freedom, mobility and participation in daily activities. It advocates for streamlining

mechanisms to provide for continuous and timely availability of menstrual hygiene products in schools. For government and government-aided schools, the policy says that states/UTs should assess and estimate the actual requirement of menstrual hygiene products to enable efficient use of resources. To enable coverage, assessment through appropriate levels of survey mechanisms can be undertaken by states or UTs followed by gap filling, so that girls in government and

government aided schools have regular access to menstrual hygiene products. Additionally, the policy seeks to dissipate harmful social norms, promote safe menstrual hygiene practices, and enable environment friendly management of menstrual waste. The health ministry has asked states to develop and submit a detailed state and UT action plan that incorporates all aspects of the policy, ensuring coverage of government and government-aided schools.

They have been asked to ensure inter-departmental coordination with relevant stakeholders to address challenges in infrastructure, supply chain, and awareness besides prioritising sensitisation and awareness activities to promote safe menstrual hygiene practices and foster behavioural change among adolescents, parents and educators. They have also been urged to include specific timelines, monitoring mechanisms and key performance indicators in the action plans.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

End of an era

The fall of Damascus to rebel forces and Bashar al-Assad's flight marks a watershed moment in Syrian history

The Assad family's grip on Syria, a legacy spanning more than five decades, has come to an end. The dramatic overthrow of Bashar al-Assad, following the rebel forces' breach of Damascus, marks the end of an era that began with his father, Hafez al-Assad. This monumental shift reshapes Syria's trajectory and poses critical questions for West Asia. The Assad dynasty began in 1970 when Hafez al-Assad seized power in a coup, transforming a politically unstable Syria into a tightly controlled state. Hafez's rule was characterised by ruthless centralisation, sectarian manipulation, and an iron grip on the military. His divide-and-rule tactics entrenched the Alawite minority—a historically marginalised community—to positions of power, ensuring the regime's survival at the expense of institutional robustness. Hafez's successor, his son Bashar, inherited a state rife with contradictions. Initially hailed as a potential reformer, Bashar's presidency quickly descended into authoritarianism, economic cronyism, and brutal suppression of dissent. His consolidation of power alienated Syria's rural majority and exacerbated sectarian tensions, sowing the seeds of unrest that erupted in 2011 during the Arab Spring.



Widespread poverty, corruption, and inequality under Bashar al-Assad's rule alienated vast swathes of the population. Economic mismanagement, compounded by a severe drought in the late 2000s, devastated rural livelihoods and drove migration to overcrowded urban centres, fueling discontent. The 2011 uprising ignited a protracted civil war that fractured Syria. While Bashar managed to cling to power for over a decade, the regime's reliance on military force to suppress dissent alienated many. The state's inability to provide security or basic services during the war eroded its legitimacy. A coalition led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) capitalised on waning regime strength. Despite its controversial history as a former al-Qaida affiliate, HTS's military success and rebranding under Abu Mohammed al-Jolani enabled it to unify disparate opposition factions, culminating in the capture of Damascus. It fell after weeks of fierce fighting, prompting Bashar and his family to flee. The fall of the Assad regime has far-reaching consequences for Syria and the broader West Asia. Syria faces a precarious future, with no clear political alternative to the Assads. The rise of HTS raises concerns about governance and inclusivity in a post-Assad Syria. Without a unifying national vision, the risk of further fragmentation looms large. The power shift in Syria will likely unsettle neighbouring countries. Turkey, which has supported opposition factions, may seek to expand its influence. Iran, a long-time ally of Assad, faces the prospect of diminished leverage, while Israel watches the developments with caution. Indeed, decades of conflict have left Syria with a shattered economy, displaced millions, and decimated infrastructure. The international community will need to step up with aid and reconstruction efforts to prevent further suffering of Syrian people.

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PICTALK



Tourists gear up to take a hot air balloon ride in Manali

Domestic compulsions get the better of Trudeau



SONAL SHUKLA

While the Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's focus on India may serve short-term political goals, it risks long-term damage to bilateral relations

Recently, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) made sensational claims accusing Indian diplomats of engaging in acts of violence, intimidation, and murder targeting Khalistani extremists, allegedly with the help of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. This accusation came just two days before Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was scheduled to testify before the Foreign Interference Commission, which was investigating allegations of Chinese interference in elections. These allegations suggested that such interference had benefited Trudeau's Liberal Party, contributing to its electoral success and the loss of seats for Conservative candidates. Notably, a day before the RCMP's claims, members of Trudeau's government leaked sensitive information to *The Washington Post* (WP) to amplify Ottawa's narrative internationally. On October 16, Trudeau appeared before the commission but devoted significant attention to India instead of addressing the allegations of Chinese interference. He admitted to having no "hard evidence" but only "intelligence inputs" regarding the claims against India, raising questions about his motives.

Political Diversion Prime Minister Trudeau faces mounting dissatisfaction among Canadians over various domestic crises, including high living costs, an unaffordable real estate market, immigration issues, and rising unemployment. Economic challenges such as slow growth, a widening fiscal deficit, and stagnating per capita GDP have further eroded Trudeau's support. Additionally, accusations of personal extravagance and the unpopular carbon tax have compounded public frustration. Speculation abounds that Trudeau may also be contending with internal dissent within his party.

Khalistani Separatism For decades, India has criticised Canada for allegedly providing a safe haven to Khalistani separatists, driven largely by domestic vote bank politics. The most egregious example of Canada's leniency toward Khalistani extremists was the 1985 Air India Flight 182 bombing. Despite prior intelligence, Ottawa has been accused of failing to prevent the attack or bring its perpetrators to justice. Sikhs represent approximately 2.1% of Canada's population but hold disproportionate influence with 4.4% of parliamentary representation. While the majority of Sikh Canadians do not support Khalistan, a vocal minority of Khalistani extremists wields significant political influence through intimidation and mobilization. Their support ensures votes, financial contributions, and political protection, making Canadian politicians reluctant to alienate them. Maxime Bernier, leader of the People's Party of Canada, has openly criticized this dynamic. He condemned Trudeau and Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre for not naming "Khalistani Sikhs" while condemning attacks on Hindu temples, accusing them of pandering to extremist elements. Bernier argued that Canada must collaborate with India to address Khalistani extremism instead of jeopardising bilateral relations. Toronto MP Kevin Vuong also raised concerns over the growing threat to Hindu Canadians following recent attacks on temples.

India's Response Ottawa has accused India of being uncooperative in the investigation into the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent Khalistani figure. However, some analysts suggest the issue lies in Canada's limited geopolitical leverage compared to the United States. For instance, WP reports allege that the CIA assisted in gathering evidence implicating Indian operatives in potential plots against Khalistani leaders. In contrast, Canada has only intelligence inputs from its Five Eyes partners and intercepted conversations of Indian diplomats. Ironically, while Canada prioritises the safety of Khalistani extremists, acts of violence, hate speech, and threats targeting Indian diplomats, temples, and community leaders have received little attention from Trudeau's government.

Trudeau's Dilemma Recent revelations have further complicated Trudeau's position. Last month, RCMP Commissioner Mike Duheme claimed to have "irrefutable evidence" implicating senior Indian officials in Nijjar's murder. However, Trudeau later denied possessing any such evidence, calling leaks to *The Globe and Mail* baseless and criminal. This inconsistency has fueled speculation about Trudeau's motives and whether external pressures—such as U.S. intelligence directives or



political considerations—might be influencing his stance.



PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU FACES MOUNTING DISSATISFACTION AMONG CANADIANS OVER VARIOUS DOMESTIC CRISES, INCLUDING HIGH LIVING COSTS, AN UNAFFORDABLE REAL ESTATE MARKET, IMMIGRATION ISSUES, AND RISING UNEMPLOYMENT.

political considerations—might be influencing his stance. **Future of India-Canada Relations** Despite robust people-to-people ties and ongoing trade, India's relationship with Canada has been fraught with tensions over Khalistani extremism. The issue transcends Trudeau or the Liberal Party and reflects deeper systemic problems in Canadian politics. Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, while maintaining a neutral stance, has also avoided directly addressing Khalistani extremism, raising doubts about whether a change in government would significantly alter Canada's approach. India has historically responded to incidents involving Khalistani extremism in Canada with diplomatic protests and calls for accountability. However, experts argue that India should adopt a more proactive and sustained approach, raising the issue at international forums like the United Nations and during bilateral dialogues with Western nations. Emphasising the principles of hate speech and incitement laws, which exist in Canadian legislation, could strengthen India's case against Khalistani violence. *(The writer is a Public Policy Analyst and Lawyer National Law University, Jodhpur; views are personal)*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GOVT IGNORES PROTESTING FARMERS

Madam — The news, the government is not in a mood to talk to protesting farmers (December 8), is received with a lot of concern by many. The country witnessing the largest and the most prolonged protest in this decade is by the farmers. The woes of the farmers are genuine and can be better understood by the fact that millions of farmers had committed suicide due to the hostile policies of the government that plunges them in unbearable debt. Withdrawing subsidies, lack of control over the growing cost of the inputs and above all, lack of certainty over the returns in terms of the produce or the profit are the main reasons.

The price of every product produced is fixed by the manufacturer. But agricultural products are the only exception. The farmer faces all the odds and bears all the pains with lofty hopes but miserably fails in the market due to the lack of a mechanism to get him reasonable returns. The field is left to the domination of the middlemen. Neither the producer nor the consumer gets the benefit. The government should take control of the entire mechanism and regulate it with norms that will not deprive anyone. It is unfortunate that the same person who was the Chief Minister of MP, where 6 protesting farmers were shot dead, is the Union Minister handling this ministry that again shoots at the farmers with teargas shells.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

INS TUSHIL JOINS FLEET

Madam — The Indian Navy will induct its latest multimedia stealth guided missile frigate, INS Tushil during a ceremony in Russia on December 9. It is really another milestone in the history of the Indian Navy. A frigate is a type of warship designed for various naval operations, including escorting large vessels and engaging in combat with enemy ships, submarines, and aircraft. It is the seventh ship in this series and

Air pollution menace



Air pollution is a significant national issue in India, affecting millions of people across the country. Several key points need to be considered to address this grave issue worsening over time. The loss of life expectancy and the impact of air pollution on quality of life are also affecting the economic growth of the country. It degrades the environ-

ment severely and exacerbates climate change by increasing greenhouse gas emissions. The government is quite aware of the major sources of air pollution, and there are laws to control them, but they are not being implemented strictly, for example, vehicular and industrial emissions, construction dust, and stubble burning due to various reasons, including political.

Delhi often receives the most attention for its severe air pollution in terms of the local and central governments blaming each other and passing the buck. Political consensus is required to control sources of air pollution and implement and frame new laws to mitigate its impacts. So, it is appropriate and necessary to discuss air pollution in the Parliament.

O Prasada Rao | Hyderabad

the first of two additional frigates being built under a 2016 agreement between India and Russia. INS Tushil is the result of the continuous toil of hundreds of shipyard workers along with multiple Russian and Indian OEMs. Tushil is equipped with advanced stealth features, making it less detectable by enemy radar. It is really a powerful warship with all kinds of weapons and sensors, fitted with the BrahMos cruise missile as its principal weapon. Upon its commissioning, INS Tushil will be part of the Western Naval Command. It is expected to bolster the Navy's operational capabilities between India and Russia and will rank amongst the most technologically advanced frigates in the world. It will not only be a symbol of the Indian Navy's growing capabilities but also the resilient collaborative strength of the India-Russia partnership.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

RBI CUTS 50 BASIS POINTS IN CRR

Madam — The RBI's monetary policy has delivered exactly what the economy

and markets need currently, and its decision to cut the 50 basis points in CRR would infuse Rs1.16 trillion in liquidity into the banking system. This lifeline from the RBI will significantly help lenders, as lack of liability growth is hampering their lending growth.

Besides that, real estate, consumer durables and the infrastructure sector also stand to gain. Despite requests for repo rate cuts from many quarters, RBI resisted with it and maintained a balance between economic growth and inflation. With the fact that retail inflation has spiked continuously for two months with food prices leading the pinch, RBI has done well to maintain a check. Last but not least, Govt will have to take a few steps like cutting the duty hike on edible oil and boosting consumption to support RBI's hope of our GDP growth of 6.6 per cent in the current financial year.

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

World Climate Day: A call for inclusive and urgent action

Addressing climate change requires shared responsibility. Wealthy nations must fulfill financial and technical support commitments

Climate change disproportionately affects the world's poorest and most vulnerable communities. For them, it's not just an environmental issue but a daily struggle for survival. Living in precarious conditions, these populations bear the brunt of climate-induced disasters such as floods, droughts, and extreme weather, which devastate their homes, livelihoods, and food security. As global warming intensifies, it deepens social divides, further endangering marginalised groups and underscoring the urgent need for inclusive and compassionate action. The ILO's World Social Protection Report 2024-26, titled Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition, highlights the intersection of structural inequalities and climate vulnerability. It reveals that over 90 per cent of people in the 20 countries most affected by the climate crisis lack access to social protection, such as child or unemployment benefits. Similarly, in the 50 most climate-vulnerable nations, 75 per cent of the population-2.1 billion



people-remains unprotected. These gaps leave millions exposed to the worsening impacts of climate change. In India, climate change has become an immediate reality. The Yale Programme on Climate Change Communication found that 85 per cent of respondents had experienced global warming effects firsthand, an 11 per cent increase since 2021-22. **Unequal Toll** Vulnerable regions face higher mortality rates during climate-related disasters. Between 2010 and 2020, deaths from floods, droughts, and storms in high-vulnerability areas were 15 times higher than in low-vulnerability ones. In South Asia, climate-induced migration poses a growing threat. Research estimates that up to 45 million people in India could be displaced by 2050 due to rising sea levels and

shifting rainfall patterns. These patterns highlight the unequal risks faced by marginalised communities. **Socio-Economic Trade-Offs** Transitioning to renewable energy presents both opportunities and challenges. In India, while 85 per cent of people believe renewable energy will reduce air pollution, concerns about job losses and rising electricity costs persist. Balancing environmental goals with socio-economic realities is essential for equitable progress. **Addressing Inequities** Effective climate solutions must consider inequality. For example, carbon pricing can disproportionately burden low-income households if not implemented thoughtfully. Similarly, conservation efforts restricting access to forests can harm Indigenous livelihoods. Community engagement is crucial to creating inclusive policies. In India's Bundelkhand region, local water management projects have reduced migration by improving resource access, demonstrating the potential of community-led solutions. **Equitable Climate Action** India's commitment to carbon

neutrality by 2070 and interim goals for 2030 signal progress. Achieving these targets will require collaboration across governments, businesses, and communities, alongside investments in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and green infrastructure. Educational initiatives promoting climate literacy are vital. Empowering communities with knowledge enables them to advocate for their needs and engage in decision-making. **The Cost of Inaction** Failing to act will have catastrophic consequences. Global temperatures could rise by over 3°C, intensifying extreme weather and threatening ecosystems. In South Asia, climate disasters already displace millions, while extreme heatwaves in India—with temperatures surpassing 50°C—disrupt lives and livelihoods. Human-induced warming now accelerates at 0.26°C per decade, emphasising the urgency for immediate and sustained action. *(The writer is a leader in disaster management, specialising in governance, climate change adaptation, and gender inclusion. Views are personal)*



EILIA JAFAR



FIRST COLUMN

DUMBPHONE IS A SMART CHOICE

Their growing popularity reflects a cultural shift, one that values mindful technology use over constant connectivity



SHAINY SHARMA

In a world where smartphones dominate our lives, many adults are turning to dumbphones to reclaim their time and mental well-being. Today, the young generation is realising that giving a child a smartphone means not just giving them access to the world but vice-versa too. Smartphones are more than just a tool for connection. It is a portal that opens them up to endless possibilities, distractions, and influences beyond one's control. Dumbphones which are also known as feature phones, are basic mobile phones that are designed primarily for calling and texting, with limited or no access to advanced internet features, applications or modern smartphone capabilities.

Unlike smartphones, which run on complex operating systems like iOS or Android, such phones usually have a simple operating system that is focused on basic functions like voice calls, text messaging, and sometimes simple games. Such phones often lack features such as social media apps, internet browsing, and advanced gaming.

They have a small monochrome or basic colour screen with no touch interface and a physical keypad. Moreover, due to their simple hardware and minimal functionality, such phones last for several days on a single charge, which is a significant advantage over smartphones. Today, the popularity of dumbphones stems from the increasing realisation of how smartphones have transformed daily life.

For many, smartphones are indispensable tools for communication, navigation, and productivity. However, their omnipresence also



comes with downsides such as excessive screen time, reduced attention spans, social media addiction, and mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

There is no denying that technology is a powerful tool, but one mustn't forget that it is also one that can easily overshadow real-life experiences. In giving a child a phone, one must be prepared to teach them how to balance its use and ensure that the digital world doesn't replace the beauty of curiosity, creativity, and genuine human connection. The rise of dumbphones reflects a broader cultural shift toward digital mindfulness and the re-evaluation of technology's role in our lives.

As more individuals and families prioritise mental health and meaningful interactions, technological companies may feel pressured to design devices and platforms that promote healthier usage patterns. Moreover, this trend serves as a reminder of the need for balance in a hyper-connected world. While technology has undoubtedly enhanced productivity and convenience, its overuse can detract from the quality of life. Dumbphones symbolise a conscious effort to reclaim control and foster a deeper connection with the world around us.

The growing adoption of dumbphones highlights a societal push-back against the distractions and pressures of modern technology. By choosing dumbphones, individuals are making a bold statement that life's richness is found not in the screens we stare at, but in the people and experiences that surround us.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Advancing the Centre's liberalisation agenda



UTTAM GUPTA

Agri-marketing reforms can be achieved by enabling bulk buyers to purchase directly at farm gates and creating multiple private-sector e-trading platforms

In June 2024, the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' welfare set up a 12-member committee, under the chairmanship of additional secretary, Faiz Ahmed Kidwai with the mandate to formulate a national policy framework for marketing of farm items and suggest measures to ensure the remunerative prices to farmers. The committee has recommended (i) allowing direct farm-gate purchases of agriculture commodities by bulk buyers, including organised retailers, without having to go through the state-notified mandis or pay the various levies that the operators of these market yards charge; (ii) declaring warehouses, silos and cold storages, including those run by private agencies, as "deemed market yards" (DMYs); (iii) establish and operate multiple e-trading platforms, including e-NAMs (electronic-national agriculture market) in the private sector.

Will the suggested measures help in achieving the stated objective? At present, agriculture marketing is carried out under the respective state laws viz. APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) Act which has widely varying provisions. This hampers the free movement of the agri-produce between different states. Even within a state, there isn't a free flow of the agri-produce as for the administration of marketing it is divided into several market areas and farmers in a given area can sell their agri-produce only at the designated APMC Mandi.

Between APMC Mandis, also market regulations vary widely. At the mandi, a cartel of licensed traders and commission agents (known as artisans in local parlance, their job is facilitating transactions between the farmer and the buyer) rules the roost.

The duo exploit the farmer to the hilt by giving a low price, rejections, weighing less, delaying payment, etc. Levies such as market fees, anthias commission, rural development cess (RDC) etc further erode her netback. The APMC mandis can handle only a fraction of the quantity farmers bring to sell. So, most of them are forced to come to private local markets, where sales are legally barred.

At these markets, they end up selling their produce to traders at throwaway prices. The latter have the blessings of corrupt bureaucrats and politicians and hence, won't face any action for violating the law. True, state agencies such as The Food Corporation of India (FCI), purchase in mandis specified crops for running welfare Schemes. They make purchases at the minimum support price (MSP) notified by the Centre. But, their purchases are limited. Even so only 6 per cent of farmers, mostly rich with larger land holdings – get access to government procurement.

Although many states have made enabling provisions for setting up private wholesale markets, private markets have come up only in a few states. This is because some states have not framed rules and in others, the rules are far from conducive to attract private entrepreneurs. A few states like Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Karnataka have made provisions for farm-gate purchases but these transactions are restricted to select commodities for defined periods, and that too, after paying the taxes to the respective APMCs. Even the e-NAM (an online trading platform for agri-produce launched by the Centre in April 2016, was



ALTHOUGH MANY STATES HAVE MADE ENABLING PROVISIONS FOR SETTING UP PRIVATE WHOLESALE MARKETS, PRIVATE MARKETS HAVE COME UP ONLY IN A FEW STATES. THIS IS BECAUSE SOME STATES HAVE NOT FRAMED RULES AND IN OTHERS, THE RULES ARE FAR FROM CONDUCTIVE TO ATTRACT PRIVATE ENTREPRENEURS

intended to provide a unified market – at the national and state level – to give multiple options to farmers for selling their produce and fetch a better price helped much.

This is because the states haven't made necessary amendments in their laws to provide for electronic trading in agri-produce. Moreover, many APMCs have not set up an e-auction platform. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Out of a little over 7000 regulated wholesale APMC mandis, just about 20 per cent of 1400 have been integrated into the e-NAM platform. Besides, the farmers registered on the e-NAM portal are 17.5 million which is around 12.5 per cent of the total 140 million.

As for business transacted on the portal, that is a little over 12 per cent of the total value of annual trade in agri-commodities (excluding dairy and meat products). At a fundamental level, the problem has to do with the continued stranglehold of the states on APMCs. In fact, for almost everything that stakeholders need to do for doing business on e-NAM be it pan-state/India license for traders, letting farmers sell on the portal (instead of only at designated Mandi) and so on, they need to get permission from the state authorities.

To cap it all, extant laws don't permit private entities to engage in agri-marketing. Now, the Committee's recommendations to allow direct farm-gate purchases of agri-commodities by bulk buyers, including organised retailers without having to go through the state-notified mandis or pay the various levies that the opera-

tors of these market yards charge; giving warehouses, silos and cold storages, including those run by private agencies, DMYs status and setting up multiple e-trading platforms including e-NAMs in the private sector essentially seek to give more options to farmers for selling their produce. But, the million-dollar question is How do you make these ideas work? For bulk buyers to directly purchase from farmers – bypassing APMCs – the concerned State will have to make provision in its APMC Act. Likewise, to enable farmers to sell straight from warehouses, silos and cold storages etc, the State has to amend the law. Similarly, for buying and selling to happen on the e-platform, the State will have to make necessary amendments to the Act.

This is acknowledged by none other than the Committee itself when it says "To align with the proposed national policy, the states and union territories would have to notify state policy on agri-marketing as the subject falls in the domain of states". But, the states are unlikely to give the desired relaxations in their laws. In the past, they have done little to liberalise agri-marketing despite much prodding by the Centre; Remember a Model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (Promotion and Facilitation) Law passed by the latter in 2017 which gave more options to farmers for selling besides a 'single pan-State license' for traders buying from anywhere in the State. But, this was ignored by the states.

Faced with the unwillingness of States to unshackle the farmers

from the clutches of APMCs and the dire need to open up agri-marketing, the Union government used its powers under the Constitution to offer them a parallel front. In September 2020, it enacted the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020 to regulate inter-state trade and intra-state trade, providing freedom of choice to the farmer or trader to conduct trade and commerce while allowing traders to purchase specified farm commodities directly from farmers anywhere in the country, even outside the State APMCs.

To realise the full potential of this law and give legal protection to farmers while engaging with buyers, it enacted two other laws viz. Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020. Unfortunately, bowing to year-long protests by a handful of farmers and the Supreme Court order in January 2021 staying their implementation, Modi announced their repeal on November 19, 2021. The SC never said these laws were unconstitutional.

A revolutionary move by the Centre to give a remunerative price to the majority of poor farmers and increase their income was sabotaged by middlemen/traders who had much to gain from the continuation of the status quo.

The situation can be retrieved only if the SC pronounces its verdict on merit.

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

Embedded insurance: Bridging India's coverage gap and transforming insurtech

By enhancing accessibility, streamlining processes and catering to underserved markets, embedded insurance is poised to revolutionise insurtech sector

As one of the largest and fastest-growing economies in the world, India has a lot of potential in both general and commercial insurance sectors. Even though the coverage of life and health insurance in India has been consistently increasing, there is a significant gap in terms of commercial insurance, as around 95 per cent of SMEs in the country are uninsured. However, this gap can be bridged by the emergence of embedded insurance, which has disrupted the Insurtech sector.

Unlike traditional models, where customers actively seek out policies, embedded insurance offers coverage at the point of sale—whether purchasing a smartphone, booking a flight, or subscribing to



ADITYA DADIA

a service. Embedded insurance is quite popular among retail and individual customers. At the same time, its role will be extremely critical in the commercial insurance segment. **What is Embedded Insurance:** Embedded insurance refers to integrating insurance products with the journey of non-insurance products and services. It is different

from conventional insurance processes where customers look for policies. Here, insurance is offered as an integral part of a transaction and is often tailored to the buyer's needs.

The model is based on leveraging the latest technologies, such as APIs, that help in providing instant coverage at the point of sale. One such example is travel insurance offered by airline companies, railways, and bus operators offered to travellers when booking tickets. The concept is a bit different in the context of commercial insurance. Here, embedded solutions are gaining traction through partnerships with supply chain platforms and B2B marketplaces.

Some examples include cargo insurance, business liability

coverage and other protections that help companies protect their assets.

Driving the Growth of Insurtech: The convenience and accessibility offered by embedded insurance are quite significant. Since it is integrated with different services, various aspects, including customer KYC, are often not required. Policies are generated and applicable at the point of sale.

This enhances the scope of insurance and ensures that overall customer experience is improved drastically. The overall level of customer experience and trust in the core service and the insurance offered improves due to this integration. It also enables insurers to reach underpenetrated markets like Tier-2 and Tier-3



cities in India, where digital platforms accelerate adoption. With digitalisation and an increase in the number of internet users (and smartphones), this trend will continue in the future as well. Impact on the Indian Insurtech Sector Embedded insurance can provide a much-needed boost to the Insurtech sector by devising the development of personalized, on-demand

products tailored to customer needs.

Since the demand for different types of digital services such as e-commerce, fintech apps, and ride-sharing platforms, is increasing, insurance companies have an excellent chance to enhance user convenience and relevance by integrating their services. This trend has led to increased partnerships between legacy insurance players and start-ups.

Even the existing service providers (besides insurance companies) have tried embedded insurance to ensure scalability and operational efficiency. As there is significant scope for bridging the underinsured in India, this can be an excellent tool through which insurance companies can reach untapped markets and deliver

high returns. Embedded insurance can be critical in bridging the insurance gap and fostering financial inclusion.

Challenges and Opportunities: However, despite the increase in overall popularity and usage, embedded insurance faces numerous challenges in India.

First, there are regulatory issues, as integrating insurance with non-insurance products demands compliance with stringent industry norms and approvals. There can be challenges relating to filing insurance claims.

There are also privacy-related issues, as embedded insurance depends on leveraging customer data for personalised offers. However, despite these limitations, there are numerous opportunities to

cover a large proportion of the uninsured population. As different sectors and industries are digitised at a good pace, the future of embedded insurance has immense potential for customised and micro-insurance products catering to diverse consumer needs.

Summing Up Embedded insurance has redefined the delivery of insurance services through integration in daily transactions. In the Indian context, the overall increase in the number of digital users and rapid transformation of industries gives an excellent opportunity for insurance companies to bridge the existing insurance gap; the opportunities in this field will be immense.

(The writer is the founder of Alwrite; views are personal)

TMC civic board issues documents to Afghans

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a shocking revelation six Afghan nationals who were recently detained in Delhi were issued credentials including birth and death certificates from the civic authorities of Malbazar Municipality run by the Trinamool Congress, sources said. The reports come at a time when the central intelligence agencies have alerted the Home Department about increased activities of the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami Bangladesh (HUJI-B) and Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (JMB) two radical Islamist terrorist organisations working from Bangladesh but having tenta-

cles in this side of the border too. The Central Bureau of Investigation which has been investigating the Afghan national case has reportedly asked the Malbazar municipality in Jalpaiguri district of North Bengal to furnish related documents based on which the six Afghan nationals were issued birth certificates so as to enable them acquire Aadhar and Voter Identity cards. The Malbazar municipalities have received two such letters from the CBI, the latest one being received as late as on December 5, sources in Jalpaiguri said. Reports also did the rounds that at least 15 illegal immigrants from

Afghanistan have acquired similar credentials from various municipal authorities. A senior district Trinamool Congress leader and a top functionary of the civic body said that he had no information regarding the issuance of such certificates to any foreign nationals and said inquiries had been ordered and actions would be taken if anyone would be found guilty of misconduct. "I was not coming to office for several days and hence had not much information about such developments ... however considering these as routine affair ... I have given instructions to the department concerned to find out the veracity of the reports of



fake certificates being provided to any foreign national ... if so strong action will be taken," the TMC leader said. Another senior functionary of the TMC responsible for handling the municipal body said that he too was not aware of

such incidents having taken place assuring strong action would be taken "if anyone is found guilty." He also said that "first of all it has to be ascertained whether any such birth or death certificate was issued by the municipality because there may be rackets providing fake certificates." Meanwhile, in a parallel development the Home Department has been alerted by the central agencies about increased activities of Huji and JMB along the India-Bangladesh border. While Huji was set up in 1992 as an extended organization of Bin Laden's International Islamic Front (IIF), JMB was established as a terror group working in

India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, UK and Australia. Believed to have been nurturing more than 10,000 terrorists the banned organisation was founded by Abdur Rahman in April 1998 in Dhaka's Palampur area and earned notoriety by exploding bombs in 2001 and again detonating 500 small bombs at 300 locations throughout Bangladesh. Both Huji and JMB which have been working along the India-Bangladesh borders, with diminished capabilities during the Sk Hasina Government have suddenly come alive during the present regime. According to sources the two militant organizations --- one

of which was responsible for the October 2 Khagragarh blast in Birbhum district killing two terrorists --- had recently joined hands and were working in close coordination. "It has been noticed that these organizations which had lost much of their teeth during the Sheikh Hasina regime have suddenly woken up in the past several months and have activated their sleeper cells along the border districts of Malda, Murshidabad and Birbhum," sources said adding the activation of the sleeper cells come in the wake of release of some 250 dreaded terrorists from Bangladesh jails by the present interim Government of Md Yunus.

Policeman shoots colleague dead before killing self near Udhampur

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In a rare incident of fratricide, a head constable of Jammu and Kashmir police allegedly shot dead his colleague in a fit of anger before shooting himself dead with his service weapon in a moving police van on Jammu Srinagar National Highway near Udhampur early Sunday morning. According to local police, the firing incident occurred near the Kali Mata temple in the Rehembal area of Udhampur around 6.30 am. when three policemen were traveling in a van bearing registration number JK05 E 4703 from North Kashmir's Sopore to the Subsidiary Training Centre, Talwara in Reasi district. Preliminary investigations revealed a head constable, hailing from Kashmir, opened fire at the driver over some argument before committing suicide with his service weapon. Another selection grade constable, who was also traveling in the vehicle, escaped unhurt and is being questioned to ascertain the real provocation before the fir-



ing took place. Confirming the same, Senior Superintendent of Police, Udhampur, Amod Ashok Nagpure said the accused used his AK 47 assault rifle in the firing. "The policemen traveling in the police van were posted in Sopore and belonged to Kashmir. Earlier the Udhampur police posted on X (earlier Twitter), "Today, at about 6.30 am, Police Station Rehembal received information that two policemen from Sopore traveling towards STC Talwara in a department vehicle have suffered bullet injuries due to firing." Initial investigation reveals that it is a case of fratricide and suicide. Senior police officers have reached the spot

and an investigation is underway," it said. Earlier, an incident of fratricide was reported in the Udhampur district in July 2022. At that time a jawan of the Indo Tibetan Police Force, deployed on Amarnath yatra duty, opened fire on his colleagues near Devika Ghat community centre. In the firing incident, three ITBP jawans received injuries while one of them was found dead inside the Devika Ghat community centre. On July 15, 2022, Two soldiers of the Indian army were killed while two others were injured in a similar firing incident inside Surankote-based territorial army camp in Poonch

India's success with UPI offers replicable model for other nations: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's success with UPI offers a replicable model for other nations, a paper written by noted experts asserted, arguing that how this indigenous fintech solution combined public digital infrastructure with open banking policies to reduce financial exclusion, foster innovation, and promote equitable economic growth. The paper, which runs into 67 pages, titled 'Open Banking and Digital Payments: Implications for Credit Access' was authored by Shashwat Alok, Pulak Ghosh, Nirupama Kulkarni and Manju Puri. Among key highlights of the paper are that UPI has enabled underserved groups, including subprime and new-to-credit borrowers, to access formal credit for the first time. In regions with high UPI adoption, loans to new-to-credit borrowers grew by 4 per cent, and to subprime borrowers by 8 per cent, the paper claimed. Unified Payment Interface is



India's leading digital payment platform. Payments through digital means in India are hitting fresh highs, as its citizens are increasingly adopting the emerging modes of transacting on the internet. Among others, a key emphasis of the Indian government has been on ensuring that the benefits of UPI are not limited to India only; other countries, too, benefit from it. Since its launch in 2016, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has transformed financial access in India, enabling 300 million individuals and 50 million merchants to perform seamless digital transactions. By October 2023, 75 per cent of all retail digital payments in India were through UPI.

Fight breaks out between trainee IPS officer and UPSC coach

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A fight broke out between a 2023-batch trainee IPS officer and a UPSC coach at a wedding in southwest Delhi's Kapashera area. According to the police on Sunday, the incident took place on December 6 and resulted in both sides filing complaints at the local police station. Vikas Dhayal, a Rajendra Nagar resident and a civil services coach, said that the trainee officer struck him on the head with a glass. No immediate reaction was available from the officer. "We are checking the CCTV footage of the entire incident. Initially, we got to know that

there was some issue between two people and one of them hit another with a glass. We have received two different complaints. Both complaints are under investigation," a senior police officer said. Dhayal shared a video on X, purportedly showing the assault, including images of his blood-smeared face and clothes. He alleged that police refused to file an FIR first, and only relented when his post went viral. "The police didn't take any action on my complaint on a life-threatening attack by IPS trainee Rahul Balhara, visible on CCTV clearly. But, now after the twitter post, the 'upright' Delhi Police lodged a complaint against me, when I didn't lay a finger anyone," he said in a post on X.

Black Sunday for Indian Cricket

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If one looks at the pattern of 37-year-old Rohit's dismissals, it is very similar to Krishnamachari Srikkanth and Virender Sehwag's way of getting out at the end of their careers. These three were gifted with exceptional hand-eye coordination where they picked length at ease during their prime and reacted accordingly. Now with reflexes slowing down, the reaction to the length is a split second slower and the way Rana, Taskin Ahmed, Tim Southee and now Pat Cummins have squared him, it speaks volumes about where he is going wrong. He is still trying to cover the line of his deliveries but wrong judgement of length means is causing trouble. Number six wouldn't solve his issues and he needs to again bat in top three. For Virat Kohli, the hundred at Perth now seems like "buffet runs" which came easily after KL Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal added 201 runs and by the time, he came in, India were ahead by 300 runs and the contest was as good as dead. To his credit, he hung in there for a 100 but it was tired attack that he belted to signal end of a prolonged lean patch. His problems with the fourth stump line has persisted since James Anderson exposed it in 2014. The 26-year-old Kohli, back then, worked hard and managed around his technical deficiency of edging behind stumps. He would stand closer to off-stump to cover the line but at 36, the movements have slowed and the effects are showing. If India need to be competitive in the remainder of the series, the two veterans need to figure out how to get over the slump or it might just be too late. If India had to pull off a coup, it needed Rishabh Pant's (28) excellence but Starc, the undisputed 'OG' of 'pink ball'

Tests with 74 victims, bowled a delivery on length which the Indian batter jabbed at without pressing forward fully. If that was not enough, the Indian Under-19 side lost by 59 runs against Bangladesh in the final of the Under-19 Asia Cup in Dubai. Chasing a paltry 199, title favourites India were shot out for a mere 139 in 35.2 overs by the defending champions Bangladesh in the summit clash to lift the Under-19 Asia Cup trophy. The batters could not capitalise on the good job done by the bowlers as India suffered a massive 59-run defeat to Bangladesh in the low-scoring U19 Asia Cup title clash, here Sunday. After India produced a fine performance with the ball to keep Bangladesh to a mere 198 in 49.1 overs, it looked like the job was half done since the batters had played their roles to perfection since defeat in the tournament-opener to Pakistan. However, in the crunch final, India lost wickets in a flurry on two occasions which broke the back of their chase, with Bangladesh bowlers and fielders doing their part well in exerting further pressure. Chasing 199, India were bundled out for 139 in 35.2 overs as none of their specialist batters could play an impact knock, including the youngest IPL star Vaibhav Suryavanshi who managed a mere 9 (7 balls, 2 fours). India suffered early blows in form of Suryavanshi and Ayush Mhatre (1) to tumble to 24 for two inside five overs. With the summit clash placed precariously, Bangladesh edged ahead by keeping the rest of the Indian batters largely quiet, drying up the boundaries and even the singles. C Andre Siddarth's (20 off 35 balls) charge was ended by Rizan Hossain in the 12th over,

which was another crucial point in the game as the balance tilted heavily in favour of Bangladesh. But it was Iqbal Hossain Emon who made the most of the situation as he snaffled three vital wickets to severely dent India's hopes, accounting for KP Karthikeya (21), Nikhil Kumar (0) and Harvansh Pangalia (6) in quick succession. Mohamed Amaan resisted for long, scoring a 65-ball 26 but his effort and Hardik Raj's late 21-ball 24 also was not enough for India to turn the tables. The end came swiftly for India as Azizul Hakim took 3/8 from his 2.2 overs towards the end. Earlier in the first half, Rizan Hossain's 47, Mohammad Shihab James' 40 and Farid Hasan's 39 proved to be the difference in a contest wherein batters mostly struggled for fluency in the middle. India dominated the Bangladeshi batters for the entirety of the first half as they could only get near the 200-run mark while consuming most of their allocated overs. Yudhajit Guha (2/29) was the pick among the performers from India as Chetan Sharma (2/48) and Raj (2/41) also chipped in with a couple of wickets each. Kiran Chormale returned a measly 7-0-19-1 while Karthikeya (1/37) and Mhatre (1/9) also chipped in with a wicket each. Meanwhile, in the second Women's ODI against Australia, India were no match to the hosts and were bowled out for 249 in 44.5 overs. Opener Richa Ghosh was the top-scorer who took 72 balls for her 54, while the likes of Jemimah Rodrigues (43) and skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (38) failed to convert their starts. Minnu Mani waged a lone battle with 45-ball unbeaten 46 but it proved insufficient.

Police shower protesting farmers with petals...

From page 1

The teargas shells forced the farmers, some of whom had covered their faces and were wearing protective eyewear, to get back a few metres. Some were seen covering the shells with wet jute bags. Ambala police had earlier said the farmer outfits, which are agitating for a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price and other demands, can march to Delhi only after getting permission from the national capital administration. The protesters, dubbed as 'marjeevras', (someone willing to die for a cause), were stopped only a few metres into the march and the standoff continued for over three hours. The farmers called off their march for the day following action of security forces. Farmer leader Baldev Singh Zira, who led the 'jatha' on Sunday, said it was a "drama" by Haryana Police. "Along with tea, and biscuits, they fired teargas shells," he said. "They have been exposed," he said. As the protesters reached the barricades, a few police personnel climbed the roof of a tin shed where security personnel have been stationed,

and threw flower petals on a group of farmers. A farmer said, "They are saying that our names were not on the list. We do not know which list they have. When we asked them whether they would allow us to move ahead after verifying our identities, they told us then we would have to show the permission." A Haryana security personnel was seen asking farmers to show permission to march to Delhi and questioned the identity of some of the protesters. Punjab farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher in the evening said six farmers were injured and one of them was rushed to the Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) in Chandigarh. "We have called back the 'jatha' (group of 101 farmers)," he said. "Whatever happened today was seen by the whole country," said Pandher as he slammed the use of teargas against farmers. "The (Haryana) administration used tactics like offering biscuits, 'langar', showering flower petals. Immediately after showering flowers, they (Haryana security personnel)

fired teargas shells and rubber bullets at farmers," he claimed. Pandher said the farmers would decide their next course of action after a meeting of their forums -- the Samyuka Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha. "The Haryana government has turned this border like the India-Pakistan border," said a protester. Farmer leader Tejveer Singh asked why farmers were stopped from moving ahead when they were peacefully going on foot. "What objection does Haryana have?" He said the farmers would not have to march to the capital had the Centre accepted their demands. Farmers are sitting close to the cemented wall holding flags. They have arranged water bottles, salt, jute bags to save them from the impact of tear gas. Ahead of the march, farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher alleged that the AAP-led Punjab government is in alliance with the Centre and is working against them. Pandher questioned why media is being stopped at the protesting site. Farmers have been camping at Shambhu and Khanauri

border points between Punjab and Haryana since February 13 after their march to Delhi was stopped by security forces. Apart from legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP) the farmers are demanding a farm debt waiver, pension for farmers and farm labourers, no hike in electricity tariff, withdrawal of police cases (against farmers), and "justice" for the victims of the 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence. Reinstatement of the Land Acquisition Act, 2013 and compensation to the families of farmers who died during the previous agitation in 2020-21 are also part of their demands. Mobile Internet and the sending of bulk messages have been suspended in parts of Ambala district. District officials have already issued orders banning gatherings of five or more people, and government-run and private schools were shut for the day on the administration's order. To prevent disruptions, the Haryana Police had tightened security at Ambala's border with Punjab with multilayered barricades at the Shambhu border on National Highway 44 and also deployed water cannons.

Earlier Haryana Police has written to its Punjab counterpart asking it to ensure media personnel are stopped at a "safe distance" from the protest site for the sake of their safety. It had earlier asked the farmers not to proceed with the march and cited a prohibitory order clamped by the Ambala administration under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) that bans unlawful assembly of five or more people in the district. In Delhi, Security was tightened at Delhi's Singhu border on Sunday. "Delhi Police is on alert and security has been tightened at the Singhu border. A skeletal deployment has been made at the Singhu border but it may increase as per the situation at the Shambu border," a senior police officer said. Traffic may also be hit due to the security arrangements at the border and in the central part of Delhi, he said. A strict vigil is also being maintained at the Noida border as another group of farmers from Uttar Pradesh has been protesting there, he added. The officer said police are ready to tackle any situation.

ASSAD FLEES, SYRIA JUBILATES

From page 1

Syrian state television aired a video statement early Sunday by a group of rebels saying that Assad had been overthrown and all prisoners had been set free. They called on people to preserve the institutions of the free Syrian state. The rebels later announced a curfew in Damascus from 4 pm to 5 am. The rebels said they freed people held at the notorious Saydnaya prison, where rights groups say thousands were tortured and killed. A video circulating online purported to show rebels breaking open cell doors and freeing dozens of female prisoners, many of whom appeared shocked and confused. At least one small child could be seen among them. Rebel commander Anas Salkhadi, who appeared on State TV later in the day,

sought to reassure Syria's religious and ethnic minorities, saying: "Syria is for everyone, no exceptions. Syria is for Druze, Sunnis, Alawites, and all sects." "We will not deal with people the way the Assad family did," he added. Residents of Damascus gathered to pray mosques and to celebrate in the squares, chanting "God is great." People also chanted anti-Assad slogans and honked car horns. Teen boys picked up weapons that had apparently been discarded by security forces and fired them in the air. Revellers filled Umayyad Square in the city centre, where the Defence Ministry is located. Men fired celebratory gunshots into the air and some waved the three-starred Syrian flag that predates the Assad government and was adopted by the revolutionaries. Soldiers and police officers left

their posts and fled, and looters broke into the Defence Ministry. Videos from Damascus showed families wandering into the presidential palace, with some emerging carrying stacks of plates and other household items. "I did not sleep last night, and I refused to sleep until I heard the news of his fall," said Mohammed Amer Al-Oulabi, 44, who works in the electricity sector. "From Idlib to Damascus, it only took them (the opposition forces) a few days, thank God. May God bless them, the heroic lions who made us proud." Syria's al-Watan newspaper, which was historically pro-government, wrote: "We are facing a new page for Syria. We thank God for not shedding more blood. We believe and trust that Syria will be for all Syrians." The newspaper added that

media workers should not be blamed for publishing government statements in the past, saying: "We only carried out the instructions and published the news they sent us." A statement from the Alawite sect - to which Assad belongs and which has formed the core of his base - called on young Syrians to be "calm, rational and prudent and not to be dragged into what tears apart the unity of our country." The rebels mainly come from the Sunni Muslim majority in Syria, which also has sizable Druze, Christian and Kurdish communities. Syrian Prime Minister Mohammed Ghazi Jalali said in a video statement that the government was ready to "extend its hand" to the opposition and turn its functions over to a transitional government. A video shared on Syrian opposition media

showed a group of armed men escorting him out of his office and to the Four Seasons hotel on Sunday. Rami Abdurrahman of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights told The Associated Press that Assad took a flight Sunday from Damascus. A senior diplomat from the United Arab Emirates, which had sought to rehabilitate Assad's image and has welcomed high-profile exiles in recent years, declined to comment on his whereabouts when asked by reporters at a conference in Bahrain. Anwar Gargash said Assad's destination at this point is a "footnote in history," comparing it to the long exile of German Kaiser Wilhelm II after World War I. Assad has been accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the war, including a 2013 chemical

weapons attack on the outskirts of the capital. There was no immediate comment from Iran, which had been Assad's staunchest supporter. The Iranian Embassy in Damascus was ransacked after apparently having been abandoned. The rebel advances since November 27 were the largest in recent years, and saw the cities of Aleppo, Hama and Homs fall in a matter of days as the Syrian army melted away. Russia, Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, which provided crucial support to Assad throughout the uprising, abandoned him in the final days as they reeled from other conflicts. The rebels are led by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group, or HTS, which has its origins in al-Qaida and is considered a terrorist organization by the United States and the United Nations.

Its leader, al-Golani, has sought to recast the group as a moderate and tolerant force. HTS set up a "salvation government" in 2017 to administer a large region in northwestern Syria under its control. "Golani has made history and sparked hope among millions of Syrians," said Daren Khalifa, a senior adviser with the International Crisis Group and an expert on Syrian groups. "But he and the rebels now face a formidable challenge ahead. One can only hope they rise to the occasion." The UN's special envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, called Saturday for urgent talks in Geneva to ensure an "orderly political transition." The Gulf nation of Qatar, a key regional mediator, hosted an emergency meeting of foreign ministers and top officials from eight countries with

interests in Syria late Saturday. The participants included Iran, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Turkey. Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari, Qatar's Foreign Ministry spokesman, told reporters that they agreed on the need "to engage all parties on the ground," including the HTS, and that the main concern is "stability and safe transition." The Israeli military said Sunday it has deployed forces in a demilitarized buffer zone along its northern frontier with Syria following the rebel offensive there. The military said the deployment was meant to provide security for residents of the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights. Israel captured the territory in the 1967 Mideast war and the international community, except for the United States, views it as occupied.

SYRIANS CELEBRATE BASHAR ASSAD'S EXIT

AP ■ DAMASCUS

Crowds gathered in Syria's Damascus on Sunday to celebrate the fall of Bashar Assad's government with chants, prayers and the occasional gunfire after opposition fighters entered the capital following a stunning advance.

Rami Abdurrahman of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Syrian opposition war monitor, said Assad took a flight from Damascus and left early Sunday. There was no immediate official statement from the Syrian government and Assad's whereabouts remain unknown.

It was the first time opposition forces had reached Damascus since 2018 when Syrian troops recaptured areas on the out-

Syria except for one that links Beirut with Damascus. Jordan closed a border crossing with Syria, too.

Yemen's leader welcomes the fall of Syria's government: The head of Yemen's internationally recognised government welcomed the fall of the government of President Bashar Assad of Syria.

"It's a historic moment," Rashad al-Alimi, who chairs the ruling presidential council, wrote on X platform of Assad's downfall. "It's time for the Iranian regime to stop meddling in Yemen, respect its sovereignty and identity."

Al-Alimi, who is backed by Saudi Arabia, was referring to Iran's support of Houthi rebels who are at war with Yemen's internationally recognised government for a decade.

couches against the backdrop of mosaiced walls, while others walked out with chairs and other items under their arms. On the massive parking lot off front, cars drove in circles honking ecstatically. In central Damascus' Umayyad Square, drivers passing by also honked jubilantly, while young men piled onto a tank abandoned in the square.

Syrians cross over from Lebanon, facing an uncertain future but hopeful for change: At Lebanon's Masnaa crossing into Syria, the mood was festive Sunday with some local Lebanese residents handing out congratulatory sweets to Syrians lined up to return to their country.

Sami Abdel-Latif, a refugee from Hama who was heading to Syria to join his wife and four

lowing the downfall of Syria's Bashar Assad.

Many welcomed Assad's ouster after decades of repression under his rule and that of his father Hafez Assad. Others, however, expressed concerns about the future of Syria, mostly given the extremist past of rebel commanders, especially Abu Mohammed al-Golani who leads Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, labelled a terrorist by the United States.

EU top diplomat welcomes Bashar Assad's ouster: The European Union's top diplomat welcomed the fall of Bashar Assad and said that the collapse of his rule underlines how weak his supporters in Moscow and Tehran have become.

"The end of Assad's dictatorship is a positive and long-awaited development," EU for-



A giant picture of Syrian President Bashar Assad lies on the ground as a Syrian opposition fighter stands nearby, inside the Presidential Palace in Damascus, Syria on Sunday. AP/PTI



Syrians celebrate the arrival of opposition fighters in Damascus on Sunday. AP/PTI

skirts of the capital following a yearslong siege.

The night before, opposition forces had taken the central city of Homs, Syria's third largest, as government forces abandoned it. The rapidly developing events have shaken the region. Lebanon said it was closing all its land border crossings with

Families wander through the presidential palace in Damascus, taking pictures: Families wandered through the high-ceilinged halls of the presidential palace in Damascus on Sunday, along with some armed men. Some paused to take family portraits or selfies on the few remaining

children, said while the future in Syria is still uncertain, "anything is better than Bashar." He said he expected some chaos initially but that eventually the situation would settle down.

Egyptians express mixed feelings over collapse of Assad's government: Egyptians expressed mixed feelings fol-

lowing the fall of Assad's government, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Sunday that "what matters now is that law and order are quickly restored in

Syria." "The Syrian people have experienced appalling suffering," the chancellor said in an emailed statement. "The end of Assad's rule over Syria is therefore good news."

Airstrikes reported in the area of the Mezzeh military airport: An Associated Press journalist in Damascus reported airstrikes in the area of the Mezzeh military airport, southwest of the capital Sunday. The airport has previously been targeted in Israeli airstrikes, but it was not immediately clear who launched Sunday's strike.

Opposition forces announce curfew in Damascus: The command of the Syrian armed opposition says it will impose Sunday a curfew in Damascus, starting at 4 pm local time till 5 am on Monday.

The Military Operations Administration, which posted the decision on Telegram, did not give a reason for the curfew.

France welcomes the fall of Bashar Assad: The French

Foreign Affairs ministry said France "welcomes" the fall of Bashar Assad's government "after more than 13 years of violent repression against its own people."

The ministry said in a statement: "The Syrian people have suffered too much. Bashar Assad has bled dry country, emptied of a large part of its people who, if not forced into exile, have been massacred, tortured and bombarded with chemical weapons by the regime and its allies."

UN envoy for Syria expresses hope but warns of immense challenges: The UN envoy for Syria says the ouster of President Bashar Assad has created an opportunity to address the country's deep problems and create a brighter future after years of conflict. But he says "immense" challenges remain.

Geir Pederson told reporters that the changes in Syria now raise hope for millions of refugees, internally displaced, political prisoners and families

whose loved ones have disappeared.

Turkish foreign minister calls on world to help stabilise Syria: Hakan Fidan said Sunday that "Syria has reached a stage where the Syrian people will shape the future of their own country," calling on the international community to support Syrians. Fidan is attending the Qatari diplomatic forum that started late Saturday and is hosting eight countries with an interest in Syria, including the US and Iran.

Assad's whereabouts are unknown: Syrian Prime Minister Mohammed Ghazi Jalali said in a video statement that the government was ready to "extend its hand" to the opposition and turn its functions over to a transitional government. A video shared on Syrian opposition media showed a group of armed men escorting him out of his office and to the Four Seasons hotel on Sunday. Rami Abdurrahman of the Syrian

Observatory for Human Rights told The Associated Press that Assad took a flight Sunday from Damascus.

A senior diplomat from the United Arab Emirates, which had sought to rehabilitate Assad's image and has welcomed high-profile exiles in recent years, declined to comment on his whereabouts when asked by reporters at a conference in Bahrain.

Anwar Gargash said Assad's destination at this point is a "footnote in history," comparing it to the long exile of German Kaiser Wilhelm II after World War I.

Assad has been accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the war, including a 2013 chemical weapons attack on the outskirts of the capital.

There was no immediate comment from Iran, which had been Assad's staunchest supporter. The Iranian Embassy in Damascus was ransacked after apparently having been abandoned.

China asks rebel forces to ensure safety of Chinese nationals

PTI ■ BEIJING

A concerned China on Sunday asked the rebel forces, which took control of the Syrian capital, overthrowing President Bashar al-Assad, to ensure the safety of Chinese nationals and its institutions in the country.

Reacting to the rebel takeover of Syria, China, which had backed the Assad regime, said it was closely following the situation in the Arab country and hoped that stability would return as soon as possible.

A Foreign Ministry statement here said the Chinese Embassy is open in Damascus and extending all possible assistance

to its nationals.

"We urge relevant parties in Syria to ensure the safety and security of the Chinese institutions and personnel in Syria," it said.

The Chinese government has been actively helping Chinese nationals who wish to leave the country to do so in a safe and orderly way, staying in contact with those still in Syria and offering them advice on how to stay safe, it said.

"The Chinese Embassy is still up and running and carrying out its duty in Syria. We will continue to make every possible assistance to Chinese nationals in need," it said. Earlier, as the rebel forces

advanced towards Damascus, China voiced deep concern over the situation in Syria and said it would support the country in its efforts to safeguard national security and stability.

State-run Xinhua reported from Damascus on Sunday that opposition forces in Syria seized control of the capital "in a stunning turn of events following a rapid offensive that saw major Syrian cities 'falling like dominos within days'."

After taking over, opposition fighters appeared on state television channels to announce what they described as the fall of Damascus and the end of President Assad's rule, the report said.

al-Golani: Leader of insurgency that toppled Assad?

AP ■ BEIRUT

Abu Mohammed al-Golani, the militant leader whose stunning insurgency toppled Syria's President Bashar Assad, has spent years working to remake his public image, renouncing longtime ties to al-Qaida and depicting himself as a champion of pluralism and tolerance. In recent days, the insurgency even dropped his nom de guerre and began referring to him by his real name, Ahmad al-Sharaa. The extent of that transformation from jihadi extremist to would-be state builder is now put to the test. Insurgents control capital Damascus, Assad has fled into hiding, and for the first time after 50 years of his family's iron hand, it is an open question how Syria will be governed.

Syria is home to multiple ethnic and religious communities, often pitted against each other by Assad's state and years of war. Many of them fear the possibility Sunni Islamist extremists will take over. The country is also fragmented among disparate armed factions, and foreign powers from Russia and Iran to the United States, Turkey and Israel all have their hands in the mix.

The 42-year-old al-Golani — labeled a terrorist by the United States — has not appeared publicly since Damascus fell early Sunday. But he and his insurgent force, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS — many of whose fighters are jihadis — stand to be a major player. For years, al-Golani worked to consolidate power, while bottled up in the province of Idlib in Syria's northwest corner as Assad's Iranian- and



Russian-backed rule over much of the country appeared solid.

He maneuvered among extremist organisations while eliminating competitors and former allies. He sought to polish the image of his de-facto "salvation government" that has been running Idlib to win over international governments and reassure Syria's religious and ethnic minorities. And he built ties with various tribes and other groups. Along the way, al-Golani shed his garb as a hard-line Islamist guerrilla and put on suits for press interviews, talking of building state institutions and decentralizing power to reflect Syria's diversity.

"Syria deserves a governing system that is institutional, no one where a single ruler makes arbitrary decisions," he said in an interview with CNN last week, offering the possibility HTS would eventually be dissolved after Assad falls. "Don't judge by words, but by actions," he said.

Al-Golani's beginnings in Iraq: Al-Golani's ties to al-Qaida stretch back to 2003, when he joined extremists battling US troops in Iraq. The Syrian native was detained by the US military but remained in Iraq. During that time, al-Qaida usurped like-minded groups and formed the extremist

Islamic State of Iraq, led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

In 2011, a popular uprising against Syria's Assad triggered a brutal government crackdown and led to all-out war. Al-Golani's prominence grew when al-Baghdadi sent him to Syria to establish a branch of al-Qaida called the Nusra Front. The United States labeled the new group as a terrorist organisation. That designation still remains in place and the US government has put a \$10 million bounty on him.

The Nusra Front and the Syrian conflict: As Syria's civil war intensified in 2013, so did al-Golani's ambitions. He defied al-Baghdadi's calls to dissolve the Nusra Front and merge it with al-Qaida's operation in Iraq, to form the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS. Al-Golani nonetheless pledged his allegiance to al-Qaida, which later disassociated itself from ISIS. The Nusra Front battled ISIS and eliminated much of its competition among the Syrian armed opposition to Assad. In his first interview in 2014, al-Golani kept his face covered, telling a reporter for Qatari network Al-Jazeera that he rejected political talks in Geneva to end the conflict. He said his goal was to see Syria ruled under Islamic law and made clear that there was no room for the country's Alawite, Shiite, Druze and Christian minorities.

Consolidating power and rebranding: In 2016, al-Golani revealed his face to the public for the first time in a video message that announced his group was renaming itself Jabhat Fateh al-Sham — the Syria Conquest Front — and cutting its ties to al-

Qaida. "This new organisation has no affiliation to any external entity," he said in the video, filmed wearing military garb and a turban.

The move paved the way for al-Golani to assert full control over fracturing militant groups. A year later, his alliance rebranded again as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham — meaning Organisation for Liberating Syria — as the groups merged, consolidating al-Golani's power in northwest Syria's Idlib province.

HTS later clashed with independent Islamist militants who opposed the merger, further emboldening al-Golani and his group as the leading power in northwestern Syria, able to rule with an iron fist. With his power consolidated, al-Golani set in motion a transformation that few could have imagined. Replacing his military garb with shirt and trousers, he began calling for religious tolerance and pluralism.

He appealed to the Druze community in Idlib, which the Nusra Front had previously targeted, and visited the families of Kurds who were killed by Turkish-backed militias.

In 2021, al-Golani had his first interview with an American journalist on PBS. Wearing a blazer, with his short hair gelled back, the now more soft-spoken HTS leader said that his group posed no threat to the West and that sanctions imposed against it were unjust.

"Yes, we have criticised Western policies," he said. "But to wage a war against the United States or Europe from Syria, that's not true. We didn't say we wanted to fight."



Syrian opposition fighters remove a government Syrian flag from an official building in Salamiyah, east of Hama, Syria AP/PTI

Israeli forces have seized buffer zone in Golan Heights

AP ■ DAMASCUS

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israeli forces have seized a buffer zone in the Golan Heights established by a 1974 ceasefire agreement with Syria.

He spoke on Sunday after a lightning rebel advance ended Syrian President Bashar Assad's rule.

Netanyahu said the decades-old agreement had collapsed and that Syrian troops had abandoned their positions, necessitating the Israeli takeover.

Israel captured the Golan Heights in the 1967 Mideast war and annexed it. The international community, except for the United States, views it as occupied Syrian territory.

Iran says Syrians should decide country's future

Damascus: Iran, which had strongly backed President Bashar Assad's deposed government, says Syrians should decide their country's future without "without destructive, coercive, foreign intervention."

The statement from the Foreign Ministry on Sunday was the country's first official reaction to the overthrow of Assad's government by rebel forces, who reached capital Damascus over the weekend.

Iran has been a staunch supporter of Assad throughout the nearly 14-year civil war.

Instructions to transfer power peacefully

Moscow: Russia's Foreign Ministry claimed Sunday that Bashar Assad had left Syria after negotiations with rebel groups, and gave "instructions" to "transfer power peacefully". In a post on the Telegram messaging app on Sunday, the ministry said Moscow had not directly participated in these talks. It also said it has been following the "dramatic events" in Syria "with extreme concern". It also said Russian troops stationed in Syria have been put on high alert and that as of early after-

noon Sunday, there was "no serious threat" to the security of Russia's military bases there. Russia has waged a military campaign in Syria since September 2015, teaming up with Assad's government to fight armed opposition groups and reclaim control over most of the country. While Russia now concentrates the bulk of its military resources in Ukraine, it has maintained a military foothold in Syria and keeps troops at its bases there.



FILE: Syrian President Bashar Assad (right) speaks with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi (left). AP/PTI

FDI inflows in India cross \$1 Trillion

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into India have crossed the USD one trillion milestone in the April 2000-September 2024 period, firmly establishing the country's reputation as a safe and key investment destination globally. According to data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the cumulative amount of FDI, including equity, reinvested earnings and other capital, stood at USD 1,033.40 billion during the said period. About 25 per cent of the FDI came through the Mauritius route. It was followed by Singapore (24 per cent), the US (10 per cent), the Netherlands (7 per cent), Japan (6 per cent), the UK (5 per cent), UAE (3 per cent) and Cayman Islands, Germany and Cyprus accounted for 2 per cent each. India received USD 177.18 billion from Mauritius, USD 167.47 billion from Singapore and USD 67.8 billion from the US during the period under review, as per the data. The key sectors attracting the maximum of these inflows include the services segment, computer software and hardware, telecommunications, trading,



construction development, automobile, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals. According to the Commerce and Industry Ministry, since 2014, India has attracted a cumulative FDI inflow of USD 667.4 billion (2014-24), registering an increase of 119 per cent over the preceding decade (2004-14). "This investment inflow spans 31 states and 57 sectors, driving growth across diverse industries. Most sectors, except strategically important sectors, are open for 100 per cent FDI under the automatic route. FDI equity inflows into the

manufacturing sector over the past decade (2014-24) reached USD 165.1 billion, marking a 69 per cent increase over the previous decade (2004-14), which saw inflows of USD 97.7 billion, an official has said. To ensure that India remains an attractive and investor-friendly destination, the government reviews FDI policy on an ongoing basis and makes changes from time to time after having extensive consultations with stakeholders. The overseas inflows into India are likely to gather momentum in 2025, as

healthy macroeconomic numbers, better industrial output and attractive PLI schemes will attract more overseas players amid geopolitical headwinds, experts said. They added that despite the global challenges, India is still the preferred investment destination. Avimukt Dar, Founding Partner, INDUSLAW, said the inflows are likely to continue in a robust form. There is strong anticipation that private equity financing in the tech sector, which had slowed down in the past, will pick up again since various funds

have enjoyed good exits in the public markets and are ready to deploy again. "The government can continue with structural reforms, particularly in the space of M&A, by nudging SEBI to make the public takeover regime more friendly for foreign players," Dar said. Rumki Majumdar, an economist at consultancy Deloitte India, said FDI inflows are likely to remain modest amidst expected policy changes in the US and the impact of policy stimulus on China's economy. Geopolitical situations may alter supply chains, and trade regulations would dampen investors' sentiments, keeping capital flows volatile, she said, adding that the government will have to prioritise infrastructure capex with timely project execution, boost workforce skilling via PPPs and incentives, invest in digital ecosystems for productivity gains, and foster R&D for digital solutions that help inclusion and formalisation of the economy. Commenting on the data, Manav Nagaraj, Partner, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co, said FDI in India is likely to continue to rise in all areas - early stage investments, growth capital and strategic investments.

"India as an investment destination has historically been and continues to be attractive for foreign investors across various countries, whether from the US, UK, continental Europe or Asian countries," he added. FDI is allowed through the automatic route in most of the sectors, while in areas like telecom, media, pharmaceuticals and insurance, government approval is required for foreign investors. Under the government approval route, a foreign investor has to get a prior nod from the ministry or department concerned, whereas, under the automatic route, an overseas investor is only required to inform the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) after the investment is made. At present, FDI is prohibited in some sectors. They are lottery, gambling and betting, chit funds, Nidhi company, real estate business, and manufacturing of cigars, cheroots, cigarillos and cigarettes using tobacco. FDI is important for India as it will require huge investments in the coming years for the infrastructure sector to boost growth. Healthy foreign inflows also help in maintaining the balance of payments and the value of the rupee.



FPIs return to Indian equities with ₹24,454 Crore inflow in December first week

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

After heavy selling in the past two months, foreign investors have staged a strong comeback to Indian equities with a net investment of Rs 24,454 crore in the first week of December amid stabilising global conditions and expectations of potential US Federal Reserve rate cuts. This revival follows significant outflows in the preceding months, with foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pulling out a net Rs 21,612 crore in November and a massive Rs 94,017 crore in October - the worst monthly outflow on record. Interestingly, September had marked a nine-month high for FPI inflows, with a net investment of Rs 57,724 crore, highlighting the volatility in foreign investment trends. With the latest inflow, FPI investments have reached Rs 9,435 crore in 2024 so far, data with the depositories showed. Looking ahead, the flow of foreign investments into Indian equity markets will hinge on several key factors. These include the policies implemented under Donald Trump's presidency, the prevailing inflation and interest rate environment, and the evolving geopolitical landscape, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director, Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said. Additionally, the third-quarter earnings performance of Indian companies and the country's progress on the economic growth front will play a crucial role in shaping investor sentiment and influencing foreign inflows.

he added. According to the data with the depositories, FPIs have made a net investment of Rs 24,454 crore this month (till December 6). Trivish D, COO, Tradejini, a stock trading platform, attributed the latest inflow to improving global conditions and the possibility of US Fed rate cuts. Also, the recent correction in the market could have prompted FPIs to build some exposure, Srivastava said. Additionally, uncertainty over Chinese equities on the back of proposed tariffs by US President-elect Donald Trump on China and other several nations could have prompted FPIs to look back at Indian equities, which offer much clearer long-term growth prospects, despite relatively high valuations, he added. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said the shift in FPI strategy is evident in stock price movements, especially in large-cap banking stocks, where FPIs have been selling. This segment still has upside potential as it remains fairly valued and continues to grow at a steady pace, with more domestic institutional and retail investments expected to flow in, he added. Additionally, the IT sector is poised to perform well and attract increased FII interest. On the other hand, FPIs pulled out Rs 142 crore in the debt general limit and invested Rs 355 crore in the debt Voluntary Retention Route (VRR) during the period under review. So far this year, FPIs invested Rs 1.07 lakh crore in the debt market.

Markets to track inflation data, global trends, FII trading this week: Analysts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' sentiments will be guided by a host of domestic and global macroeconomic data announcements this week, along with the trading activity of foreign investors and trends in world stocks, analysts said. Besides, the rupee-dollar trend and movement of global oil benchmark Brent crude will also be crucial in dictating terms in the market, experts added. "The domestic stock market is likely to be shaped by a mix of global cues, domestic economic indicators, and the flow of investments from foreign and domestic institutional investors. Key factors like the rupee's exchange rate and crude oil prices will play a critical role in determining market trends. "Globally, geopolitical tensions, particularly the ongoing Russia-Ukraine



conflict, continue to pose challenges. However, recent declines in the dollar index and US bond yields have created a more favourable environment for emerging markets like India," Praveesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika Investmart Ltd, said. On the economic front, significant macroeconomic releases, including retail inflation and industrial production data from India as well as US core CPI, are expected to influence overall

market sentiment, Gour added. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,906.33 points or 2.38 per cent, and the NSE Nifty climbed 546.7 points or 2.26 per cent. "FIIs turning buyers in early December, in a total reversal of their sustained selling strategy during the last two months, has altered the market sentiments. The change in FII (Foreign Institutional Investors) strategy is getting reflected in stock price

movements, particularly in large-cap banking stocks in which FIIs have been sellers," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said. The release of US CPI inflation data will give some insights into the Fed's December meeting, an expert said. "The markets' attention is expected to turn towards macroeconomic indicators like IIP and CPI inflation. Additionally, the trend of FII inflows, following their recent buying spree, will remain a key focal point for market participants," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said. Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said this week will see significant economic data releases, including GDP numbers from Japan and the UK, along with China's CPI and India's CPI.

Mcap of six of top 10 most valued firms jump ₹2 lakh Crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of six of the top-10 most-valued firms jumped Rs 2,03,116.81 crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services and HDFC Bank emerging the biggest gainers, in-line with an optimistic trend at the Dalal Street. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,906.33 points, or 2.38 per cent, and the NSE Nifty climbed 546.7 points, or 2.26 per cent. While Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Infosys, and State Bank of India were the winners from the pack, Bharti Airtel, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), ITC, and Hindustan Unilever emerged the

laggards. The market valuation of TCS surged Rs 62,574.82 crore to Rs 16,08,782.61 crore. HDFC Bank added Rs 45,338.17 crore taking its market valuation to Rs 14,19,270.28 crore. The valuation of Infosys jumped Rs 26,885.8 crore to Rs 7,98,560.13 crore and that of Reliance Industries soared Rs 26,185.14 crore to Rs 17,75,176.68 crore. State Bank of India's market capitalisation (mcap) climbed Rs 22,311.55 crore to Rs 7,71,087.17 crore and that of ICICI Bank rallied Rs 19,821.33 crore to Rs 9,37,545.57 crore. However, Bharti Airtel's valuation eroded Rs 16,720.1 crore to Rs 9,10,005.80 crore. The mcap of ITC declined Rs 7,256.27 crore to Rs 5,89,572.01 crore.

Cars set to get expensive from January as OEMs announce price hikes



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prices of various car models - ranging from entry-level hatchbacks to high-end luxury offerings - are set to rise as automakers have announced price hikes with effect from January. Carmakers cite an increase in input costs and operational expenses as the main reason to implement price increases from the next month. Industry experts, however, note that the exercise is also undertaken by automakers every year in December to shore up sales volume in the last month of the year, as customers postpone buyouts to later months to get the new year manufactured units. "We have seen a few cycles of price increase in India. It happens at the beginning of the calendar year and financial year, but few OEMs pick the timing based on their planned launches as well," Deloitte India Partner Rajat Mahajan said. While there could be multiple factors for the price increase, the key one is due to a decline in profitability of a few large

auto OEMs in the second quarter, he added. "Due to the festive season, the price revisions were not done. Hence, this is expected at the beginning of Q4. "Rising input costs of few materials, shifting consumer preferences on advanced features but a low willingness to pay, clubbed with the pressure of supporting dealers to offset high inventory carrying costs despite high festive discounts are putting a burden on profitability," Mahajan stated. Ibra Vice President & Sector Head - Corporate Ratings Rohan Kanwar Gupta said automakers generally take a price increase at the start of the calendar year to help offset factors like the increase in operational costs on account of inflationary pressures and commodity prices etc. "The recent price hikes announced by various car makers are for the same reason. It must be noted that there are already healthy discounts on offer across a variety of models in the passenger vehicle industry, with the industry focused on

bringing down inventory levels," he added. The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India plans to hike vehicle prices by up to 4 per cent from January. The company, which sells models ranging from entry-level Alto K10 to multi-utility vehicle Invicto, said it is taking a price hike in light of rising input costs and operational expenses. "While the company continuously strives to optimise costs and minimise the impact on its customers, some portion of the increased cost may need to be passed on to the market," it stated. Rival Hyundai Motor India is also looking to increase the prices of its model range by up to Rs 25,000 from January 1, 2025. The price increase has been necessitated due to an increase in input costs, adverse exchange rate and increase in logistics costs, the maker of Verna and Creta said. Mahindra & Mahindra will hike prices of its SUVs and commercial vehicles by up to 3 per cent from January. The adjustment is in response to the rising costs due to inflation and increased commodity prices, Mahindra & Mahindra said. Similarly, JSW MG Motor India said it will increase prices of its entire model range by up to 3 per cent from next month. The price increase is a result of continuously rising input costs and other external factors, the automaker stated. Honda Cars India is also considering a price increase but is yet to decide on the quantum.



Khorlochhu Hydropower Project in Bhutan to commission in 2029: Tata Power CEO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The construction work of the Rs 6,900 crore Khorlochhu Hydropower Project in Bhutan has started, and the plant is likely to be commissioned by 2029, Tata Power CEO and MD Praveer Sinha has said. The 600 MW project is being developed on the Kholongchhu River in the eastern part of the neighbouring nation. "We are looking at Bhutan. Work has already started for the 600 MW project in Khorlochhu...The tunnel diversion work," Sinha told PTI in reply to a question on plans for hydro projects outside India. The project is expected to be commissioned in September 2029, he said. In August, Tata Power and Bhutan-based Druk Green Power Corporation Ltd (DGPC) partnered to develop the hydropower project at an estimated cost of Rs 6,900 crore. The partnership involves a 40 per cent equity

investment by Tata Power in Khorlochhu Hydro Power Ltd, a public-private partnership company. Later in November, Tata Power announced entering into a strategic partnership with Druk Green Power Corporation Ltd (DGPC) to develop a portfolio of 5,000 MW of clean energy capacity in the Himalayan nation. DGPC, a subsidiary of Druk Holding and Investments Ltd, is the sole generation utility of Bhutan. As part of the partnership, another project of 1,125 MW will be set up in Bhutan, the CEO said. The pre-construction work of Dorjilung HEP (hydroelectric project) will start in January 2025, and the project is expected to be commissioned by mid-2031, Sinha said. When asked if the company is also looking to set up any such projects in Nepal, he said that as of now, there are no such plans. However, if any opportunities come, it can be evaluated, Sinha said.

CII urges govt to stick to fiscal deficit target

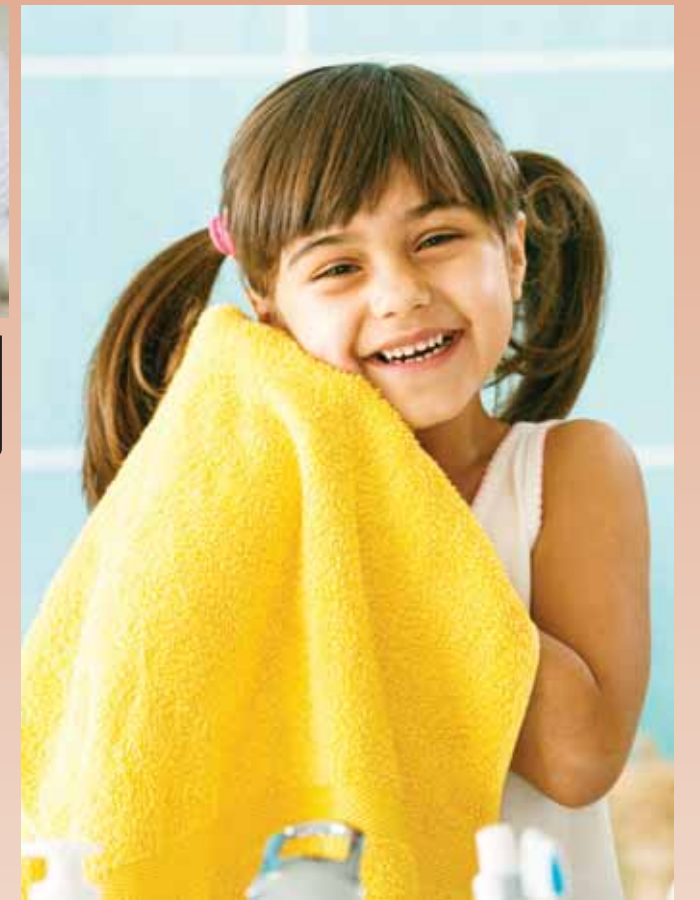
PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Industry body CII has suggested the government to stick to the fiscal deficit target of 4.9 per cent of GDP for 2024-25 and 4.5 per cent for 2025-26, cautioning that "overly aggressive targets" beyond these could adversely affect India's economic growth. "India has been growing rapidly amidst a slowing global economy. Prudent fiscal management for macroeconomic stability has been pivotal to this growth," said Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII, elaborating on suggestions for the forthcoming Union Budget. CII also highlighted the announcement in the Union Budget 2024-25 to keep the fiscal deficit at levels that help reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio. In preparation for this, the forthcoming budget could lay out a glide path to bring the central government's debt to below 50 per cent of GDP in the medium term (by 2030-31), and below 40 per cent of GDP in the long term, CII has suggested. Such an explicit target will have a positive impact on India's sovereign credit rating and further on the interest rates in the economy, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) stated. "To aid longer-term fiscal planning, the government should consider instituting Fiscal Stability Reporting. This could include issuing annual reports on fiscal risks under different stress scenarios and



the outlook for fiscal stability. The exercise will help forecast potential economic headwinds or tailwinds and assess their impact on the fiscal path," it said. The reporting can also include long-term (10-25 years) forecasting of fiscal positions, accounting for the impact of factors like economic growth, technological change, climate change, demographic changes, etc. Several countries have adopted this proactive ranging from 10 years in Brazil to 50 years in the UK. "Looking at the next year's budget, CII has suggested sticking to the fiscal deficit target of 4.9 per cent of GDP for FY25 and a target of 4.5 per cent for FY26. However, CII has also pointed out that overly aggressive targets beyond the ones mentioned could adversely affect growth," the industry body said. CII has suggested three interventions to nudge states towards fiscal prudence. Firstly, the states could be encouraged to institute state-level Fiscal Stability Reporting. Secondly, states have been allowed to borrow directly

from the market, following the recommendations of the 12th Finance Commission. States also provide guarantees in case of borrowing by state PSEs, which have implications for the state's fiscal health. Third, the central government could create an independent and transparent credit rating system for states to incentivise them to maintain fiscal prudence. The rating of states could be used to grant them greater autonomy in deciding how to borrow and spend. Additionally, the central government can use the Credit Rating of states as one of the parameters in deciding transfers to states, including for schemes like Special Assistance as Loan to States for Capital Expenditure. "Such rewards will act as a strong incentive for state governments to prioritise fiscal prudence and fiscal sustainability of state finances," said Banerjee. In addition to the fiscal prudence at the Centre, fiscal prudence at the state level is equally crucial for the overall macroeconomic stability and fiscal sustainability.



REVOLUTIONISING CHILDREN'S SKINCARE

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE PARENTS' TO FIND THE CORRECT SKINCARE FOR THEIR KIDS, WRITES **ABHI SINGHAL**

Children's skincare is a growing concern in today's world. As children are increasingly exposed to environmental factors and social media trends, maintaining their delicate skin's health becomes essential. Unlike adults, children's skin requires gentle, age-appropriate products that cater to their unique needs, promoting healthy hygiene habits from an early age. However, finding solutions that balance safety, effectiveness, and appeal can be challenging. Parents often struggle to navigate between harsh commercial products and ineffective alternatives, making it crucial to develop skincare routines tailored for children. Addressing these concerns, brands are stepping in to make skincare safe, enjoyable, and child-friendly. Today we talk about *Y Play Z*, a self-care and grooming product brand that is tailored for children. On talking to *Vidya Madhavan*, Founder and CEO, of

Y Play Z, she told *The Pioneer* that the inspiration behind *Y Play Z* has stemmed from a glaring gap in personal hygiene awareness for kids in India. Despite the growing exposure to trends through social media, children lack access to products designed specifically for their unique needs. Many existing options are either too harsh, ineffective, or unappealing for this age group, leading to poor hygiene habits. As a parent herself, *Vidya* noticed how challenging it was to find gentle, age-appropriate solutions that children could use independently and confidently. This realisation of her fueled the idea of creating a brand that not only addresses their skincare and hygiene concerns but also makes the process enjoyable. Everyone would get the harsh thought of exposing their child's skin to skincare at such an early age, addressing this the founder explained that the one thing everyone must understand is that



children today are growing up in a digital age where exposure to skincare trends on social media is inevitable. But her brand's goal is to help everyone do

safe and responsible skincare for their little ones. *Vidya Madhavan* also talked about the challenges she faced while designing

products specifically for children and teenagers. On the same, she said that designing skincare products for the same presented unique challenges, particularly in balancing safety, efficacy, and appeal. Children's skin is delicate, requiring formulations free from harsh chemicals while teenagers face hormonal changes that demand targeted solutions, collectively after which she made the products. Also, *Vidya* said that through their pan-India research, *Y Play Z* identified key skin and body concerns among children and teenagers, such as dry skin, irritation, and the need for gentle hygiene solutions. Some *Y Play Z* products that are available are all-over soothing and restorative balm (Soothe Operator) is specially formulated to alleviate dry skin conditions, a common issue across age groups. Similarly, our natural, aluminum-free deo sticks (Slide & Glide) are uniquely curated

for teen skin, offering a safe and effective option for body odour management while being gentle and skin-friendly. The founder recommends *Grime Buster*, a 2-in-1 Face & Body Wash with a nourishing, hydrating formula for the ones with ultra-sensitive, eczema-prone skin. With that the 2-in-1 Face & Body Lotion (Hydration Hub), enriched with Mumuru Butter, Olive Squalane, and Rice Water effectively relieves dryness and soothes sensitive skin with its anti-inflammatory properties. In a world where children's skincare is often overlooked, *Y Play Z* emerges as a brand that understands and prioritises the unique needs of young skin. With a focus on safety, efficacy, and appeal. The brand not only addresses common skincare challenges but also empowers parents to adopt safe and responsible skincare routines for their little ones.



As the winter chill sets in, the allure of warm, nutrient-dense foods becomes undeniable. Among these seasonal delights, walnuts shine as a superfood that not only enhances the taste of comfort foods but also fortifies your body against the rigors of winter. With their rich, buttery flavour and exceptional nutritional profile, walnuts are the perfect addition to your winter wellness routine.

[1] Winter-Proof Your Health with Nutritional Power: Walnuts are more than just a delightful snack; they are a treasure trove of nutrients that can keep your body thriving during the colder months.

□ A Boost of Antioxidants for Immunity: Walnuts contains some of the highest levels of antioxidants among nuts, with most found in their delicate skin. These antioxidants, including polyphenols that help strengthen the immune system and are crucial during winter when colds and flu are common. By neutralising harmful free radicals, walnuts can help your body fend off seasonal illnesses.

□ Heart Health During the Holiday Season - The indulgent foods of winter often lead to concerns about heart health. Walnuts, with their omega-3 fatty acids, monounsaturated fats, and magnesium, can mitigate these effects. They support heart health by reducing blood pressure and cholesterol levels, making them a guilt-free addition to festive treats.

□ Aiding Blood Sugar Stability: Winter celebrations can challenge blood sugar balance, but walnuts come to the rescue. Their low carbohydrate content and high fibre, protein, and healthy fats help regulate blood sugar levels. Regular consumption supports better insulin sensitivity, which is particularly helpful during a season of rich meals and sweet temptations.

□ Nourishing Your Mind in the Darker Months: The shorter days and longer nights of winter can affect cognitive function and



THE WARM COMFORT OF WALNUTS

A NUTRIENT-PACKED SUPERFOOD FOR WINTERS

mood. Walnuts, abundant in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin E, and folate, are known to enhance brain health. Incorporating them into your diet can improve focus, memory, and emotional well-being can be a natural antidote to winter blues.

[2] Walnuts in the Kitchen: Perfect for Winter Recipes: The versatility of walnuts makes them ideal for winter cuisine.

□ As a Snack: Toasted walnuts with a sprinkle of cinnamon and honey are a warming, nutritious treat.

□ In Savoury Dishes: Add a crunch to creamy soups, winter salads, or hearty grain bowls with chopped walnuts.

□ For Baking: They're a star ingredient in festive cakes, spiced loaves, and chewy cookies.

□ As Garnish: Sprinkle over roasted vegetables or hot porridge for a delightful

combination of texture and flavour.

[3] Chilean Walnuts: A Winter Staple for Indian Consumers: Chilean walnuts have carved a niche in the Indian market by offering year-round access to premium-quality nuts. During India's off-season for walnuts, Chile steps in with its counter-seasonal production, ensuring a steady supply. Known for their light colour, consistent freshness, and superior flavour, Chilean walnuts align perfectly with the culinary traditions and health aspirations of Indian consumers.

[4] Chile's Natural Advantage: A Perfect Growing Environment: Chile's unique geography provides an ideal environment for cultivating world-class walnuts. Natural barriers such as the Andes Mountains and the Pacific Ocean shield walnut orchards from pests and diseases, resulting in high-quality produce. These nuts are celebrated for their uniform size, high yield, and rich taste, making them a favourite among health-conscious consumers.

[5] Seamless Seasonal Supply: Freshness Guaranteed: Chile's harvest season, from April to June, complements India's September to October walnut season. This ensures that Indian consumers have access to fresh walnuts even in the winter months. The consistent quality and availability of Chilean walnuts have made them a trusted choice for Indian households during the festive and winter seasons.

Walnuts are the ultimate winter superfood, providing essential nutrients to bolster your health during the colder months. From enhancing heart health to supporting cognitive function and boosting immunity, their benefits are as diverse as their culinary applications. So, this winter, make walnuts your go-to ingredient for health and comfort. A handful a day keeps the chill away!

— The article has been authored on behalf of the Chile Walnut team

BALANCING CAREERS & WELL-BEING



Prioritising self-care and stress management enhances productivity and creates a fulfilling work-life balance, says **UPASANA ARORA**

Women juggle demanding careers with personal responsibilities. Whether they're leading teams, managing complex projects, or making critical decisions, the constant drive to excel in their professional lives can result in chronic stress and burnout. However, prioritising self-care and stress management is crucial not only for personal well-being but also for sustaining professional success over the long term. Nurturing one's mental and physical health can improve resilience, increase productivity, and build a greater sense of balance in life.

Mindfulness is one of the most effective tools for managing stress. Mindfulness practices like meditation, deep breathing, and grounding techniques help women stay focused in the moment, reducing anxiety and preventing negative thought spirals that often arise in high-pressure situations.

Mindfulness practices are effective tools for managing stress, especially for women in high-pressure roles. Techniques like meditation, deep breathing, and grounding exercises help individuals stay focused and present, reducing anxiety and breaking negative thought cycles that often arise in stressful situations. 10 to 15 minutes of daily meditation can promote calmness and mental clarity by encouraging a focus on the breath, allowing thoughts to come and go without judgment. Similarly, deep breathing exercises like diaphragmatic breathing help activate the body's relaxation response, lowering heart rate and blood pressure, which can have a profound impact on reducing overall stress levels.

Women should try to maintain effective time management skills in high-pressure roles. By prioritising tasks, delegating responsibilities, and setting clear boundaries, women can manage their workload without sacrificing personal time or well-being. Further, physical activity is another powerful tool for stress management. Regular exercise not only maintains physical health but also releases endorphins, which help boost mood and energy levels. Women should aim to incorporate regular physical activity into their schedules, such as jogging, yoga, or even a brisk walk during lunch breaks, to improve mental clarity and reduce stress. Additionally, taking short movement breaks throughout the day can relieve physical tension and help clear the mind, especially for those who spend long hours at a desk or in meetings. Combining exercise with adequate rest and relaxation can significantly improve both mental and physical well-being. Sometimes, the pressures of high-pressure roles can



become overwhelming. In these instances, seeking professional help is not a sign of weakness but a necessary step toward maintaining mental health. Speaking with a therapist can help women manage stress, develop coping strategies, and gain a new perspective on work-related challenges. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and other therapeutic techniques can be particularly effective for stress management. Professional coaching or attending stress management workshops can provide women with specific tools and techniques for managing high-pressure situations more easily. Self-care and stress management are important components of sustaining long-term success, both professionally and personally, for women in high-pressure roles. By integrating mindfulness practices, managing time effectively, incorporating physical activity, setting boundaries, building a supportive network, and seeking professional help when needed, women can overcome the complexities of their roles without compromising their health. Self-care is not a luxury—it is a necessity.

— The author is the Managing Director, Yashoda Super Speciality Hospital, Kaushambi

Bumrah can't bowl from both ends, others need to take responsibility: Rohit

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Jasprit Bumrah is only human and cannot always shoulder the responsibility of bowling opposition out all by himself, skipper Rohit Sharma said on Sunday, urging others to share the load with the premier fast bowler. India lost to Australia by 10 wickets in the second Test and during the home team's first innings, only Bumrah stood out with a four-wicket haul. "We are not just playing with one bowler. There are other bowlers also who will have to take responsibility and get the job done for the team, be it (Mohammed) Siraj, Harshit Rana, Nitish Reddy, Akash Deep or Prasad (Krishna)," skipper Rohit had a loud and clear message for his bowling unit. The captain understands that there is a bit of inexperience in the line-up and they will grow in confidence with time. "These bowlers have just arrived in Test cricket, it's important to give them confidence. Whenever they play a match, it's important to give them confidence. We keep planning and discussing. But you

can't expect Bumrah to bowl from both the ends and from morning to evening," Rohit said. "It's very important to manage (all) bowlers. We discuss all this with each other. We talk to the bowler and then we make the decisions." Rohit said that he takes workload management of bowlers very seriously. "I speak with him (Bumrah) whenever he finishes a spell. I enquire about how his body is feeling, is he (feeling) fresh or not? It's a five-match series, we want Bumrah to play all the matches and remain fresh," Rohit knows what his lethal weapon means in the larger context of the series. Backing for young Harshit Rana Young Harshit Rana was clobbered for 86 in just 16 overs but the skipper was against making a two-Test youngster the fall guy for a comprehensive defeat in Adelaide. "Rana didn't do anything wrong in the first Test. He did very well. He gave the team crucial breakthroughs when they were needed. I believe that if someone hasn't done anything wrong, he cannot be left out without a reason



because then what confidence does the team get? "It happens, sometimes the team doesn't get what it wants. He came up against a good batsman who put pressure on him. But he has a heart and a passion so we should back such (qualities in a player)," Rohit said. "The player might think that you give me one match but leave me out in the next. This is not good

for any player or any team, that's what I think. We should assess what the situation is and how helpful the conditions are," he elaborated. While he doesn't want to judge Rana on the basis of one game but if change is warranted it would be done for benefit of the team. "But judging someone after one match is not the right thing. We always keep (all) options open for any player to play since we have to win a Test match. If we must make such changes to win a Test, we will do that." Rohit doesn't want to read too much into Siraj-Head incident. The Indian skipper feels that one doesn't need to read too much into the verbal altercation between Travis Head and pacer Siraj after the latter gave the left-hander angry send-off after a brilliant century. While Head insisted that he acknowledged Siraj, saying "well bowled" after his dismissal, the Indian pacer countered by alleging that the Aussie batter was lying. "There is a thin line between getting aggressive and over-aggressive. It is my job as captain

to see that no one crosses the line. But a few words can be exchanged. Siraj knows what he needs to do for the team and he will do everything required," Rohit defended his teammate. Probed further by the Australian media, Rohit said: "When India and Australia play, these things happen. My job is not to look at one incident but at bigger picture." We didn't bat well enough, skipper admits. Not even being able to score 200 across both innings is certainly disappointing, and the skipper made no bones about it. "When you come to Australia, I feel the best chance of winning a Test match is by putting runs on the board. We knew that there would be challenges with that ball. "But in the past, we've done that many times where the conditions have been a little challenging, and we've batted really well to put runs on the board, and then try and put pressure on the opposition," Rohit said. "Like I said, that is the disappointing part, that we didn't bat well enough. We probably were 30-40 runs short with the bat in the first innings."



We left Perth in Perth and shut outside noise: Starc after Adelaide success

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Mitchell Starc, one of the architects of Australia's comeback win in Adelaide, said the hosts had left the Perth debacle behind by shutting the "outside noise" following their heavy defeat in the series-opener. A 295-run embarrassing defeat despite bowling India out for just 150 in the first innings invited criticism for the hosts from all quarters. Living up to his reputation with the pink ball, left-arm quick Starc handed Australia a dream start by dismissing Perth centurion Yashvi Jaiswal in the very first ball of the second Test en route to finishing with an impressive match haul of 8/108. "There was a lot of outside noise after the game but we left Perth in Perth. Cannot really put my finger on it," Starc said after the end of the match. About his approach with the pink ball, he said: "Nothing changes in my approach. Probably slightly fuller lengths. It (pink ball) is more like the white ball than the red ball. "We were really positive with bat and ball and got the rewards. It's nice when the ball hits the stumps." He further credited his skipper Pat Cummins for helping in his growth and highlighted improvements in his bowling,

including mastering deliveries that move away and those that swing back. He also talked about enhancement in his accuracy with the wobble seam technique. "I have been learning a lot from Pat Cummins over the last seven years or so. So I have added to my bow the one that goes away and still able to bring one back. "I always had that air speed and swing but I have also been someone who leaked a bit. Developing the wobble seam helped me improve my accuracy over the years. To be able to have the longevity in putting that hard yards in that people don't always see," he added. Cummins also hailed Starc for his impact. "He's amazing. He's been doing it for over a decade. I feel very lucky and privileged to have him in the team." "That's a great week for us. We were far from the team we wanted to be in Perth, but this was much better. It's always good to contribute with a few wickets myself." Cummins also lauded Travis Head's game-changing innings of 140 from 141 balls that gave Australia a decisive first-innings lead. "Head loves batting here. The game could have gone either way when he walked in, but he shifted the momentum in our favor."

World Chess Championship: Gukesh takes lead in 11th game as Ding Liren blunders

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Grandmaster D Gukesh made a huge strike forward towards becoming the youngest-ever world champion defeating Ding Liren of China in the 11th game of the World Chess Championship here on Sunday. With just three games to come, Gukesh took the lead for the first time in the match, with scoreline now reading 6-5 in favour of the 18-year-old Indian. History is now on Gukesh's side as no challenger in modern chess has ever scored a win after being tied 5-5 after the 10th game. For Liren, the only comforting thing could be the fact that he had won the 12th game in the last World Championship match against Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia. The Indian started off with the Knight move on his first turn and was surprised as Liren went for a reverse Benoni opening. The move was shocking as it



looked like it was an over-the-board decision rather than a planned one. After only five moves, Gukesh had a lead of over an hour on the clock, which is never too easy for the opponent to recover in crunch games. However, if everyone thought that the opening had gone seriously wrong for Liren, the Chinese had different ideas as he capitalised on an erroneous plan by Gukesh in the early

middle game. Things turned upside down when Liren went for completing his development and missed out on a simple manoeuvre that would have probably given the defending champion slightly better prospects. Gukesh himself spent a lot of time in the middle game but the nature of the position remained double-edged. As the clouds began to clear, Gukesh came up with a spectacular pawn sacrifice on

the queen side to give moving space for his rooks. Just as he doubled them on the file to exert pressure, Liren simply crashed and made the blunder in a blink. The Chinese player was left dejected as he immediately realised the mistake. Gukesh played the winning move in quick time. In the remaining three games, Liren will have two games as white and this would be the best chance for him if he has to stage a comeback. Gukesh is just three draws away from winning his maiden world championship title. The moves: D Gukesh - Ding Liren 1.Nf3 d5 2.C4 d4 3.B4 c5 4.E3 Nf6 5.A3 Bg4 6.Exd4 cxd4 7.H3 Bxf3 8.Qxf3 Qc7 9.D3 a5 10.B5 Nbd7 11.G3 Nc5 12.Bg2 Nf7 13.0-0 Ne5 14.Qf4 Rd8 15.Rd1 g6 16.A4 h5 17.B6 Qd6 18.Ba3 Bh6 19.Bxc5 Qxc5 20.Qe4 Nc6 21.Na3 Rd7 22.Nc2 Qxb6 23.Rab1 Qc7 24.Rb5 0-0 25.Na1 Rb8 26.Nb3 e6 27.Nc5 Re7 28.Rdb1 Qc8 29.Qxc6 black resigned.



Don't waste time in hotel, no room for optional practice sessions, says Gavaskar

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Batting legend Sunil Gavaskar has urged India not to "waste" time in their hotel rooms after the early finish of the pink ball Test, but utilise the two extra days by sweating it out in training so they can bounce back in the third game. India were thoroughly exposed in their 10-wicket loss in the second Test of the Border Gavaskar Trophy with the match ending in less than two-and-a-half days as Australia bounced back to level the five-game series 1-1. "Look at the remainder of the series as a three-match series. Forget it was a five-Test series. What I would like this Indian team to do is use the next couple of days for practice," Gavaskar told the official broadcaster. "It's very important. You can't be sitting in your hotel room or wherever you're going because you have come here to play cricket. "You don't have to practice the whole day. You can practice a session in the morning or afternoon, whichever time you choose, but do not waste these days. You would have been here playing a Test match if the Test match were to go on for five days," he added. The third Test begins on December 14 and Gavaskar said the Indians should utilise the intervening time to get

their rhythm back. "You have to get yourself that much more time to get into the rhythm because you have not got the runs. Your bowlers haven't got the rhythm. There are others too who need time in the middle," he added. Indian pacers were found wanting on a fast wicket that offered lateral movement, giving away plenty of runs in the first innings and allowing Australia, especially centurion Travis Head, to take a huge 157-run lead. Gavaskar added that he did not believe in the concept of optional practice sessions, stating that the decision should solely rest with the captain and coach, not the players. "This optional practice session is something that I don't believe. The decision for optional training should rest with the captain and the coach. The coach should say, 'Hey, you hit 150, you don't need to come to practice. Hey, you bowled 40 overs in the match, you don't need to come to practice.' "They should not be given the option. If you give the players that option, a lot of them, especially the certainties, will say, 'No, I am going to stay in my room.' And that's not what Indian cricket needs." He reminded the players that it was a privilege to play for India and they should do it wholeheartedly.

India defeat Singapore, eye best-ever finish Asian Women's Handball Championship

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India registered a commanding 35-22 win over Singapore at the Asian Women's Handball Championship here on Sunday, opening up the opportunity for their best-ever finish in the tournament. India, who have never finished above sixth, will face China on Tuesday in the 5th/6th place playoff match. Charged by the backing of their fans, India opened the placement match against Singapore with high energy, leading 9-6 midway through the first half, courtesy Menika and Bhawana Sharma's consistent scoring. At the other end, captain Diksha Kumari and goalkeeper Nina Shil, who made key saves including a penalty, kept Singapore



at bay. The hosts maintained their overall dominance on the other side of the interval to secure a comprehensive win. "Our team has shown incredible spirit and resilience throughout this tournament, whether against Hong

Kong, Singapore, Iran, and even Japan. Every match has been a learning experience for us and we have pushed ourselves to compete with some of the best teams in Asia at our home," Diksha said. "Scoring consistently and staying strong defensively has been our focus, and we're proud of how we've come together as a unit. This journey inspires us to aim higher." Earlier in the day, China ensured their place opposite India in the 5th/6th place playoff by beating Hong Kong with a resounding 38-14 scoreline. In the top bracket, South Korea booked their berth in the final by outclassing Iran 33-20. South Korea will play the winner of the match between Japan and Kazakhstan for the title on Tuesday.

England beats New Zealand by 323 runs in 2nd test to take 2-0 lead in three-match series

AP ■ WELLINGTON

England conquered the Wellington gale Sunday to seal a 323 run win over New Zealand on the third day of the second test and to take a 2-0 lead in the three-match series. Joe Root completed his 36th century as England batted for less than 30 minutes in the morning before declaring with a lead of 582 runs and New Zealand crumbled under the weight of the deficit and was all out for 259 in its second innings. England's win followed its comprehensive eight wicket win in the first test at Christchurch, capping its first series victory in New Zealand since 2008 ahead of

the final test in Hamilton which begins on Saturday. The third day differed from the first two in Wellington which were warm and sunny. It was cool, gloomy and windy but otherwise England's thorough command of the series continued. Root resumed on 73 with England already 533 ahead. He sped to his century from 127 balls with 10 boundaries and then was out for 106 at which point Ben Stokes declared England's second innings at 427-6. Stokes left himself high and dry at 49 not out, just short of his 49th half century. Chris Woakes had the job at first of bowling into the Wellington wind and he was

rewarded with the wickets of Devon Conway (0) and Kane Williamson (4) as New Zealand slumped to 59-4 by lunch. Brydon Carse removed captain Tom Latham (24) and Rachin Ravindra (6) before the break to lift his tally of wickets for the series to 16 at an average of 12.8. New Zealand showed more resistance in the afternoon and evening as wicketkeeper Tom Blundell, under pressure to hold his place, compiled his fifth test century from 96 balls. Blundell put on 94-run partnership with Nathan Smith which saw England having to chase leather for the first extended period in the series. He was out for 115



which included 13 fours and five sixes and Smith followed for a career-bet 42 just before the end. Carse and Harry Brook have been in the engine room for England throughout the series. Brook's 171 at Hagley Oval in the first test and Carse's 10-106 — his 4-64 in

the first innings and 6-42 in the second — propelled England's to its emphatic win. Brook then scored 123 from only 115 balls in the first innings at Wellington to lead England's recovery from 43-4 to 280. "It's amazing to be stood here winning the series and particularly after being 40-4 on day one and I think looking back to the start of this game I think that's a huge reason why we have (won)," Stokes said. "Harry Brook and Ollie Pope were just amazing on day one to play like that. That wicket in cricket terms was what we call a snake pit. Especially on day one it was doing plenty and providing a lot of

assistance for the bowlers." "To have the bravery and the backing of your own ability and to also have the skill to go out and play like that was just absolutely phenomenal." Carse took 4-46 and Gus Atkinson took 4-31 including a hat-trick as New Zealand was bowled out for 125, giving England a lead of 155. Atkinson took the last three New Zealand wickets to become the first England bowler since Moeen Ali in 2017 to compete a test hat-trick. England's second innings of 427-6 in the second innings included contributions of 96 by Jacob Bethell — out just short of a maiden century — 92 by Ben Duckett, 55 by Brook and then Root's 106.

Brook has scored 349 runs in the series so far at an average of 116 and now has three centuries and three half centuries in four tests against New Zealand. After a stunning 3-0 series win away in India last month, New Zealand has slumped in this series, particularly with the bat and changes may be considered before the final test. "We're obviously hurting," Latham said. "It's disappointing to lose in that fashion. "I think after the first innings, putting them under pressure, Harry Brook played a fantastic innings there. Obviously when you only score 125 in the first innings you're on the back foot.

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