RASHID ENDS TIED 25TH **CANADIAN LEE WINS** TITLE IN JAKARTA



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Terror targets Srinagar civilians



Security personnel cordon off the area after a grenade attack by terrorists, in Srinagar, Sunday

MOHIT KANDHARI JAMMU

head of the first session of A the newly elected legislative Assembly on November 4, one of the highly guarded and busiest streets of Srinagar city near the Tourist Reception Centre (TRC) was hit by a grenade attack in which at least 11 civilians were injured on

The grenade attack took place less than 24 hours after one foreign terrorist identified as Lashkar-e-Taiba

Commander Usman Lashkari was eliminated by the joint team of security forces during an eight-hour gunfight in the Khanyar area of Srinagar city on

After these two back-to-back

alerted in Srinagar as the newly elected legislators will be attending the five-day-long maiden assembly session of the legislative Assembly.
A large number of shoppers were

present for the weekly 'Sunday market' at the time of the grenade attack. All the injured were rushed to the nearby Śri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital (SMHS) hospital for

According to initial reports, the attackers missed the target as they intended to hit the security personnel deployed in the area to inflict maximum injuries. According to hospital records civilians between the age group of 16 to 55 years were left injured in the attack. The explosion caused panic in the area and sent shoppers scrambling for cover. The security strikes, the security grid has been personnel also laid a tight cordon

and carried out random searches in the area to nab the attackers.

The Lieutenant Governor, Manoi Sinha spoke to DGP, Nalin Prabhat and senior officials of the security agencies on the grenade attack in Srinagar. He directed the security officials for an effective and forceful response to punish the terrorists and their associates. The Lieutenant Governor reaffirmed government's resolve not to allow terrorist elements to succeed in their nefarious designs.

Terrorists targeting our citizens will have to pay a very heavy price for their actions. You have full freedom to crush terror outfits and leave no stone unturned to complete this mission," the Lieutenant Governor told the senior security officials.

The Lieutenant Governor wished speedy recovery of those injured

directed that district and administration should extend all possible assistance.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also reacted to the second incident of terrorist violence in Srinagar. He said the security apparatus must do everything possible to end this

spurt of attacks.
"The last few days have been dominated by headlines of attacks & encounters in parts of the valley. Today's news of a grenade attack on innocent shoppers at the 'Sunday market' in Srinagar is deeply disturbing. There can be no justification for targeting innocent civilians. The security apparatus must do everything possible to end this spurt of attacks at the earliest so that people can go about their lives without any fear" Omar posted on X (earlier Twitter).



for sending death

threats to UP CM PNS MUMBAI

The Mumbai police have arrested a 24-year-old woman for allegedly giving a death threat to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, an official said on Sunday. The woman, identified as Fatima Khan, who has done BSc in Information Technology, Information Technology, resided in Ulhasnagar area of neighbouring Thane district of Maharashtra with her family members. Her father is into timber business, the official said. The woman is well qualified but is mentally unstable, the police

The Mumbai traffic police's WhatsApp number on Saturday received a message from an unknown number threatening that if Adityanath did not resign from the CM's post within 10 days, then he would be killed like NCP leader Baba Siddique, the official said. During the probe, the police found Khan had sent the message, he said.

The Mumbai Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) in a combined operation with the Ulhasnagar police traced the woman and apprehended her, the official said. Further investigation was on into the matter, the official added. The police are on alert as Adityanath is likely to come to Maharashtra for campaigning for the November 20 state assembly polls, as per officials. Former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique was shot dead in Mumbai's Bandra area on October 12.



Congratulations, Delhi AQI is 500

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

A thick layer of smog engulfed the National Capital on Sunday, and the Air Quality Index (AQI) continued to deteriorate, crossing the 500 mark, two days after Diwali. The government may soon consider banning BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel fourwheelers, dust suppression measures, and forbid all nonessential construction activities. In areas like Shahdara and Anand Vihar, the AQI remained above 500 after 11.30 am on Sunday. The air pollution level lies in the alarming 'hazardous' category (above AQI 400) in most parts of the capital, with PM2.5 levels over 59.6 times more threatening than the World Health Organisation's (WHO) prescribed limit.

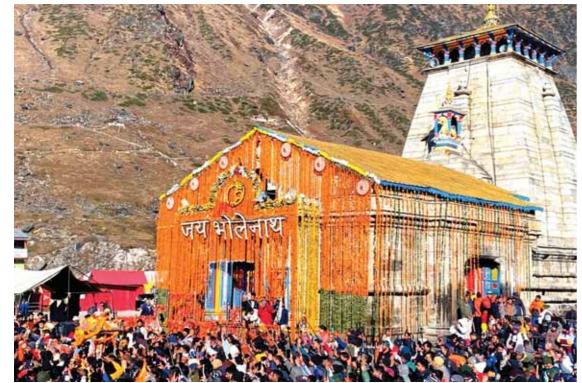
Ān average AQI stood in the "very poor "category at 382 in Delhi. A day before, it had been slightly worse at 339 but did not slip into the 'severe' level as forecast because of favourable atmospheric conditions such as warmer temperatures and strong winds. According to weather analysts, it is likely that wind speed will drop further and, therefore, worsen the pollutants status. Local factors, including construction activities, heavy

volumes of vehicles, and farm fires, aggravated the situation

At present, the major contributors to PM2.5 pollution are local and regional sources. The transport sector is the most significant contributor at 12.24 per cent, as per the Decision Support System data by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM). While the residential sector contribution is 3.21 per cent, industries contributed (3.53 per cent), construction 1.67 per cent, energy sector 1.63 per cent, waste burning 1.49 per cent, and road dust 1.19 per cent.

The IITM, in its six-day outlook Sunday, said that the air quality is likely to be in the 'very poor' or 'severe' category. It also stated, "Meteorological conditions are likely to be extremely unfavourable for dispersion of pollutants." The 24-hour average Particulate Matter (PM)2.5 and PM10 were 180.4 ug/m3 and 303.9 ug/m3, respectively, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) as of 1 pm on Sunday. The 24hour averages of PM2.5 and PM10 pollutants are three times higher than the national prescribed standards of 60 and ug/m3 100 respectively.

KEDARNATH DHAM DOORS CLOSED FOR WINTER



Devotees participate in the closure ceremony of the Kedarnath Dham door, in Rudraprayag district, Sunday. The shrine remains closed for nearly six months each year during the winter season

Historical humiliation for Team India



The fortress had been breached already. On Sunday, it just crumbled to the ground with the Indian dressing room sitting stonefaced, trying to process a fall so spectacular that nobody saw it coming.

For the first time in their Test history, which goes back to 1933, the 'Tigers' at home had been whitewashed in a series of three or more games.

The humiliation inflicted by New Zealand, a side that landed here after being thrashed 0-2 by a Sri Lankan team that is in transition. The Black Caps were also without their the chase was a mere 147

biggest batting star -- Kane thanks Williamson, injury. Yet, it was a fullstrength India that looked confused and short of preparation throughout a rubber they were expected to win and win comfortably at that.

The 25-run loss in the third Test in front of a buzzing Wankhede crowd, that just a few months ago feted a T20 world champion Indian side, was a stunning reminder of how fortunes swing wildly in Having already conceded the series 0-2, the Indians should have been able to pull one back. It wasn't an unfair expectation,

runs but it was on a track that looked like a minefield to the entire home line-up except Rishabh Pant (64). On Sunday, all Pant needed or wanted was for someone to hang in there. Nobody seemed capable. From Virat Kohli to skipper Rohit Sharma to Shubman Gill to Sarfaraz Khan, none looked to have learnt their lessons.

Five key wickets were lost for a mere 16 runs at the start of an embarrassing collapse with the Jogeshwari's very own Ajaz Patel making them dance to his tunes for a haul of 11 wickets in the match. The left-arm spinner now a staggering wickets Wankhede in just two matches, making him the most successful overseas bowler at the venue after the

great Ian Botham (22). Something like this will be a very low point of my career and I take full responsibility for it. With the bat, I was not good enough," a desolate Rohit admitted in the postmatch press conference struggling to explain clearly just what has gone so wrong with this team.



Retired DSP others attacked by neighbours

SAUMYA SHUKLA NEW DELHI

Two unruly sisters attacked former Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) of Uttar Pradesh, and his family members with a knife, injured a Delhi Police officer on duty, and dragged a two-wheeler for over half a kilometre with their car, while trying to flee arrest in East Delhi's Vasundhara Enclave

All hell broke loose in the wee hours of Saturday when the 74-year-old former DSP Ashok Sharma, who is also a cancer patient, asked the two women, namely 21-year-old Charvi Jain and 23-year-old Bhavya Jain to stop honking repeatedly in the society. They both have been arrested.



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MP first State to initiate fulfill Modi's resolve

STAFF REPORTER BHOPAL

Mohan Yadav has said that we are going to start four new missions from January 1 to fulfill Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's resolve to change the lives of various sections of society who have been neglected for decades. Our government is going to work committedly in mission mode in January 2025 for the economic empowerment of youth, women, farmers, and the poor.

Chief Minister Yadav said that Prime Minister Shri Modi has resolved to instill self-confidence in the youth, women, farmers,



and betterment. Madhya Pradesh government is taking concrete initiatives for the economic development of these sections. Four missions - Yuva Shakti Mission, Garib Kalyan Mission, Farmer Welfare Mission, and Women Empowerment and the poor along with Mission – are being start-their economic upliftment ed in the state from ture a more profitable busi-

January 1, 2025. Madhya Pradesh is the first state to take the initiative to fulfill the resolve of Prime Minister Shri Modi. Chief Minister Yadav said

that under the Yuva Shakti

Mission, youth will be empowered through employment, skill devel-opment, and leadership opportunities. In the Garib Kalyan Mission, poor and deprived sections will be given social security, employment, and basic facilities. Women will be educated, made self-reliant and empowered economically and socially in the Women Empowerment Mission. The Farmers Welfare Mission aims to increase the income of

Chief Minister Yadav said that to realize the concept of a public welfare state in the state, a public welfare budget of more than Rs 3.5 lakh crore was passed in the current financial year. A decision has been taken to double the budget in the coming years. The government is trying to ensure public participation to

strengthen the state. Chief Minister Yadav said that the faith of the people of the state gives us strength in making Madhya Pradesh the leading state in the country. When our 8.5 crore people of the state work together towards development, new dimensions of development will be created in the

CM celebrates Diwali

Bhopal: Chief Minister Mohan Yadav met with members of the journalism community at his residence and extended Diwali greetings. He invited editors, correspondents, reporters, and representatives from print, electronic, and digital media for a Deepawali Milan gathering, where warm wishes were exchanged.

Yadav inaugurated the event by lighting a ceremonial lamp. The occasion featured melodious performances by the police band, and a video showcasing the state's achievements in development, public welfare schemes, tourism, and industrial progress was also

At the traditionally decorated venue, an exhibition of welfare schemes and programmes run by the state government was also organised.



A blanket of dust covers the old city locality at Hamidia road in Bhopal on Sunday.

The AQI in Bhopal continues to hover in 150-180 range

50-year-old man, wife nabbed for molesting a minor girl

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

ukhi Sewania police have Sarrested a 50-year-old man and his wife for molesting a 16-year-old minor, accused man was harassing the student for about a year due to which she stopped going to school.

The family members lodged a complaint about the incident

on Saturday night. The police have registered a case against the accused under sections of molestation and POCSO Act and took the accused husband and wife into custody on Sunday evening. According to the police, the 16year-old girl lives in the area. She complained that the 50-

been harassing her for about a The accused had also molested the minor in December

year-old middle-aged man liv-

ing in the neighborhood has

2023 and July 2024, but out of fear, she did not tell anyone about it. The silence of the teenager encouraged accused and he started harassing her while she used to go school. Scared of the accused she stopped going to school. On Saturday, the victim informed her sister about the accused.

The family took her to the police station and lodged a complaint. The victim told the police that the accused's wife was also aware of his misdeeds. She used to call her 'sautan'. The accused uncle followed her outside the school one day and threatened to pick her up by putting handcuffs on both her hands. Since then I was very scared. That is why I stopped going to school. Didi came home during Diwali hol-

idays, she saw me silent and

asked the reason for not going

to school. Then I told her the

The victim told the police in her statement that it was her birthday on 10 December 2023. She had gone to the house of uncle and aunty living in Sukhi Sewania area to give chocolates. There uncle and aunty were found sitting in the hall, aunty went to the kitchen to work, then uncle did obscene acts with me for the first time.

Meanwhile aunty also came there. But she did not say anything to uncle and started smil-

ing at me. On July 16, 2024, the accused husband and wife came to the victim's house. Then her mother and sister were in another room. Both came to the victim's room, aunty held her hands. Uncle did dirty things with her. After this, both left the house, later the uncle started harassing her by coming out-

CM for stringent action

Bhopal: Vowing stringent action against those responsible for elephant deaths at Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR), Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Sunday said that the guilty will not be spared.

Talking to mediapersons at his residence, Yadav highlighted his sensitivity towards animals and informed the press that he was personally monitoring investigations into the unfortunate inci-

Yaday stated that he is in dialogue with wildlife experts to identify safety measures for elephants in the state.

Notably, 10 wild elephants from a herd of 13 died over the last week at Madhya Pradesh's Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve. A five-member team, constituted by the Chief Minister, is looking into the causes behind the deaths of

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

arking a considerable improvement over Lthe corresponding period last year, the Air Quality Index (AQI) in the state capital hovered in the 150-180 range, even as the burning of crop residues continued to scald the air in

The cumulative AQI in the city, based on real-time data from three automated monitoring stations, was recorded at 175 at 8 PM on Sunday.

neighbouring rural areas on

Meanwhile, the AQI soared to dangerous levels in neighbouring Bhojpur, with the index placing itself close to

The highest AQI was recorded at Paryavaran Parisar in the city, where the index reading stood at 199. Idgah recorded

The cumulative AQI in the city, based on real-time data from three automated monitoring stations, was recorded at 175 at 8 PM on Sunday

the cleanest air in the city with 155, while the commercial hub of TT Nagar stood at 172, mainly due to the high weekend traffic in the area.

PM2.5 and PM10—primary pollutants in the city remained below average, leading to speculation over the effects of crop burning from rural areas on the city AQI. The health advisory on the Sameer App of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) warned of breathing difficulties for those with underlying lung issues.

Pollution control officials have repeatedly identified dust particles suspended in the atmosphere by vehicular traffic as the biggest detriment to air quality. The particles fall into the PM2.5 and PM10 cate-

gories. PM2.5 consists of microscopic deadly pollutants, 40 times smaller than the breadth of human hair, with the ability to enter the human body and damage lungs.

Though four times bigger, the larger particles in PM10 are no less dangerous.Amid preparations for the onset of winter-a high pollution season due to its dense air-Divisional Commissioner Sanjay Singh convened various arms of the civic administration and sought concerted

He instructed officers from the traffic police and the state pollution control board to implement stringent measures to control vehicular pollution by enhancing Pollution Under Control (PUC) checks for all vehicles plying on the city roads.

He also called for checks to contain the burning of garbage and solid fuels, as well as stringent action against those insisting on the use of kerosene for commercial and vehicular purposes.

A 100-day campaign run by the Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) to control pollution has also brought the practice of garbage burning under control, but the effort requires stricter vigilance after a garbage burning incident led to the gutting of two vehicles at Talaiyya.

Road in Bhopal has sur-

faced. Three youths on a

moving Activa pulled the

traffic police barricade

placed on the road and left

it ahead. The barricade had

wheels. Due to this, it kept moving on the road, the vehicles coming behind somehow escaped from col-

In the video, the youth are seen going from Moti Masjid towards Kamala Park. The youth leave the

barricade on the main road

in front of Ret Ghat Chowki.

Police are trying to find out

when the video is from.

Nearby CCTV footage is

liding with it.

Mayor Malti Rai with sanitation workers of BMC during Bhai Dooj festival celebration at her residence in Bhopal on Sunday.

Hooligans throw powerful firecrackers on parked vehicles

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Powerful firecrackers thrown on vehicles from a moving SURV from a moving SUV to damage parked vehicles were made by unidentified miscreants in SUV near Budhwara area, the miscreants continued to hooliganism on road for 2 km in Bhopal.

In Bhopal, some miscreants threw powerful firecrackers on vehicles parked on the roadside from a moving Fortuner car. CCTV footage of Diwali night (31 October) has surfaced. Fortuner passed through Hathikhana Miscreants were seen throw-

The miscreants riding in Fortuner set fire to the powerful firecrackers and threw it under the Accent car. From here onwards, they blasted the powerful firecrackers on the roof and under a Thar jeep.

The car has been damaged, the diesel line of Thar was

Some miscreants threw twine bombs on vehicles parked on the roadside from a moving Fortuner car. CCTV footage of Diwali night (31 October) has surfaced. Fortuner passed through Hathikhana -**Budhwara** area

also damaged. According to the local people, the Fortuner riders have passed by blasting powerful firecrackerson more than 6 vehicles in an area of ??about 2 km till Kamla Park.

under Thar in CCTV.

Mohammad Ayub, a resident of Hathikhana, said that he saw the car damaged on the morning of November 1. Checked the footage of the CCTV camera installed outside the house. Youths riding in a Fortuner car were seen

throwing a cotton bomb

under the car. The Thar jeep belongs to Junaid Maqsood of Hathikhana. He told that after blasting under the Accent car, the miscreants also blasted under the Thar to this, the diesel line of the Thar has been damaged. TI CB Rathore of Talaiya police station said that no complaint has been received in this regard at the police station. Action will be taken

on receipt of complaint.

Earlier in a seprate incident

a video of ruckus on VIP

the youth. Additional Commissioner of Police Traffic (North Zone) Basant Kumar Kaul said

We are looking at the footage of CCTV cameras. Action will be taken as soon as the number of the vehi-

cle is known.

Jt Secretary of Union Ministry visits consumers getting smart meters

official

from the

Kumar Srivastava, Director

sumption and seamlessly for-

The meters are equipped with

advanced technology that auto-

matically detects power down-

times, allows users to check real-

time consumption, and over-

comes human error issues in

ward it to the company.

electricity readings.

hand

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A mid ongoing installations of smart meters in the state capital, the Joint Secretary of the Union Ministry of Power, Shashank Mishra, visited the homes of electricity consumers in the Kolar Road localities of Danish Kunj and Virasha Heights on Sunday.

The top central government official gathered first hand information from the consumers and reviewed the new metering initiative that promises to bring a considerable curb in electricity pricing by arresting power thefts. During the review, Mishra observed the smart metering work being carried out by the Madhya Kshetra Vidyut Vitran Company Limited (MKVVCL) Central Region Power Distribution Company, as well as the consumer surveys and installation processes conducted prior to smart metering.

Electricity consumers were also provided with information on the benefits of smart metering, and a smart metering app was installed on their mobile devices to provide real-time information on their household electricity consumption.

This event was attended by all officials, including Sudhir

Financial literacy programme by RBI **STAFF REPORTER** ■ BHOPAL The top central government

financial literacy programme organised by the Reserve Bank of India was held at PG College, Alirajpur. Hemant Kumar Soni, General gathered first Manager of the Reserve Bank of information India, Bhopal, provided detailed insights into the important aspects of financial literacy. consumers As part of Vigilance Awareness Week, the General Manager also

(Commerce) of the Central pants at the event. Collector Abhay Arvind Bedekar, Region Power Distribution Company, and BBS Parihar, General Manager of Bhopal MKVVCL stated that approximately 35,000 smart meters have been installed in its area of operations, and work for the new metering initiative is expanding to achieve targets. The central region power distributor has also listed several consumer benefits for the installation of the new meters, which automatically record power con-

Superintendent of Police Rajesh Vyas, CEO of the District Panchayat Prakhar Singh, Sub-Regional Head of Bank of Baroda, Ratlam, Ashutosh Kumar, District Lead Officer of the Reserve Bank, Vinay More, and Ram Nagar, DDM of NABARD, along with District Lead Manager Rajesh Haswani and RSETI Director Shyam Patidar, attended the programme. Participants from various groups, including farmers, women from self-help groups, school and col-lege students, and branch man-

agers from all banks, gained valu-

able insights into financial litera-

cy. The programme concluded

a question-and-answer session

Vinay More.

administered an oath to partici-

70-year-old man set ablaze by his son over land dispute at Berasia

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

🕝 n a heinuous crime a 70year-old man was set ablaze by his son over a land dispute in Berasia on Saturday night.

A farmer living in Berasia area was burnt alive by his own son. The farmer's condition remains very critical due to 70 percent burns. Police have registered a case of attempted murder in this matter. The accused son is being searched. He is

Initial investigation by the police has revealed that there was an old dispute between the father and son over a piece of land. At the time of the incident, the burnt old

Karan Kushwaha lives in Arjunkhedi. He does farming on his own land in the village. His elder son Bhavani wanted to get a piece of land of one acre in his name. While the father was not ready, there has been a dispute between the two for a with a prize distribution following long time regarding this mat-

absconding after the inciman was drunk.

On Saturday night, the father conducted by Ram Nagar and reached home in a drunken

The farmer living in Berasia area was burnt alive by his own son. The farmer's condition remains verv critical due to 70 percent **burns**

state. There the son had a dispute with him. The son locked the father in a room and set the room on fire. Due to which the old man got badly burnt. Seeing the fire, the neighbors and relatives extinguished the fire and took the old man to the hospital. Where his treatment is going on in a private hospital. Burned alive, critical: The incident was carried out due to land dispute in Berasia.

Initial investigation by the police has revealed that there was an old dispute between the father and son over a piece of land. At the time of the incident, the burnt old man was drunk.



Former BJP MP Alok Sanjar along with the members of Kayasth community during Yama Dwitiya festival at Chitragupta

Miffed 'uncle' thrashes shopkeeper at Jatkhedi

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

ut shopping for sarees with his significant other, a man took violent exception at being repeatedly addressed as 'uncle' by a cocky shopkeeper in the Jatkhedi area of the state cap-

The incident took place on Saturday afternoon when the shopkeeper insisted on addressing the man as 'uncle' in presence of his wife despite the man warning him to avoid using the term. Though the man left with his wife and kid, he returned to the shop with several of his friends, pulled the shopkeeper into the street and thrashed him

black-and-blue in full public view. A woman trying to break up

the brawl was also hit by a belt in the fracas which was caught by security cameras in the area.

Misrod police have lodged a case against two, including the 'uncle', Rohit Richharia, and his accomplice Makhan Singh. The shopkeeper has been identified as Vishal Shastri of Shastri Fashion Store. No arrests have been made so far.

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CM declares formation of State-level Elephant Task Force

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

nitiating steps for the purpose of elephant safety in the state, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Sunday announed plans for formation of a state-level elephant task force to protect the species.

In abid to foster human-elephant coexistence, 'Haathi Mitra' will be appointed, solar fencing in areas with high traffic of wild elephants will also be installed to protect crops. Additionally, efforts will be made to connect farmers with agroforestry and other alternative activi-

Describing the recent deaths of elephants in Umaria district as 'distressing', Yadav said that a high-level team has studied the situation in the area, but further develop-

ments and action hinges on the result of a detailed postmortem report.He underlined that no pesticides were found in the preliminary postmortem examination while adding that the the recent influx of large elephant herds Is a recent phenomenon in Umaria and Sidhi districts. Hence, field directors and other officials need to remain vigilant.

to remain viguant.
Regarding accountability,
Yadav stated that the field
director's absence during such a significant incident, and the lack of necessary precautions regarding the previous elephant herds, led to the suspension of Field Director Gaurav Chaudhary and incharge ACF Fateh Singh

Yadav mentioned that the Bandhavgarh area and other forest regions have favourable pensated.

conditions for elephants. The effective management of these areas has prevented elephants from returning to Chhattisgarh and other states. With large herds settling in the state, a decision is being made at the government level to establish an elephant task force for sustainable management.

Plans are underway to implement precautions for elephants living alongside other wildlife, incorporating best practices from Karnataka, Kerala, and Assam, where there are significant elephant populations. In response to the recent

fatalities, the compensation for loss of life will be increased from Rs 8 lakh to Rs 25 lakh per person. The families of the two deceased individuals will also be comincluded the Minister of Forests and the Additional Chief Secretary of Forests, who provided insights from Other officials, including the

Chief Secretary, also participated virtually. In the Bagdara beat of the Khtouli range, a rescue operation successfully identified and rescued the elephant involved in the trampling incident on November 2, which resulted in two fatalities. The operation, led by the PCCF Wildlife and APCF Wildlife, involved 40 personnel, including wildlife veterinarians and the rescue team. The ians and the rescue team.It is noteworthy that the two deaths occurred when an elephant trampled individuals in the forest buffer range of Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve and in the Umaria Forest Division.

Ask AAP leaders about failure of their govt: BJP

ken roads, clogged sewers,

drinking water issues, and ask

why pollution in Delhi is so

high. Ask them why Yamuna is

so polluted, why stubble burn-

ing in Punjab cannot be pre-

vented, why Delhi's transport

system has deteriorated so

badly, how the Delhi Jal Board

ended up in a 73,000-crore

deficit, why sewage treatment

plants were not set up, and why

CAG reports are not being pre-

sented in the Assembly," he

The LoP remarked that the

AAP has now become a party of deceit. "Misleading people and

making false promises has

become their habit. The gov-

ernment is also deceiving the

marshals. Ignoring the order

issued by the Lieutenant

Governor on November 1 to



Kejriwal launches 2nd phase

elected.



campaign in support of BJP candidates for state assembly elections in Jharkhand on Sunday.

Bansuri Swaraj visits Satpula DDA Park, restarts Chhath Puja arrangements

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

ew Delhi BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj on Sunday visited Satpula DDA Park near Chirag Delhi village and restarted the Chhath Puja arrangements, which she alleged were being obstructed by Delhi Minister and senior AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj.

"Delhi Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj is a symbol of political hypocrisy, whose political business is of spreading lies and confusion. His entire political strategy is negative, and he repeatedly misuses his power for self-

The BJP MP alleged that as Minister of the Department of Art and Culture, he abuses his position to promote himself by organizing events in his constituency, Greater



Kailash, at public expense and plastering the area with hoardings and posters fea-turing his photo. "Saurabh Bharadwaj engages in shameful politics, from organizing Sundarkand recitations to Ramleela and Chhath Puja," she claimed.

forgotten how in 2022, Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj announced that AAP MLAs would organize monthly Sundarkand recitations in their constituencies, yet these

recitations soon ceased to happen. This year, Saurabh Bharadwaj also created controversy around the Ramleela event held near his village, Chirag Delhi," Swaraj asserted, while questioning Saurabh Bharadwaj on his party's unfulfilled promise to clean the Yamuna and perform the

Swaraj also demanded answers as to why Bharadwaj is preventing Jan Seva Samiti, which has been allocated land in Satpula Park, from ini-tiating Chhath Puja arrangements. Further, she claimed that the violence exhibited by Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj against Jan Seva Samiti mem-Satpula Park in recent days, noting that such behavior is unprecedented, and the people of Delhi, especially those of Chirag Delĥi, will never forgive him.

29-year-old flour mill operator dies mysteriously

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Efforts will be made to pro-

mote agroforestry and other

alternative activities to

encourage farmers to engage

with forest management, rather than relying solely on

traditional farming. Yadav

indicated that radio tracking

will be implemented for soli-

tary elephants to monitor

their movements and prevent

Experts will be invited to sug-

gest other significant measures. The Chief Minister

stressed the need for com-

munity cooperation in areas

where elephants reside and

pledged to raise public aware-

ness through district admin-

In a meeting at his residence,

Yadav received detailed infor-

mation from a high-level

team that had returned from

Umaria regarding the elephant deaths. The team

eader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly

Vijender Gupta on Sunday

appealed to the public to ask

AAP leaders about the failures

of the ruling government over

the past 10 years while demand-

ing a special session of the assembly for answering the

Addressing a press conference,

Gupta appealed to the public to ask AAP leaders why citizens

over 70 years of age in Delhi are

not receiving benefits from the

'Ayushman Bharat' scheme and

raised the question of why 90,000 poor people in Delhi are not being issued ration cards.

"Show them the garbage in their neighborhoods, the bro-

PNS NEW DELHI

questions.

future incidents.

istration.

29-year-old flour mill operator died under Amysterious circumstances in a room of a lounge in Ratibad area; man had gone to attend a bachelor party, he friend in a room at the lounge and later found dead in the morning. The body of a Sumit Kabulashi

was found in a room of PP Lounge located in Ratibad area. After postmortem, the body was handed over to the family on Sunday afternoon. He had partied with his friends in the lounge till late Saturday night. His body was found in a room of the same lounge on Sunday morning. The police have registered a case and started investigation mortem, the body was handed over to the family on Sunday afternoon.

SI Moolchand Meena said that Sumit Kabulashi (29), son of Dhirendra Kabulashi,

lived in Vaishali Nagar. He used to run a flour mill named Sumit Industries in Mandideep. Two of his friends are going to get married in the coming days. Due to this, friends had a bachelor party near PP Lounge Sakshi Dhaba

before marriage.
About 10-12 friends partied till 2:30 in the night. After this, everyone slept in different rooms built there. Sumit slept in the room with a friend named Ankit. Ankit tried to wake Sumit after waking up at

around 7 in the morning. There was no movement in his body. He informed other friends about the matter. Everyone took him to a private hospital. Where the doctors declared him dead after checking. The real cause of death getting the PM report.

Aniket, who stayed in Sumit's had met in Bhopal and organized a bachelor party. They partied till late night, till then own business.

Sumit was absolutely fine. He did not mention any kind of problem. His health also seemed fine. When he woke up in the morning, there was no movement in his body. Even after calling and shaking him a lot, he did not respond. Then the colleagues were informed about this. He was taken to the hospital, where

deploy 10,000 defense volun-

teers on pollution control duty, the government is politicizing

Gupta alleged that Atishi's accu-

sations against the BJP are mere

theatrics, and she does not want

the marshals to be deployed. He

pointed out that in the October

Governor, it was decided to set

up a committee to regularize the

marshals through a formal pro-

"However, she has taken no action on this decision for a

month and has not acted even

after the Lieutenant Governor's

order on October 24. This clear-

ly shows that the Delhi govern-

ment neither wants to deploy nor

regularize these marshals. The

delay tactics are evidence of their

lack of commitment," he claimed.

meeting with the Lieutenant

this issue," he added.

posal.

his death was confirmed. Sumit was married in the month of April this year. He was the only brother among three sisters. He started a business on his own and was getting success in it. After the news of the death of his only son, the father's health also deteriorated. He did not even come to the mortuary to see his son's body.

Sumit's father Dhirendra is from the Department. He retired only room, told that all the friends two years ago. His son Sumit was very promising. After studying MBA, he started his

PNS NEW DELHI Gujarat, or Rajasthanwherever they are in power—about their elec-

of Padyatra in Rajouri Garden

AP Convenor Arvind Kejriwal Arvind the second phase of his padyatra on Sunday in Rajouri Garden and said he needed the support of the people to defeat the BJP and ensure that the "good work" continued in Delhi.

Addressing the crowds, Arvind Kejriwal called on citizens to view the upcoming election as a choice between safeguarding the significant progress Delhi has made in the past decade and reverting to outdated systems of gover-

"This election is not just about re-electing the AAP. It's about saving Delhi," he told the locals, emphasizing that his administration's achievements have set a standard that other states are struggling to match.

"I am sure you have forgotten the days when entire nights would pass without electricity," he said, claiming that the city faced eight to 10 hours of power cut before the AAP govern-ment. "Not a single power cut occurred in Delhi, which now enjoys 24-hour electricity," he claimed. Kejriwal said, "Ask people in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana,

tricity bills. Our opponents don't want to make electricity affordable elsewhere; instead, they want to halt our progress in Delhi." He claimed that Delhi's success story has spread nationwide, with other states observing Delhi's model of efficient governance and citizen-friendly policies. Addressing recent concerns over high water bills in Delhi, the AAP supremo promised immediate relief when AAP is re-

"Incorrect water bills have come in for some, but once we come back to power, I will waive all these bills within a month," he asserted. Kejriwal also detailed the ongoing infrastructure improvements across Delhi, claiming that he had personally ensured all halted projects resumed as soon as he left jail. 'They stopped all ongoing

work behind my back using the LG. But now, wherever roads were broken, repair work has begun. Wherever sewers were overflowing, work is now underway," he said, adding that he is personally monitoring all issues in neighborhoods across the city, aiming to provide clean water and proper sanitation.



Minister meets bereaved families in Umaria district

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

inister of State for Forest Dilip Singh Ahirwar today visited Banka and Deori villages of Chandia tehsil in Umaria district where he met and condoled the families of deceased Ramratan and Khairu Kol who were killed in the elephant attack. In compliance with the instructions of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, Ahirwar handed over the approval orders for ex-gratia of Rs 8 lakh to the family members. Ahirwar assured that in this sad moment, the state government and the forest department stand with the

extend all possible assis-

tance. As per the instructions of Chief Minister Yadav, Minister of State for Forests, Ahirwar, visited Chandia to inspect the incident site. During his visit, he met with the family of the deceased, Khairu Kol, and extended his condolences. He presented approval letters for financial assistance amounting to Rs 8 lakh to Sapna Kol, the daughter of Kĥairu Kol. Aĥirwar assured that, in addition to educational and hostel facilities for Sapna, further support and necessary assistance would also be pro-

affected families and will Minister of State for Forest Shri Ahirwar reached the house of deceased Ramratan Yadav in village Devra and handed over the letter of approval of exgratia amount of Rs 8 lakh to Ramratan's wife Smt. Kallibai Yadav. Ahirwar asked not to worry and assured that the government would extend assistance in every possible way. On this occasion, Municipal Chairman of Chandia Shri Purushottam Divisional Forest Officer Shri Vivek Singh, SDM Bandhavgarh Sushri Rita Dahria, Deputy Forest Divisional Officer Kuldeep Tripathi and public representatives were present.

Minister of State for Forest Dilip Ahirwar met families of deceased Ramratan Yadav and Khairu Kol and handed over ex-gratia

Two cops injured, dragged 20 metres in hit and run accident in Kishangarh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

▼wo Delhi traffic police personnel were injured in a hit and run accident after they tried to stop a car for jumping the signal while on duty in southwest Delhi's Kishangarh area.

In a video surfacing on the internet, two police officers can be seen on the bonnet of a white coloured car (DL 9 CBC 7528) while they tried to stop it from evading prosecution. However, the car speeds up in second, dragging them for about 20 minutes and injuring the officers on

According to the police on Sunday, the incident occurred on Saturday evening at

around 7.45 pm at the Ber Sarai traffic light near Vedant Deshika Marg. "On Saturday, a PCR call was received at the Kishan Garh police station stating that an unknown vehicle had hit traffic officers on duty and fled the scene," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Surendra

a team was immediately sent and Head Constable Sailesh

Chowdhary. He said that in the meantime, to the spot and it found that the two injured personnel had been rushed to Safdarjung Hospital by a PCR van. The team reached the hospital and found Assistant Sub-inspector (ASI) Pramod Chouhan were in a conscious and stable condition.



According to their statements, they were conducting routine challans for traffic violations when at around 7.45 pm, a vehicle jumped the red light. Thereafter statement of ASI Pramod was recorded wherein he has alleged that on Saturday he along with HC Sailesh (Vasant Vihar Traffic Circle) was doing Mobile prosecution challan on Vedant Deshika Marg (Ber Sarai market Road) and around 07.45 PM a Car No DL-9C-BC-7528 jumped the red light and came towards them," the DCP stated. At first, when HC Sailesh sig-

naled the car to stop, the driver did initially compile. However, when the officer asked the driver to come out of the car, the driver tried to run away from the spot and dragged them for about 20 meters on the car and later hit them and ran away from the spot.

"Both of them received minor injuries in the accident. A crime and forensic team inspected the area where the incident occurred," another police officer said, adding that as per the statement given by the officers, the alleged car driver had created obstruction in the official duty and had further tried to kill the above police officials by dragging them on his car

for over 20 meters. "A case under attempt to murder and obstruction in discharge of official duty and charges for endangering the

istered," said the officer. An FIR was registered on Sunday under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) sections 109(1) (attempt to murder), 221 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 132 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty), 121(1)

(voluntarily causing hurt or grievous hurt to deter public

servant from his duty), and 3(5)

(joint liability).

lives of public has been reg-

Search of the offending vehicle and accused is being made. The offending vehicle is found registered on the name of Jai Bhagwan, resident of Vasant Kunj. Further investigation is going on," the offi-

ED targets cyber fraud in 'digital arrest' scams

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

Days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi urges people to guard against the menace of 'digital' arrests, probe agencies said they are taking action against this category of cyber crime with the ED filing a charge sheet in one such case and the I4C issuing a fresh advisory. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) issued a statement on Saturday, saying it filed a prosecution complaint before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Bengaluru last month against eight accused who allegedly "lured" common people through "fake" IPO allotments and stock market investments through fraud-

"Probe found that a huge network of cyber scams in India, involving fake stock market investments and arrest executed primarily through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Telegram. "Known as 'pig-butchering' scams, stock market investment scams entice victims with promises of high returns, using fake websites and misleading WhatsApp groups that appear connected to reputable financial firms," the Enforcement Directorate

Scammers, it said, establish credibility through fake ads and fabricated success stories, ultimately leading victims to invest significant amounts. The ED said some victims of this scam were "manipulated" under the guise of a fake arrest (digital arrest) by the

Doctors call for

sleep screening

to reduce truck

Agroup of doctors has advo-cated the need for "sleep

screening" of truck drivers to

bring down road accidents by

The risk of road accidents is

rising due to lack of sleep among truck drivers, Dr Rajesh Swarnkar, president of

South East Asian Academy of

Sleep Medicine, told PTI on

"Keeping this in mind, the

(RTOs) must ask truck

drivers to fill up a form every

two years with their body

mass index (BMI) as well as

details like whether they like

to sleep during the day or

whether they snore at night.

The analysis of their replies

and medical examinations

can tell us if truck drivers

have sleep apnea or any other

related illness," Dr Swarnkar

informed. If truck drivers

sleep for seven to eight hours

The risk of road accidents can be brought down by 43 per cent, he said.

Driver Dharmendra Sharma, who was about to commence

a long journey from

Transport Nagar here, said he manages to get just two to four hours of sleep per day, which turns him lethargic and

also affects his concentration.

Several other drivers said traffic jams, queues at toll

plazas and the pressure of ontime delivery of goods are

"We can't sleep by the road

since we fear someone may

steal diesel, spare parts or

goods," one of them added.

Speaking on the issue, CL

Mukati, chairman of National

RTO and Traffic Committee

of All-India Motor Transport

Congress, an umbrella body

of truckers, said the idea of

sleep screening was a very

good one.
"The transport department

should authorise hospitals to

conduct regular health check-

ups and sleep screening of

If a driver is found to be

suffering from any sleep-related disease as per the test,

then he should be treated free

If the government wants, our

organisation can provide funds for this," Mukati said.

Moreover, the working hours

of drivers should be fixed and

the government should build

rest houses for truck drivers

every 200 kilometres on the

highways, he added.

truck drivers.

of cost.

also causing sleeplessness.

at least 43 per cent.

accidents

PTI ■ INDORE

Sunday.

in a day.



the ultimately making them transfer huge funds to various shell or dummy companies fake

regularisation process."

It said 'digital' arrest scams involve fraudsters posing as law enforcement officials, intimidating victims into transferring their savings by fabricating scenarios that suggest illegal involvement of the victim, the federal agency said. The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) issued a public advisory on Sunday asking people to "Beware of Digital Arrests" reminding that "those making video calls are not police, CBI, Customs officials or judges". They are cyber criminals, the organisation that functions under the Union home ministry said. The advisory asked people to not fall for these "tricks" and report such crimes "immediately" by the national

cybercrime helpline 1930 or

Prime Minister Modi had during his monthly 'Mann ki radio address on October 27 flagged the issue of fraudsters targeting people with 'digital' arrests and urged people to adopt the mantra of stop, think and take action" when faced with such a scam, asserting that these steps will provide digital security to them. The ED said it booked a money laundering case into this crime after studying multiple police FIRs and it arrested eight persons, also named as accused in its charge sheet filed on October 10, named Charan Raj C, Kiran S K, Shahi Kumar M, Sachin M, Tamilarasan, Prakash R, Ajith R and Aravindan and 24 related companies. All the arrested persons are currently lodged in jail under judicial custody. This cyber crime case involves proceeds of crimes to the tune of Rs 159 crore and

are ultimately converted into cryptocurrency and transferred abroad, the ED probe found.

One of the accused, Charan One of the accused, Charan Raj C, played a "key" role in this scheme by recruiting individuals for directorships and managing bank account openings. Shashi Kumar M assisted in "incorporating" several shell companies which became instrumental in collecting and integrating became instrumental in collecting and integrating proceeds of crime into the banking system. Kiran S K, linked to several shell companies as per the ED, had connections with bank accounts of multiple shell ontifice greated by suggresses. entities created by overseas scammers, who submitted documents incorporate these companies. Sachin M, a Director in several firms, "admitted" to

assisting overseas scammers in recruiting dummy directors and facilitating bank accounts, being "well aware" of their illegality, according to the agency. Tamilarasan played a "significant" role in facilitating these activities, collaborating with both Indian and overseas scammers and he "assisted" in opening bank accounts for shell companies. Like Cyberforest Technologies Pvt. Ltd., and "knowingly" continued these operations despite of knowledge of their connection to cybercrime, the agency said. The ED said it has "incriminating" evidence like chequebooks and communication records to say that these individuals participated in a syndicate that laundered proceeds from

cyber frauds across India.

Commission's tenure extended to examine SC status for converts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■

 $M_{
m and\ Empowerment\ has}^{
m inistry\ of\ Social\ Justice}$ extended by a year the tenure of a commission established to examine whether Scheduled Castes (SC) status can be granted to individuals who have converted to religions other than Sikhism and Buddhism. This decision, formalised through a notification dated November one, comes as the Commission, initially set to conclude its work on October 10 sought additional time to finalise its report. The Commission of Inquiry



2022, under six. Commissions of Inquiry Act,

The inquiry also covers related concerns regarding social justice, rights, and the possible extension of reserved status to converts from religions not traditionally

such as Christianity and Headed by former Chief Justice of India K G Balakrishnan,

Commission been engaging with stakeholders, including sociologists, historians. representatives from affected communities, to better understand the nuances of

religious conversion, officials According to the latest notification, the Commission

caste identity in the context of

is now required to submit its report by October 10, 2025.

PM Modi congratulates Duma Boko as Botswana's President



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday congratulated Duma Boko on being elected as the president of Botswana and said he looks forward to working closely with him to further strengthen bilateral ties.

Duma Boko, the presidential



candidate of the Umbrella for



Democratic Change (UDC): was declared Botswana's sixth president last week.

In a social media post, Modi said, "Congratulations @duma_boko on your election as the President of Botswana. Best wishes for a successful tenure."

"Look forward to working closely with you to further strengthen our bilateral ties,"



movement on four names reiterated by Collegium

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

There has been no forward movement on the names reiterated by the Supreme Court Collegium headed by Justice D Y Chandrachud for appointment as high court judges as he demits office as the chief justice of India on November 10.

The collegium had in January 2023 reiterated the names of advocates Saurabh Kirpal for elevation as a judge of the Delhi High Court, R John Satyan as judge of the Madras HC, and Amitesh Banerjee and Sakya Sen as judges of the Calcutta High Court.

The top court collegium had also reiterated the name of Somasekhar Sundaresan, also an advocate, as judge of the

January 2023. In November that year, he was elevated as a judge of the

Bombay HC. People aware of the procedure to appoint high court and Supreme Court

judges said the files relating to Kirpal, Satyan, Banerjee and Sen are still pending with the government. In January 2023, the Supreme Court collegium

had for the second time reiterated the names of Banerjee and Sen for appointment as judges of the Calcutta High Court "expeditiously", saying it was not open for the government to repeatedly send back the

same proposal. Advocate Banerjee is the son of former apex court judge Justice U C Banerjee, who headed a commission which in 2006 ruled out conspiracy angle in the 2002 Sabaramati Express fire tragedy at Godhra that killed 58 'kar

sevaks'. Advocate Sen is the son of Justice Shyamal Sen, who was elevated as a permanent judge of the Calcutta High Court in February 1986 and later became the chief justice

and advocate Somasekhar

Sundaresan as a judge of the Bombay High Court. Justice Sanjiv Khanna will take over as the next CJI on November 11, a day after Justice Chandrachud demits office and will have a tenure of a little over six months. He will retire on May 13, 2025 on attaining the age of 65

Foreign Secretary to brief Parliament on India-Canada relations, China ties

cognisance of the ED charge

the court

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

 $F^{\text{oreign Secretary Vikram}}_{\text{Misri is likely to brief the}}$ Parliamentary panel on exter-nal affairs on Wednesday on the India-Canada ties, which have taken a hit after Canadian officials accused Indian government functionaries of ordering the murder pro-Khalistani terrorist Harjeet Singh Nijjar.

parliamentary panel on the gathering targeting Sikh recent upswing in India's ties separatists inside Canada, a with China following the charge dismissed as "absurd agreement to resume and baseless" by India. along the Line of Actual (LAC)in eastern Ladakh.

India's relationship with Canada has taken a hit after Minister Trudeau linked top Indian officials to the murder of Nijjar, a charge rubbished by

Canada's Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister David Tuesday that Home Minister Shah ordered a



violence, Misri is also likely to brief the intimidation and intelligenceseparatists inside Canada, a

> that the main issue between the two countries is that of Canada giving space to pro-Khalistan elements operating from Canadian soil with

India had withdrawn its High Commissioner to Canada Sanjay Verma after the security officials there named him as a "person of interest" in the investigation in Niijar's Morrison had alleged on murder case. India had also expelled six Canadian diplomats, including acting

High Commissioner Stewart Ross Wheeler on October 14. On October 25, Misri had briefed the Parliamentary panel on the Israel-Palestine conflict and asserted that solution to the issue. India has supported

sheet on October 29, it said.

The ED said fraudsters, in

order to perpetrate this fraud,

obtained hundreds of SIM

cards which were either

linked to the bank accounts of

shell companies or were

utilised to create WhatsApp accounts. "The anonymity

afforded by these untraceable

SIMs allow scammers to

defraud victims with a

reduced risk of immediate

detection. The scammers

created 24 shell companies in

Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and

some other states to facilitate

acquisition

laundering of proceeds from

These shell companies,

registered mainly at the

addresses of coworking

spaces (where no actual

business presence exists),

statements in filings before

Registrar of Companies as

proof of commencement of

business of these companies.

Scammers operated through

bank

cybercrimes," it said.

have used fake

negotiated two-state solution, towards establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable state of Palestine within secure and recognised borders, living side by side in peace with Israel.

The Parliamentary panel on External Affairs, chaired by former union minister Shashi Tharoor, is examining the demand for grants of the External Affairs Ministry.

Someone might see weakness, she'll see strength, that is my sister: RaGa champions sister Priyanka

PTI WAYANAD

ongress leader Rahul Gandhi, who held a joint meeting with his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra here as part of the campaign for the upcoming Lok Sabha bypoll, on Sunday refrained from criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi and others but spoke more about the family and his sister, who is the party candidate in Wayanad.

He said Priyanka, during her speech, had already spoken about PM Modi. "And, about PM Modi. anyway, she has already mentioned Mr. Modi and we all bored of him. Then why Gandhi said during the

Priyanka, who spoke earlier, accused PM Modi of favoring big business interests over the well-being of the people.

"In this meeting, I have a choice in front of me to either give a political message or a speech I would give to my family members. I would rather speak to you like I speak to my family. I would like to give a speech more about the candidate herself,"



Rahul Gandhi said addressing the rally.

My sister has always been a campaigner. She never stood for election.

about something character, he said. Sharing their nostalgic memories of childhood when

they competed with each other using the cameras gifted by their father (late Rajiv Gandhi) for capturing the best photograph, he said, "I still don't remember who won the competition.. Ok.. She (Priyanka) is now saying that I won."

He said Priyanka had travelled a long distance from the little girl taking the photographs. She understands that the

beauty is that everyone has millions and millions of unique, everything is unique someone might see weakness, she'll see strength that is my sister," the Leader Opposition said.

Rahul Gandhi also said that Priyanka can do more roles than him. The by-election for Wayanad

LS seat became necessary after Rahul Gandhi, who won the Lok Sabha polls from there and Rae Bareli constituency, decided vacate Wayanad.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE BHUBANESHWAR

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Sunday said his Government is concerned about the Mahanadi water dispute with neighbouring Chhattisgarh. Majhi said he has already held discussions with his Chhattisgarh counterpart Vishnu Deo Sai twice on the Mahanadi water dispute. While replying to a media query in Bolangir, Majhi said the State Government is conscious about the issue and giving it all importance.

"Discussion on the Mahanadi issue is going on and I personally held discussions with the Chhattisgarh chief minister twice during courtesy meetings," said Majhi, who is in charge of the Water Resources Department. The CM further said that the state government is also giving emphasis on expediting the proposed barrages, dam projects on Mahanadi river in Odisha.

Majhi, who was on a two-day visit to Bolangir district for the first time after becoming the Chief Minister of Odisha, alleged that the previous BJD government had neglected the district even though there



dearth of strong political leadership Bolangir.

During the press conference, he said that 83 development projects worth Rs 890 crore have been either inaugurated or foundation stone was laid in Bolangir district on Saturday. The foundation Saturday. The foundation stone of the Upper Lanth irrigation project in Belpara block of the district was laid by the CM on Saturday. The upper Lanth irrigation project is proposed across river Lanth, a tributary of Tel river. The project after completion will provide irrigation to 15,000 acres of land in 25 villages and 38,000 farmers of Belpada will benefit from it, he said.

Among the projects inaugurated by Majhi included a Sub-Divisional Hospital (SDH) and a dialysis centre at Patnagarh and

stone of a bypass road for Patnagarh town. Majhi said Bolangir district will be developed as one of the best districts in the state as the BJP government has been taking several initiatives for the development of the district. Deputy Chief Minister K V Singh Deo who hails from Bolangir district will review the projects every month for its timely completion, he said. Odisha alleges that it does not receive sufficient water from the Mahanadi river during non-monsoon months as Chhattisgarh obstructs the flow of the water by constructing barrages upstream.

He also laid the foundation

The previous Naveen Patnaik had moved the Supreme Court in this matter in 2016. Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal constituted in 2018, following orders of the Supreme Court.

Goa to showcase regenerative and spiritual **PTI** ■ PANAJI will offer a vivid showcase of

tourism at World Travel Mart in London

Goa will participate in the upcoming World Travel Mart in London and highlight regenerative and spiritual tourism in the coastal state and the exposition of the relics of St Francis Xavier, an official said on Sunday. The three-day event from

November 5 to 7 will bring together industry leaders from around the globe, offering Goa a prime opportunity to present its distinctive tourism experiences and innovative sustainable travel initiatives on an international platform, a spokesperson from the tourism department said.

"The Goa tourism pavilion

the state's vibrant festivals, adventure pursuits, heritage traditions, and tranquil beaches that together shape its unique identity as a travel destination," he said.

State Tourism Director Suneel Anchipaka said the highlight of this year's participation is the concept of regenerative tourism, a step beyond sustainability that focuses on actively revitalising and enhancing Goa's natural and cultural treasures.

"The display will feature initiatives like hinterland tourism, preservation of heritage sites, wellness tourism centred around Ayurveda, and

destination Incentives, (Meetings, Conferences, and Exhibitions) and wedding events," he said. These initiatives aim to

benefit local communities and ensure that the environment is preserved for future generations, he said Anchipaka said the pavilion will also present the Ekadasha Teertha Circuit, a spiritual exploration of the 11 historic temples in Goa. 'The exposition of St Francis Xavier will also be one of the

The exposition will be held from November 21 to January 5, 2025, at Old Goa,"

highlights.

of the Allahabad High Court. Justice Sen also served as the Governor of West Bengal from May 1999 to December Besides reiterating the names of Banerjee and Sen, the three-judge Collegium had also reiterated the names of senior advocate Kirpal as a judge of the Delhi High Court, advocate Sathyan as judge of Madras High Court

Odisha CM addresses Mahanadi water dispute, highlights development projects in Bolangir

BJP to implement UCC in Jharkhand, keeping tribals out of its ambit: Home Minister

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday UShah on Sunday announced that the BJP will implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Jharkhand if voted to power in the state, but would keep tribals out of its

Shah, while releasing the saffron party's manifesto, 'Sankalp Patra', for the upcoming assembly elections in Jharkhand, announced that a Displacement Commission would be formed to ensure the rehabilitation of people displaced by industries and mines in the state. Elections to the 81-member assembly in the state will take place in two phases on November 13 and 20, and votes will be counted on November 23.

"Our government will introduce UCC in Jharkhand but tribals will be kept out of its ambit. Hemant Soren and the JMM government are spreading false propaganda that UCC will impact tribal rights, culture and relevant legislation, which is totally baseless as they will be kept out of its ambit," Shah said in Ranchi. He said though UCC



ensure that tribal rights are not

"The BJP, if voted to power in Jharkhand, will deliberate on the Sarna religious code issue, take appropriate decisions," he said.

Shah said the saffron party, if voted to power, will create five lakh employment opportunities, including 2.87 lakh government jobs, in Jharkhand.

The Home Minister said that BJP will bring in a law to take back land from infiltrators in Jharkhand and identify and deport the illegal immigrants. He claimed that 'Mati, Beti, Roti' (land, daughter and food) were under threat from the illegal immigrants and the BJP would provide security to the indigenous people. The local administrations encourage infiltration in West Bengal and

Iharkhand, Shah alleged. 'Crimes against women rose by 29 per cent during the five year tenure of corrupt and insensitive Hemant Soren government, while rape cases

saw an increase of 42 per cent during the period," Shah alleged. He accused the JMM-led government of patronising infiltrators, while claiming that the tribal population was dwindling in the state and demography was changing fast. Shah promised that the BJP will bring in a stringent law to take back land from infiltrators in Jharkhand as well as to drive them out.

He announced 'Operation Suraksha', promising to end human trafficking in Jharkhand by 2027, besides the elimination of Naxalism from the state in the next two years. Shah said voters will have to

government that patronises infiltrators" and the BJP which doesn't allow anyone to cross the border illegally. "Hindus are under attack and appeasement is at its peak. Jharkhand is the most corrupt state in the country,"

he alleged.

There will be CBI and SIT probes into "paper leaks" in competitive exams Jharkhand and culprits will be put behind the bars, he said. The manifesto provides that Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission-Combined Graduate Level (JSSC-CGL) Competitive Exam will be cancelled and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) will investigate the previous CGL exams and all major paper leak cases. Besides, it promises to make Jharkhand the hub of eco-tourism in the country. "We will set up 10 new medical colleges in the state. We will increase the coverage under Ayushman Bharat Jeevan Dhara Yojana from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh for elderly persons aged over 70 years. We will increase the number of beds in primary

Shah promised that the poor in the state will be provided with houses if the BJP comes to power in the Jharkhand. A total of 21 lakh houses will be constructed under PM Awas Yojna, while elderly, widows and persons with disabilities will get Rs 2,500 as monthly pension, he added.
Under the Matritva Suraksha

Yojna, every pregnant woman will be given six nutrition kits and assistance of Rs 21,000, while free education will be provided from "KG to PG" to girls from poor and backward communities, he said.

"Hemant Soren is sitting on the lap of Congress and RJD. He is asking for Rs 1.36 lakh-crore coal dues from the Centre. I want to make it clear that the UPA government gave only Rs 84,000 crore grant-inaid between 2004 and 2014 whereas Prime Minister Modi gave Rs 3.08 lakh-crore from 2014-2024 in addition to funds for infrastructure and rail development," claimed. He said the BJP government will construct 25,000 km of highways and expand rail network to connect every dis headquarters with Ranchi. district

Tanuj Puniya appointed state president of Scheduled Castes cell to mobilise dalit

BISWAJEET BANERJEE

In a strategic move aimed at uniting Dalit youth, the Congress party has appointed Tanuj Puniya, the Member of Parliament from Barabanki, as the new state president of the Scheduled Castes cell.

The party plans to cultivate a renewed culture of resistance against incidents of Dalit oppression.

To facilitate this, Congress is preparing to establish vigilance teams at the village panchayat level, enabling immediate reporting of any incidents of oppression to the state headquarters. The party is actively working to forge alliances among backward, and Dalit. minority communities.

Following a modest success in the recent Lok Sabha elections, Congress is now focusing its efforts on the upcoming 2027 assembly elections. Sushil Pasi, the former state president of Scheduled Department, has appointed as the national secretary and given the responsibility of co-in-charge

After successfully engaging the

Pasi community, the party has devised a strategy to connect with the Harijan community. After deliberations on various candidates, senior leaders have turned their attention to Tanuj Puniya. His appointment is seen as a way to send a positive message to

his community while leveraging his youth appeal to attract Dalit youth from other

Furthermore, as an MP, Puniya will be able to raise issues related to Dalit oppression in the Lok Sabha, applying pressure on officials to address these matters. His status as an MP is also expected to enhance his ability to connect with a broader youth audience. This initiative will serve as a litmus test for the Congress party in 2027.

After his appointment, Tanuj Puniya expressed his desire for any incidents of Dalit oppression in villages to be reported immediately to the state headquarters. He noted that many incidents are often suppressed locally for various

To combat this, the Scheduled Castes cell plans to set up vigilance teams in every village to monitor and report incidents of oppression. Depending on the situation, a from headquarters dispatched to the site of the incident for an on-ground assessment. The findings will not only be submitted to the government but also made public, which is expected to enhance trust in the party and instances

oppression. Puniya also announced plans to conduct training programs to disseminate the ideas of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, ensuring that young people are aware of their rights and duties as outlined in the Constitution.

The newly appointed state president of the Scheduled Castes Department, Tanuj Puniya, brings a wealth of organizational experience. He is the son of PL Puniya, a former Rajya Sabha member who transitioned from the All India Administrative Service to politics. After earning an IIT degree, Tanuj stepped into the political arena to carry forward his father's legacy. Following a setback in the assembly elections, he assembly successfully contested the Lok

Barabanki in 2024.

Kedarnath temple closes for winters amid **Vedic rituals**



The portals of Kedarnath temple were closed on Sunday for the winters amid Vedic rituals, with over 18,000 pilgrims thronging the Himalayan temple to witness the closure ceremony. An elaborate ceremony preceding the closure of the temple gates began at 4 am and the portals were closed at 8.30 am, Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC) media More than 18,000 pilgrims thronged the Himalayan temple to witness the closure ceremony, he said. During the whole of the yatra season more than 16.5 lakh pilgrims visited Kedarnath to offer prayers, BKTC chairman Ajendra Ajay said. Located at a height of more than 11,000 ft in the Garhwal Himalayas, Kedarnath is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas situated in different parts of the country. A popular pilgrimage destination visited by lakhs of

pilgrims each year the temple

doors are closed during

winter when it remains

covered in snow

Sunil Sharma as leader of legislative party **MOHIT KANDHARI** ■ JAMMU

Ahead of the beginning of the maiden Assembly session of the James and Kashmir Legislative Assembly in Srinagar on Monday, the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) Sunday 'unanimously' elected Sunil Sharma as the leader of the legislative party. the legislative party.

The House will meet after a

gap of more than six years on Monday, with the last session held in early 2018, a year before the reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories.

Stringent security measures have been put in place for the assembly session.

47-year-old Sharma, who won from the Padder Nagseni Assembly constituency in is hiding and we will attack Kishtwar, is set to assume the accordingly." role of the leader of the Meanwhile, the party has apposition for the first time in announced its leader the legislative assembly.

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi and BJP General Secretary Tarun Chugh were appointed central observers by the BJP's parliamentary board to elect the leader of the legislature

Interacting with the media persons in Srinagar Sunil Sharma said, the BIP is set to play the role of a constructive opposition in the Assembly. Sharma said he is grateful to the party's central and state leadership for giving him this responsibility.
"With the help, experience,

and blessings of my MLA colleagues, I will discharge



my duties. Keeping in mind party policies and aspirations of the people, we will be the voice of the people in the assembly and outside as

well," he said.

Asked about his priorities in the assembly, Sharma said, "I have just been appointed. The battle will start tomorrow. We have to see where the enemy

Narinder Singh will be the candidate for the post of deputy speaker in the Jammu Kashmir Legislative Assembly.

On the other hand, Veteran National Conference leader and seven-time MLA from Charar-e-Sharief Abdul Rahim Rather is likely to become the first speaker of the legislative assembly of the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

According to the provisional calendar for the session issued by the Assembly Secretariat, the House will elect the speaker in the first sitting on

BJP unanimously elects | BJP's Madhya Pradesh unit chief Vishnu Dutt Sharma's future uncertain

GIRISH SHARMA BHOPAL

health centres and community health centres by 25,000," he

Political circles in Madhya Pradesh are rife with speculation, with many asking if Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) state unit chief Vishnu Dutt Sharma will get another term as the provincial chief, even as party functionaries refuse to divulge details, saying the mystery will be unravelled this December.

Incumbent state president of the BJP, Vishnudutt has Sharma, almost completed five years in office, while according to BJP constitution, the tenure of a state chief is only three vears.

the party has Though provided two-vear extensions circumstances.

party per constitution, a leader can be consecutive terms, and there are strong possibilities of Sharma being reained after he goes through the election

However, the fact is that since 2006, the state unit presidents have either been Brahmins or Thakurs.

In 2006, the trend started when Satyanarayan Jatia took over as state president for nine months, succeeding Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Since then, those who have remained in this top party position in Madhya Pradesh are Narendra Singh Tomar (two terms), Prabhat Jha, Nandkumar



Chouhan,

Political observers feel that when state assembly or Lok be selected. Sabha elections are not near, Party sources said that a

Sources claimed that as per the constitution, the state president is elected through an election process, but also been there have instances when the BJP Central Command has replaced old faces with new ones, based on prevailing political circumstances.

for the The process for the organizational election of the Bharatiya Janata Party has commenced, and the entire process is scheduled for completion by the end of December.

At present, the process of making active members has

until November 5, and then booth-level committees will

the party might decide to meeting of the party is elect a Dalit leader for the scheduled in New Delhi on November 11 to announce the next phase of the election calendar.

The poll schedule for party positions includes elections for mandal presidents and district presidents, and then the state president will be elected.

Spokesperson of the state unit of the BJP, Rajneesh Agrawal, said that for mandal presidents, more than 50 per cent of the booth presidents need to be elected, and similarly, for district presidents, more than 50 per cent of mandal presidents need to be

Two succumb to burns in Kasaragod temple firecracker explosion



Two persons who had suffered more than 40 per cent burns in the firecracker explosion in a temple in Kasaragod district on 29th October succumbed to their injuries on Sunday, according to the district administration.

The deceased have been identified as 38-year-old driver who had suffered 45 per cent burns and Ratheesh, a barber who had suffered more than 60 per cent burns in the firecracker explosion. Ratheesh was on life support system and the end came early Sunday morning.

A total of 154 persons were injured in the blast out of which 98 are still undergoing treatment hospitals in the districts of Mangalore (Karnataka), Mangalore (Karnataka), Kannur, Kozhikode and Kasaragod.

Firecrackers worth Rs 24,000 were stored in a room near the temple where a Theyyam (a traditional ritual common

in the districts of Kannur and Kasaragod) festival was taking place.

The mishap occurred when the crackers were burst at a distance of hardly 2 meters from the shed where the explosives were stored.

police investigating the case said that the crackers were burst in violation of the safety rules presci authorities.

Kasaragod district police have registered a case against the committee members under sections 288, 125 (a), 125(b), 3(5) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, 3(a) and 6 of the Explosive Substances Act which pertain to negligent conduct with respect to explosive substance, act endangering life or personal safety of others, acts performed rashly, negligently that endanger human life or personal safety and acts done by several

persons in furtherance of

common intention.

Maha Congress seeks ban on cotton imports, asks CCI to purchase produce at guranteed price

T N RAGHUNATHA MUMBAI

mid reports about the Aimport of 22 lakh bales of cotton and the consequent concerns about the potential fall in the prices of the domestic cotton, Maharashtra Congress has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to impose immediate ban on the import of cotton and direct the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) to purchase cotton at the guaranteed price.

In a letter written to the Prime Minister in the run-up to the November 20 State Assembly polls, Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole said that despite Maharashtra - which is home to over 40 lakh cotton farmers, having produced substantial cotton this year, the reports of the country importing 22 lakh of cotton had sparked concerns among the cotton farmers about the potential fall in the

domestic cotton prices.
"This import, combined with 11 lakh unsold bales held by the Cotton Corporation of

India (CCI), threatens to Maharashtra," Patole said. destabilise the cotton market and undermine the livelihood of farmers of Maharashtra," Patole stated.

Patole said that currently, the cotton was being sold anywhere from Rs 6,500 and Rs 6,600 per quintal, which is below the Minimum Support Price (MSP)_ of Rs 7,122 per quintal of cotton. He said that owing to this low

market price, farmers had so far chosen not to sell their produce, in the hope of a better price in the near future. "However, the impending import of 22 lakh bales threatens to lower demand for locally produced cotton, suppressing prices further and negating any chance of an increase, the State Congress chief said.

produces "Maharashtra approx. 80 lakh bales of cotton every year. A fresh influx of 22 lakh bales, i.e., over one-fourth of the overall cotton produced in our state, will create severe market imbalance and destabilise the economy

Explaining the gravity of the situation, Patole said that the cotton farmers were already vulnerable, facing challenges from low prices, high input costs due to 12 to 18 percent of GST imposition on agricultural inputs and unseasonal rains. "Maharashtra has faced

severe crop damage, with over 19 lakh hectares being damaged due to retreating monsoon unseasonal storms. compensation announced by the Centre remains on paper, while the PM Fasal Bima Yojana only serves to fill the coffers of the insurance companies," he said.

that in the current precarious situation, "the Centre's failure to curb huge amounts of cotton imports, despite CCI's existing stockpile of 11 lakh unsold bales, shows that the Centre is more concerned about traders' profit margins over the survival of the hardworking farmers of Maharashtra".

The State Congress chief said

Incidents of rape and murder plague Bengal, five rapes in three days **SAUGAR SENGUPTA** KOLKATA Congress

Bengal continued to quickly scale the ladder towards becoming what Opposition and sociologists called - a "rape capital" of India with sexual offences against women, particularly the minors taking place almost on a daily basis. Even a sustained three-month 'apolitical movement' bringing life in Kolkata and Siliguri almost to a standstill seemed to have failed to knock sense in the police administration and the criminals, the critics say.

"Bengal is fast turning out to be a rape capital of India ... the criminals are confident that there is nothing that the police can do to them because the top political leadership is backing them," said Bharatiya Party Janata Manoranjan Byapari. Cut to North 24 Parganas. On saturday, a man was

arrested for raping a nineyear-old girl in Gaighata area of the district. Local BJP MLA Subrata Thakur said, "The family

members of the accused along

with the local Trinamool leaders threatening the victim's family." The local TMC leader Prasenjit Ghosh denied such Shift to North

Friday's incident at Gaighata took place within 24 hours of another minor girl being raped in a similar manner at Kumargram in Alipurduar district. The girl was abducted and raped in a nearby forest while she was bathing in a

The culprit was arrested on Saturday, police SP Y Raghuvangshi said. The incident Kumargram followed a rape and murder that took place at Falakata a few miles away in the same district where a toddler was raped and murdered on Thursday by two persons one of who - a 42-year-old man was lynched by the locals while his accomplice was arrested, subsequently

sources said. The local people had been Kolkata-like staging a Kolkata-like movement, blockading roads for the past two days in went on a rampage soon after demand of justice for the the incident torched the local

victim. Back to South Bengal. A similar incident took place at Domkal in Murshidabad district a middle-aged person was on Saturday arrested on charges of raping a sevenyear-old minor girl.

Locals said the reportedly to be the grand uncle of the lured her with victim chocolates inside his room and there raped her on Thursday night.

A similar report was reported from nearby Burdwan district where a school girl was raped on Saturday sources said. Domkal happened a within hours of a newlywed woman being snatched away from her husband and gangraped in

an overpass at Kalyanai in Nadia district. Four accused, all auto drivers have been arrested in that connection.

the wee hours of Friday under

The successive incidents took place within a few weeks of a rape and murder 10-year-old girl taking place at Mahishmari village in Kultali off Joynagar in South 24 Parganas district. The locals police station alleging the police refused to act on time when the parents reported the incident.

A similar incident took place the next week a few miles away at Gosaba where a 60year-old man raped a minor was subsequently arrested while both the incidents.

The back-to-back

incidents took place last month almost within a week of a many being lynched at Patashpur village in East Midnapore for raping and poisoning to death a housewife, sources said.

Alleging police inaction the angry neighbours dragged the alleged culprit out of his house and clubbed him to death, police said. With the frequent incidents of

rape - in some places accompanied with murder taking place in the backdrop of a sustained movement post the rape and murder of a postgraduate lady doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital the sociologists have joined the opposition politicians in condemning the lackadaisical approach of the Government in dealing with such crimes. Where the Government and

the police administration itself takes sides of the criminals by shielding them as we have seen in the case of RG Kar what do you expect from the local police men ... they are afraid of conducting arrests because they would not know which criminal is a TMC man or who has whose hands behind ... so we have been consistently demanding the resignation of the State's Police Minister who is also the Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee," said Bengal Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari. Central committee member Sujan Chakrabarty said that "where the police acts in a partisan manner the people not only lose faith in them but also the criminals get encouraged ... these rapes are an aftermath of that encouragement" Congress' Adhir Chowdhury

said, "the way the incidents of lynching are taking place we may see more such incidents after rape because the people are fast losing faith in the police," he said. www.dailypioneer.com

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Bangladesh protests

Protests erupt in Bangladesh as international voices express concern over escalating human rights crisis

ens of thousands of minority Hindus in Bangladesh took to the streets on Friday, demanding immediate protection from ongoing violence and harassment following the recent political upheaval. The protests, primarily held in the southeastern city of Chattogram, saw around 30,000 Hindus gather, raising slogans for justice and security. The demonstrations were heavily guarded by police and military personnel, as Hindu community leaders urged the interim Government to intervene amid rising attacks on their community. The protests follow a series of reported attacks against the Hindu minority, which has been particularly vulnerable since the overthrow of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's secular government in August. After Hasina's departure, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus was appointed to lead an Interim Government, which has faced criticism for its alleged inability to maintain order and protect minority groups. The influential Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council claims that over 2,000 attacks



on Hindus have occurred since August, a period marked by escalating violence from hard-line Islamist groups. Hindus represent approximately 8 per cent of Bangladesh's population of nearly 170 million, while the Muslim majority makes up around 91 per cent. Despite being a significant minority, Hindu communities say they are inadequately protected and often targeted amid political and social instability. The unrest has also affected other groups; reports indicate that supporters of Hasina's Awami League party and its ally, the Jatiya Party, have faced violence as well. The recent spike in violence has sparked international concern. United Nations human rights officials, along with

global advocacy groups, have voiced alarm over the human rights situation in Bangladesh under the Interim Government. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed concern over the attacks, while US President Joe Biden's administration announced that it is monitoring the situation closely. Adding his voice to the chorus, former US President and current presidential candidate Donald Trump condemned the "barbaric violence" targeting Hindus, Christians, and other minorities, describing Bangladesh as "in a total state of chaos." The Hindu activists who have been rallying since August are pressing the Government with a list of eight key demands which include the establishment of a minority protection law, the creation of a dedicated ministry for minority affairs, and a specialised tribunal to address and prosecute incidents of violence against minorities. Friday's protest in Chattogram was partly fuelled by recent sedition charges filed against 19 Hindu community leaders. As Bangladesh continues to grapple with political and religious tensions, minority communities remain on edge. With increasing international attention and escalating domestic demands for protection and justice, the Interim Government must restore peace and address the rights and safety of its minority groups, else there is a clear danger of it plunging into anarchy and eventually into a civil war.



bout 1001 food items offered at the Akshardham Temple during the 'Annakut' festival, in Jaipur

America decides: Will Kamala make history



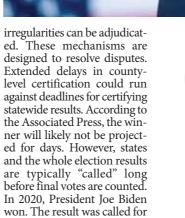
While polls show Harris narrowly leading, Trump's momentum and attacks on Harris, alongside economic concerns, keep the outcome unpredictable

he upcoming election for the White House is of immense significance, as it will determine the next tenant of the White House and shape the future of the United States. Whether America will get its first woman president or a second Donald Trump term is a debate going on among not only the politicians but also the public. A week before the November 5 presidential polls, election fever hit the country hard. However, there is a possibility that knowing the final result may take a few more dates. Narrow victories in a handful of swing states will likely determine who gets the top job. Polls and prediction markets are signalling a Republican sweep in the election.

As the Republican candidate, Donald Trump, and the Democrat nominee, Vice President Kamala Harris, wrap up their campaigns, the potential impact of this election on the future of the United States cannot be overstated.

It is no surprise that the campaign has been not only highly negative but also personal, with Trump attacking his rival, hitting her below the belt and calling her "dumb." While the reports claim that the fight is very tight, with Trump leading now and Kamala making up her lead, the suspense will continue for a few more days, even after the election date. The Electoral College is the system that decides presidential elec-tions: A candidate must secure at least 270 votes - allocated by state based on the outcome of their respective vote – to win the White House. Although certification sabotage has not yet resulted in such an extensive delay, many attempts have been made before. County election boards generally have no legal authority to investigate any allegations of

fraud or irregularities. Tight races in crucial battleground states in 2020 and an increase in mail-in voting amid the COVID pandemic saw prolonged vote counts. That helped malfeasance pushed by Trump and his allies. State election law provides other checks and safeguards through which suspected Trump is relentless in attack-



four days after November 3,

when Pennsylvania's result was

confirmed.

The state gave Biden 20 electoral college votes, taking over the 270 required to win. In 2016, Hillary Clinton conceded to Trump the morning after the election. With the presidential contest in the final countdown and Harris and Trump maligning the opponent, the vice president has called Trump dangerous. Harris insists she's doing both — establishing a contrast with Trump and laying out her agenda on the economy, immigration and more. She says It's either Donald Trump in there, stewing over his enemies list, or me working for you, checking off my to-do list."



SURPRISE THAT THE CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN **NOT ONLY** HIGHLY **NEGATIVE BUT ALSO** PERSONAL, WITH TRUMP ATTACKING HIS RIVAL, HITTING HER BELOW THE BELT

HER "DUMB"

IT IS NO

ing Harris, sometimes in crude terms. His core strategy has been to tie Harris to voters' frustrations with the Biden administration.

According to the latest reports, Harris leads Trump by four points, 51 per cent-47 per cent, in an ABC/Ipsos of likely voters released Sunday. This is up slightly from her 50 per cent-48 per cent edge in early October. Meanwhile, a CBS /You govt survey out Sunday shows Harris up 50 per cent-49 per cent, a shift from the vice president's 51per cent-48 per cent lead in mid-October. According to FiveThirtyEight's election forecast, Trump is favoured to win 54 times out of 100, compared to 46 for Harris.

As for the campaign spending, Harris routed Trump in fundraising for their official campaigns in September by pulling in \$222 million compared to the Republican's \$63 million. Those numbers are down from the same period in 2020 when Biden raised \$281 million and Trump raised \$81 million.

Harris was able to spend a lot on TV ads. According to the ful. Wesleyan Media Project, the Harris campaign has also dramatically outspent Trump in

digital advertising and dominated cable and radio advertising advertising, which tracks campaign advertising spend-

The economy and inflation remain prominent concerns, with 90 per cent and 85 per cent of registered voters calling them highly important in their votes, respectively. Harris' campaign insists she's doing both — establishing a contrast with Trump and laying out her agenda on the economy, immigration and more. As she said in Georgia earlier this week: 'It's either Donald Trump in there, stewing over his enemies list, or me working for you, checking off my to-do list."The economy and inflation remain prominent concerns, with 90 per cent and 85 per cent of registered voters calling these highly important in their vote. The problem for Kamala Harris is that she is a woman of Asian descent. Despite being a highly developed country, people are shying away from electing a woman. Hillary Clinton tried hard, but she could not win the presidency.

> (The writer is a popular columnist, currently in the US; views are personal)

Art and literature: An imperative than a choice for students



Embracing art and literature is an investment in their mental wellbeing tomorrow—an invaluable asset for their future life

any decades ago, when I opted to take **▼** Literature in college, at a time when many of my peers chose science, people raised their brows. It was believed to be the choice of the mediocre, a subject that didn't need much of an intellect or dedication. It was where students who didn't secure a seat in prime areas finally settled. Art and literature weren't considered durable then. Neither is it given much weightage now by

Creative pursuits are still categorised as hobbies, and they get sidelined as children reach higher grades or enter college. Why? Because art is not sustainable. It is not lucrative. It doesn't build careers as easily as a degree in science, technology or accounting does. There still may be some truth in that contention prompting parents to wean off their children from extracurricular activities as the race to the future heats up. But the role of creative activities in providing our children with a respite from the stress of careerbuilding cannot be undermined. At a time when they are grappling with the chal-

lenges of higher education, what might bring them respite from their anxieties are artistic endeavours. It is often in the lines of a sketch or the verses of a poem that children

find a voice beyond words a silent yet powerful release of their inner thoughts and emotions. In a world that measures success by exams and marks, these activities provide a refuge, where the mind is free to wander, explore, and create without boundaries. Studies have consistently shown that students who engage in painting, writing, music, dance or theatre experience lower stress levels than those who do not.

These activities act as a counterbalance to the rigid schedules and deadlines that studies impose, allowing children to unwind and channel their

often overlooked merits of art and literature is the development of emotional intelligence. When children immerse themselves in stories, they begin to understand complex emotions, both their own and those of others. A novel might teach empathy, while a piece of music might mirror feelings they struggle to articulate. These moments foster self-awareness, which is critical in today's fast-paced world where young people are grappling with social pressures and academic demands. These creative pursuits don't just make children more empathetic; they also teach them to become aware of their inner world—a skill that will serve them well beyond the walls of a class-

In those moments when they feel overwhelmed, they can turn to the comfort of a favourite book, the joy of drawing, or the calm of journaling. It becomes a personal ritual, a way to recharge and refresh, like finding shelter from the storm within the pages of a story or the hues of a canvas. Extracurricular

energies into something activities such as dance, entirely their own. One of the music, fine art and creative writing are not mere pastimes; they are crucibles where life skills are forged. Problem-solving, adaptability, and innovation—all essential skills in adulthood—find their roots in these pursuits. Children learn patience through practice, resilience through failure, and confidence through expression, creating a sturdy foundation that will support them through life's inevitable challenges. Parents and educators must recognise the role these activities play in a child's mental and emotional development.

Fostering a balanced approach between academics and extracurricular interests can create resilient individuals who are not only high achievers but also happy, healthy humans. As life's pressures mount, these creative expressions transform into anchors, grounding us in times of stress and rekindling the joy we may have set aside in the haste of growing up.

(The author is a columnist and children's writing coach based in Dubai; Views are

TRUMP'S BANGLADESH CONCERN

Madam - Former President Donald Trump vowed to protect Hindu Americans from the radical left's anti-religion agenda, pledged to strengthen US-India relations, and condemned violence against minorities in Bangladesh. Donald Trump extended greetings and pledged to safeguard the interests of Hindu (may be forgotten that Sikh, Jain and Buddhists also followed Deepawali) Americans, vowing to shield them from what he described as the "anti-religion agenda of the radical left."

This is for the first time that Trump has addressed the crisis in Bangladesh, where reports indicate that hundreds of Hindus were killed during protests in July and August. He contrasted his approach to that of President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, whom he accused of ignoring the plight of Hindus both globally and in America.

Actually, this is not the love of Trump towards Hindus and minorities. This is just a political stunt with a view to lure the Indian population (a significant number in the United States now and very much capable of swinging the outcome of this tightly balanced election of 2024) in the US to vote for him in the Presidential election and nothing else. He is not that generous towards Indians as he is attempting to show. By nature, Trump is a bit of a dictator and is against the people migrating to the United States from various other countries. He terms migrated people as "Garbage".

Whatsoever, we should not want to forget that it was the US (read CIA) who purported the coup along with ISI to destabilise the region. US has always been and will be doing these things in future. Hence, don't take his love for Hindus seri-

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

ERIGAISI'S NATURAL GAME

Madam— Ever had so many Indian chess players shine on international circuit simultaneously like the present bunch of player's new approach of not bothering

Adieu Bibek Debroy!



ibek Debroy, a name that needs no Bintroduction for him; for the people of our country, to relate and recognise him as a public personality. From handling the India's PM Economic Advisory Council (EAC) to contributing in India's erstwhile Planning Commission i.e. Niti Aayog policy making, Debroy had left an indelible mark of contribution on India's intellectual and policy making landscape. His passing away at the age of

extremely talented youngsters. The exploits of R Praggnanandhaa are too well-known to need reiteration. Gukesh Dommaraju is on the brink of making history as he prepares himself to square off with Ding Liren in the World Chess Championship final in little less than a month. Meanwhile, Arjun Erigaisi has achieved the stupendous feat of reaching 2800 Elo points in the FIDE live rating, becoming only the second Indian after Viswanathan Anand and the sixteenth player in the world to do so. Only French Grand Master Alireza Firouzja—at 18—reached there earlier than the Indian GM.

Erigaisi has joined the elite club of Magnus Carlsen, Garry Kasparov, Vladimir Kramnik and Ding Liren among others. Known as a risky player, Erigaisi relishes the "accusation" as he feels top level chess needs some serious risk taking. Without his natural style of attacking game, the 21-year-old would not have broken into the top five of world chess at such a young age. The razor sharp

69 is a huge loss of our nation. He was truly a man of wide ranging interests, be that in Economics or Sanskrit, English or Puranas; his variety of interests into scholarly, put him at the epitome of the versatility in multi-discipline. His books, columns, and other translation works of Indian Vedas and Puranas into English had been an intellectual gift to all the Indian nationals from time to time. His sad demise is a huge loss of India's economic, cultural and scholar landscape. He put his knowledge and experience at the best use for his country holistic development. His visionary contribution to public policy, administration, literature and economics will keep on serving as a guide and bearing as torch for the next generation.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

about records and ratings but concentrating on the game at hand appears to have paid him rich dividends. High energy and incredible motivation have driven him thus far, and the top rated Indian is all set to conquer new heights in chess.

Ganpathi Bhat | Akola

US SANCTIONS ON INDIAN COMPANIES

Madam — The current US sanctions against Indian firms raise major worries about Indian vital posture. Should India reconsider its trading links with countries participating in the Russian defence supply lines? How can governments better educate firms on how to adhere to global sanctions in order to avoid future repercussions? On top of that, what steps would be executed to protect Indian enterprises caught up in geopolitical tensions? Addressing these issues is critical for protecting national interests amidst developing global conflicts.

Anshu Bharti | Begusarai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneér@gmail.com the pioneer

analys's 07

FIRST COLUMN

FINDING STILLNESS AMIDST A FLOOD OF THOUGHTS

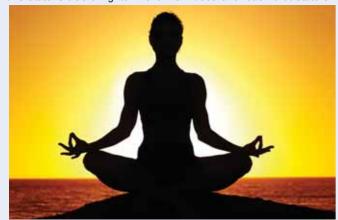
A journey toward tranquillity begins by learning to simply "be" in the present moment



RAVI VALLURI

ometime back I had written a piece on "Mind Management" and received certain queries about the generation of multiple thoughts and the acceptance by people that the mind was not at ease. It was frightening and troubling that several people of various age groups were plagued by all kinds of negative thoughts. People were troubled by thoughts arising during the whole day and particularly at night time. Thoughts arising at bedtime reside with us and seep deep into our consciousness and the following morning we are again troubled by those very thoughts and are not like fresh dew on petals. The Ashtravaka Gita says that "all action resides in the mind" and this is further corroborated by modern science. Modern science amplifies that there is no difference in the activity of the mind; whether you slap someone or merely think of slapping someone. It is the brain's limbic system, which is where motor control gets expressed. Just thinking of slapping someone activates all muscles that would be employed to undertake that specific action. On average, we are bombarded by 60 thousand thoughts a day. And we seem to have no control over them.

These thoughts arise on account of our memory bank (past impressions and Karma), the company we keep, past and current experiences and also the food that we partake in. According to the Ashtavakra Gita, enlightenment occurs only when we live in our hearts. The heart is synonymous with a point of inflexion where there is no past or future. There is only one present. Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar says that "the present moment is inevitable". And this state is true enlightenment. How does one reach that state of



"present moment"? Before dwelling on some techniques, let us witness a few stories. Two Buddhist monks were riding cycles and were on their way to meet a Zen Master. Monk one described the number of trees, clouds, wafts of cold breeze striking his cheek, mountains, beautiful blue sky, fruits plucked on the way, and village folk he encountered among others before meeting the Zen

The second monk in all trepidation, meekly replied that he only cycled to meet the Zen Master. Immediately, the Master proclaimed the second monk to be the next Zen Master. Why? Because he was only cycling! He was in the present moment. Yet another Buddhist story. Two Buddhist monks were travelling through a dense forest. On their way, they came across a naked woman. The older one removed his apparel clothed the bare woman carried her across the river and left her on the other side of the bank.

The younger monk was greatly troubled by this act of his senior. He kept chiding the senior monk, literally accusing him of what he perceived as an act of sacrilege. The older one just smiled and remarked that he carried the lady across the river and left her there, while the other monk was still carrying the lady in his mind.

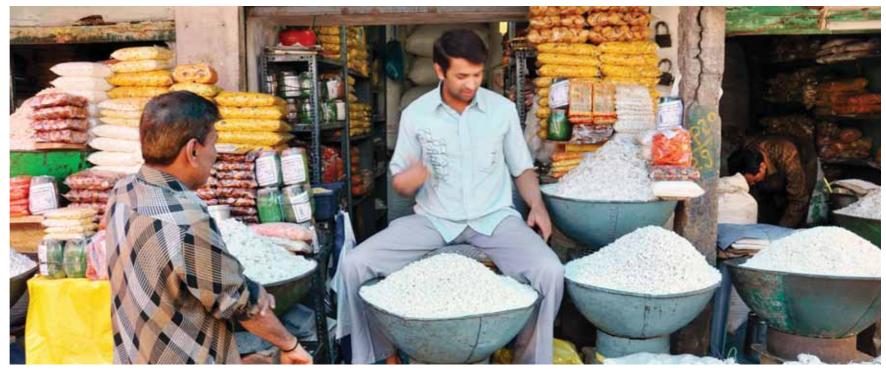
Practising pranayama, Sudarshan Kriya, yoga, undertaking vigorous exercise, pursuing hobbies, contemplating, praying, observing nature and just being a spectator or a witness will also help a seeker and those with troubled minds to live in the present moment. Confucious says, "Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated.

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

Food subsidy reforms: Can Govt tackle mounting costs-



Timely disbursement of funds to FCI would go a long way to streamline the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, which provides free food grains to the people



he Ministry of Finance (MoF) has released Rs 97,000 crore towards food subsidy expenses in the first half of the current financial year (FY) to the Food Corporation of India (FCI). This is over two-thirds of the required fund support of Rs 147,000 crore to FCI during the current FY. The MoF is expected to release the balance amount by December 31, 2024. Under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), the Centre asks the FCI and other state agencies to procure food from the farmers at MSP (minimum support price) and distribute it to around 820 million people for free. Under the Scheme, each beneficiary gets 5 kg of food per month. The entire cost i.e. MSP paid to farmers plus handling and distribution cost (HDC) is reimbursed to the FCI/other state agencies as a subsidy. The money comes from the Union Budget's allocation for 'food

The FCI conducts the bulk of the food procurement, handling and distribution operations on behalf of the Centre. At Rs 147,000 crore, it gets around 72 per cent of the total food subsidy Rs 205,250 crore the budget estimate (BE) for 2024 25. The government is duty-bound to make timely payments to FCI to enable the latter to conduct its operations 'smoothly' and 'effectively'.

What is so special about the current FY? In the past, thanks to inadequate budgetary allocations (often prompted by the compulsion to keep the fiscal deficit excess of total expenditure over total receipts - under check), the government's payments to FCI had fallen short, forcing the latter to take recourse to working capital from banks to sustain operations. To bridge cash-flow mismatch, the extant arrangements provided for the FCI to avail a short-term loan with a tenure of 90 days up to Rs 75,000 crore at any given point in time.

This led to an increase in subsidy as interest cost on loans taken from designated banks (the interest rate ranges between 6.98 per cent to 7.36 per cent per annum) had to be reimbursed to the FCI. The gap between budget allocation and actual requirements used to be so huge that cash



IN THE PAST, THANKS TO INADEQUATE **BUDGETARY** ALLOCATIONS. **GOVERNMENT'S** PAYMENTS TO FCI HAD FALLEN SHORT, FORCING THE LATTER TO

TAKE RECOURSE TO WORKING CAPITAL FROM BANKS TO SUSTAIN **OPERATIONS**

credit limits sanctioned by the banks proved to be inadequate. This prompted the FCI to even borrow funds from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF). The NSSF is a public account (established on April 1, 1999) where all deposits received under National Saving Schemes are credited. All withdrawals by depositors are made out of the accumulations in this Fund. Normally, the government is not expected to use the NSSF to meet its revenue expenditure and expenses on food subsidy fall in this category. Yet, it encouraged the FCI to encroach on the Fund to plug the shortfall in its receipts. When the FCI started taking loans from NSSF in FY 2016-17, the Centre had committed to release the subsidy arrears to enable FCI to pay back the loans in subsequent years. But, that was not to be as subsidy arrears kept mounting, and FCI continued borrowing increasingly from NSSF. At the end of 2018-19, FCI's cumulative borrowing from NSSF was Rs 200,000 crore. This continued into 2019-20 on a much larger scale. In that year's budget, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had kept the BE for food subsidy at Rs 184,000 crore and drastically reduced it to Rs 109,000 crore in the revised estimate (RE) just because she wanted to keep the FD close to the target. Against this, the requirement being Rs 219,000 crore, the shortfall of Rs 110,000 crore was made up by FCI borrowing from NSSF. In the budget for 2020-21, she kept BE at Rs 116,000 crore against the requirement of Rs 137,000 crore. TV Somanathan, the then expen-

diture secretary, saw nothing wrong in the above practice arguing that borrowings by FCI were against the assets it held in the form of food stocks. The argu-

were taken against subsidy receivable from the Centre. In the case of wheat, for instance, on every kilo sold under the National Food Security (NFSA), the subsidy was Rs 23 (MSP plus HDC of Rs 25 minus Rs 2 being the price paid by the beneficiary). The loan was given against this amount promised by the Centre. This liability couldn't be adjusted against the food stock, which, on giving to the NFSA beneficiary would fetch only Rs 2. The Secretary further argued that keeping these borrowings off the Centres balance sheet would prevent crowding out, and help the private sector borrow from the market at a lower interest cost. This needed to be weighed against erosion in the credibility of fiscal consolidation, which is inevitable when a strict liability of the Centre is kept off its balance sheet. A wrong can't be justified simply because the honest course of reflecting the liability in the Union budget would lead to

The government recognised the flaw in the above approach even as Sitharaman made a course correction while presenting the budget for FY 2021-22. In the RE for FY 2020-21, she provided for a massive allocation of Rs 529,000 crore. That amount included Rs 462,000 crore towards payment of subsidy to the FCI against a claim of Rs 216,000 crore by the latter. The excess amount was used by the FCI to extinguish all its accumulated liabilities to the NSSF. During 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24, the government stayed on course with allocation for food subsidy at Rs 372,000 crore, Rs 287,000 crore, and Rs 211,394 crore respectively adequate to fully cover the requirement. As for payments to the FCI, during 2021-22, the subsidy received was Rs 208,000 crore

crore. During 2022-23, the amount received was Rs 200,000 crore against the claim of Rs 204,000 crore. During 2023-24, the FCI received Rs 139,000 crore against the claim of Rs 133,000

During the current FY, having already received 2/3rd of its likely annual requirement, Rs 147,000 crore, during the first half, the FCI is expected to receive the balance 1/3rd by December 31, 2024. It receives the money almost round the clock, meaning it doesn't have to resort to short-term credit even from banks (forget NSSF), as its operational expenses are fully met from timely reimbursement of subsidy dues by the Center. From the Centre's perspective, all its liabilities regarding food subsidies are 'fully' reflected in the budget for any given FY. The government no longer indulges in window dressing, no carryover of subsidy dues, and the process is fully 'transparent'. Moreover, there is no interest cost doost to subsidy payments as the FCI need not borrow. But the unsustainable increase in food subsidies continues to haunt us.

This has to do with 'universal' coverage of PMGKAY (820 million beneficiaries and at least 100 million waiting to be included as per an order of the Supreme Court), promise to give them 'free' food eternally, purchase of 'unlimited' quantum of food from farmers at MSP resulting in high stocks with FCI (at 44 million ton, its stock of rice as on October 1, 2024 is over three times the requirement) and associated high carrying cost, reimbursement of cost to FCI on 'actual' basis and pilferage of subsidized food. Addressing these maladies calls for major reforms in the Scheme. Can Modi bite the bullet?

(The writer is a policy analyst;

AI enabled technologies: The game changer in spinal cord injury care Spinal cord injury care has yet to receive the focused attention it deserves from the government

n the realm of spinal cord injury (SCI) care, recent **▲**advancements in enabling technologies are revolutionising treatment, rehabilitation, and long-term care. These innovations are all set to redefine the quality of life for SCI patients. The International Spine and Spinal Injuries Conference (ISSICON) 2024, organised recently in New Delhi by Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute and the Spinal Cord Society, highlighted this potential by bringing together over 600 participants, including national and international experts, all focused on advancing SCI

Experts discussed the transformative role of technologies like the role of Exoscope, Robotic surgery, Neurorehabilitation



tools, and Artificial Intelligence (AI). It is evident that these enabling technologies are going to be the game changer in SČI care. Unlike in previous decades, where survival was the primary focus, today's innovations allow for the enhancement of function, Unlike traditional micromobility, and independence, shifting our approach from

functionality. Visibility and precision are paramount in spinal microsurgeries. The ability to maintain a clear view of the surgical area with magnification is crucial, as it allows surgeons to operate with accuracy while providing adequate illumination.

Traditionally, microscopes have been the gold standard in such complex procedures, offering the depth of field and lighting necessary to navigate intricate anatomical structures. However, the limitations of traditional microscopes-primarily the fixed head position required for prolonged periods-often lead to neck and back strain for surgeons. scopes, exoscopes are equipped with high-defini-

screens, allowing surgeons to view a magnified 3D image on a large screen rather than through an eyepiece. This shift not only alleviates physical strain but also enhances ergonomic comfort, which can be transformative for procedures requiring extended

The exoscope's ability to provide improved illumination and 3D visualisation allows for sustained precision, minimising fatigue and supporting a higher level of surgical performance over prolonged periods. Moreover, it offers seamless integration with digital systems, assisting with documentation and enabling real-time collaboration with other specialists. Remote access to the exoscope's 3D feed allows for survival to empowerment and tion cameras and 3D viewing consultations with experts out-



side the operating room, which is particularly valuable in teaching hospitals and cases that require multidisciplinary input. By reducing the physical toll on surgeons and offering digital connectivity, the horoscope is paving the way for better, more collaborative care in spinal surgery.

The inclusion of AI in spinal surgery is another gamechanger, with the potential to reshape the field by allowing for data-driven insights and

more precise treatment planning. Through AI, vast amounts of patient data can be analysed to identify optimal surgical approaches and predict complications.

Such AI insights combined with robotic precision could minimise human error and variability in outcomes, enhancing both surgical efficiency and patient safety. Currently, robotic systems are already being used in spinal procedures, aiding in the precise placement of screws, rods, and other implants. With AIdriven data analytics, robotic assistance could reach new levels of effectiveness. AI systems could improve preoperative planning based on large datasets, enabling more accurate hardware placements and efficient decision-making. This

surgeries to predict potential complications and suggest the most effective treatment paths, offering a personalised, databacked approach to surgical care. Furthermore, AI-driven analytics have the potential to predict patient outcomes based on prior cases, guiding surgeons on probable recovery trajectories and aiding patient consultations. ISSICON 2024's workshops reflected this commitment to enabling technologies by providing participants with hands-on experience in emerging techniques, such as robotic and navigationassisted spine surgery and robotic-assisted rehabilitation. The conference was aligned with the World Health Organisation's Rehabilitation

2030 initiative, reinforcing a

technology can analyse past

global commitment to improving access to advanced rehabilitation services, particularly in underserved areas. To ensure the longevity of these innovations, ISSICON 2024 is developing eight position state-ments, created through preconference deliberations and expert discussions, to serve as guidelines for SCI care. The Spinal Cord Society has been advocating for a National Spinal Care Program that addresses the rising needs in spinal injury care and back pain management. (Dr H S Chhabra is president of

the Spinal Cord Society, director of Spine & Rehabilitation Services at the Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute, and Chairman of the ISSICON 2024 Organizing Committee; views

Khamenei threatens Israel, US with 'a crushing response'

Iran's supreme leader on Saturday threatened Israel and the US with "a crushing response" over attacks on Iran and its allies.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei spoke as Iranian officials are increasingly threatening to launch yet another strike against Israel after its October 26 attack on the Islamic Republic that targeted military bases and other locations and killed at least five people. Any further attacks from either side could engulf the wider Middle East, already teetering over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip and Israel's ground invasion of Lebanon, into a wider regional conflict just ahead of the US presidential election this Tuesday.

The enemies, whether the Zionist regime or the United States of America, will definitely receive a crushing response to what they are doing to Iran and the Iranian nation and to the resistance front," Khamenei said in video released by Iranian state media.

The supreme leader did not elaborate on the timing of the threatened attack, nor the scope. The US military operates on bases throughout the Middle East, with some troops now manning a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, battery in Israel. The USS Abraham Lincoln

aircraft carrier likely is in the Arabian Sea, while Pentagon press secretary Maj Gen Pat Ryder said Friday that more destroyers, fighter squadrons, tankers and B-52 long-range bombers would be coming to the region to deter Iran and its militant allies.

Early Sunday, the US military's Central Command said B-52s from Minot Air Force Base's 5th Bomb Wing arrived in the Middle East, without elaborating. The 85-year-old Khamenei had struck a more cautious approach in earlier remarks, saying officials would weigh Iran's response and that Israel's attack "should not be exaggerated nor downplayed." Iran has launched two major direct attacks on Israel, in April and October.

But efforts by Iran to downplay the Israeli attack faltered as satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press showed damage to military bases near Tehran linked to the country's ballistic missile program, as well as at a Revolutionary Guard base used in satellite

Iran's allies, called the "Axis of Resistance" by Tehran, also have been severely hurt by ongoing Israeli attacks, partic-



ularly Lebanon's Hezbollah and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Iran long has used those groups as both an asymmetrical way to attack Israel and as a shield against a direct assault. Some analysts believe those groups want Iran to do more to back them militarily.

Iran, however, has been dealing with its own problems at home, as its economy struggles under the weight of international sanctions and it has faced years of widespread, multiple protests. After Khamenei's speech, the Iranian rial fell to

691,500 against the dollar, near an all-time low. It had been 32.000 rials to the dollar when Tehran reached its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. Gen Mohammad Ali Naini, a

spokesman for Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard which controls the ballistic missiles needed to target Israel, gave an interview published by the semiofficial Fars news agency just before Khamenei's remarks were released. In it, he warned Iran's response "will be wise, powerful and beyond the enemy's comprehension."

"The leaders of the Zionist regime should look out from the windows of their bedrooms and protect their criminal pilots within their small territory," he warned. Israeli air force pilots appear to have used air-launched ballistic missiles in the Oct. 26 attack.

Khamenei on Saturday met

with university students to mark Students Day, which commemorates a Nov. 4, 1978. incident in which Iranian soldiers opened fire on students protesting the rule of the shah at Tehran University. The shooting killed and wounded several students and further escalated the tensions consuming Iran at the time that eventually led to the shah fleeing the country and the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Israel 'struck' Gaza clinic during polio campaign; army denies

Palestinian officials say an Israeli drone strike on a clinic in northern Gaza where children were being vaccinated for polio wounded six people, including four children. The Israeli military denied respon-

sibility.
The alleged strike occurred Saturday in northern Gaza, which has been encircled by Israeli forces and largely isolated for the past year. Israel has been carrying out another offensive there in recent weeks that has killed hundreds of people and displaced tens of

thousands. It was not possible to resolve the conflicting accounts. Israeli forces have repeatedly raided hospitals in Gaza over the course of the war, saying Hamas uses them for militant purposes, allegations denied by

Palestinian health officials. Dr Munir al-Boursh, director general of the Gaza Health Ministry, told The Associated Press that a quadcopter struck

Gaza City early Saturday afternoon, just a few minutes after a United Nations delegation left the facility

The World Health Organisation and the UN children's agency, known as UNICEF, which are jointly carrying out the polio vaccination campaign, expressed concern over the reported strike.

The reports of this attack are even more disturbing as the Sheikh Radwan Clinic is one of the health points where parents can get their children vaccinated," said Rosalia Bollen, a spokesperson for UNICEF.

Today's attack occurred while the humanitarian pause was still in effect, despite assurances given that the pause would be respected from 6 am to 4 pm." Lt Col Nadav Shoshani, an Israeli military spokesman, said that "contrary to the claims, an initial review determined that the (Israeli military) did not strike in the area at the specified time." A scaled-down campaign to administer a second

dose of the polio vaccine began Saturday in parts of northern Gaza. It had been postponed from October 23 due to lack of access, Israeli bombings and mass evacuation orders, and the lack of assurances for humanitarian pauses, a UN statement

The administration of the first dose was carried out in September across the Gaza Strip, including areas of northern Gaza that are now completely sealed off. Health officials said the campaign's first round, and the administration of the second dose across central and southern Gaza, were

successful. At least 100,000 people have been forced to evacuate from areas of north Gaza toward Gaza City in the past few weeks, but around 15,000 children under the age of 10 remain in northern towns, including Jabaliya, Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun, which are inaccessible, according to the UN. The final phase of the polio vaccination campaign had aimed to reach an estimated 119,000 children in the north with a second dose of oral polio vaccine, the agencies said, but "achieving this target is now unlikely due to access constraints."

They say 90 per cent of children in every community must be vaccinated to prevent the spread

of the disease. The campaign was launched after the first polio case was reported in Gaza in 25 years a 10-month-old boy, now paral-

ysed in the leg. The World Health Organisation said the presence of a paralysis case indicates there could be hundreds more who have been infected but aren't showing symptoms. The war began on Óctober 7, 2023, when Hamasled militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250.

Israel's offensive has killed over

43,000 Palestinians, according

to Gaza health authorities, who

do not say how many were

combatants but say more than

half were women and children.

Iranian-American held in Iran: US

n Iranian-American jour-Analist who once worked for a US government-funded broadcaster is believed to have been detained by Iran for months now, authorities said Sunday, further raising the stakes as Tehran threatens to retaliate over an Israeli attack

on the country. The imprisonment of Reza Valizadeh, acknowledged to The Associated Press by the US State Department, came as Iran marked the 45th anniversary of the American Embassy takeover and hostage crisis on Sunday. It also followed Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei threatening both Israel and the US the day before with "a crushing response" as long-range B-52 bombers reached the Middle East in an attempt to deter

Valizadeh had worked for Radio Farda, an outlet under Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty that's overseen by the US Agency for Global Media. In February, he wrote on the social platform X that his family members had been detained to Iran. In August, Valizadeh apparently posted two mes-

Germany allocates

Tehran.

sages suggesting he had returned to Iran despite Radio Farda being viewed by Iran's when asked about Valizadeh.

theocracy as a hostile outlet. "I arrived in Tehran on March 6, 2024. Before that, I had unfinished negotiations with the (Revolutionary Guard's) intelligence department," the message read in part. "Eventually I came back to my country after 13 years without

any security guarantee, even a verbal one. Valizadeh added the name of a man who he claimed belonged to Iran's Intelligence Ministry. The AP could not verify if the person worked for

the ministry. Rumors have been circulating for weeks that Valizadeh had been detained. The Human Rights Activists News Agency, which monitors cases in Iran, said that he had been detained on arrival to the country earlier this year, but later released. He was then rearrested and sent to Evin prison, where he now faces a case in Iran's Revolutionary Court, which routinely holds closed-door hearings in which defendants face secret evidence, the agency reported. Valizadeh had faced The State Department told the for five Iranians in US custody AP that it was "aware of reports" and for USD 6 billion in frozen

We are working with our Swiss partners who serve as the in the time since. protecting power for the United States in Iran to gather more information about this case," the State Department said. "Iran rou-tinely imprisons US citizens the embassy takeover.

This practice is cruel and contrary to international law." Iran has not acknowledged detaining Valizadeh. Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The Voice of America, anoth-

and other countries' citizens

unjustly for political purposes.

er US government-funded media outlet overseen by the Agency for Global Media, first reported the State Department was acknowledging Valizadeh's detention in Iran.

Since the 1979 U.S. Embassv crisis, which saw dozens of hostages released after 444 days in captivity, Iran has used prisoners with Western ties as bargaining chips in negotiations with the world. In September 2023, five Americans detained for years Iranian assets to be released by South Korea.

Valizadeh is the first American known to be detained by Iran

Meanwhile, Iranian state television aired footage Sunday of different cities across the country marking the anniversary of

Gen Hossein Salami, the head of the Guard, also spoke in Tehran, where he repeated a pledge made the day before by Khamenei. "The resistance front and Iran will equip itself with whatever necessary to confront and defeat the enemy," he said, referring to the militant groups like Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah backed by Tehran. In Tehran, thousands at the

gate of the former US Embassy chanted "Death to America" and "Death to Israel." Some burned flags of the countries and effigies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. They also carried images of killed top figures of Iran's allied militant groups includ-ing Lebanese Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Palestinian Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar. The crowd in the they were ready to defend the

Millions of **Americans** seal their choices in

Broadway in New York is an important address in this election season in the US. This is the office of the Board of Elections. Michael Ryan, executive director, and his deputy Vincent Ignizio are upbeat about the figures that the early voting has drawn for the city. On the first day, about 140,000 votes were cast in the early

on the back but we are upbeat about this. New York has already created a record in early voting and it is still on," says Ryan.

of millions of voters have already cast their ballots. According to the data from the University of Florida's Election Lab tracker, more than 68 million Americans have already Across the nation, vot ers are taking advantage of the flexibility offered by early voting options, whether through mail-in ballots or in-person

ing conflicts on election day. Ryan feels that several factors played a role in ensuring the positive trend in early voting, at least for New York City (NYC). "In 2020 less than 100 more than that," says Ryan.

polling stations were set up for early voting. This year the number is almost 50 per cent An early voting station has been set up at the John Jay College in the Manhattan area of NYC. The station is packed with voters coming in and casting their ballots days ahead of the main election day on November 5. Suzan, the coordinator of the station, feels the early voting process is witnessing a very positive

Harris appears on 'Saturday Night Live' as mirror image of Rudolph

Vice President Kamala Harris made a surprise appearance on "Saturday Night Live" in the final days before the election, playing herself as the mirror-image double of Maya Rudolph's version of her in the show's cold open.

The first lines the candidate spoke as she sat across from Rudolph, their outfits identical, was drowned out by cheers from the audience.

"It is nice to see you Kamala," Harris told Rudolph with a broad grin she kept throughout the sketch. "And I'm just here to remind you, you got this." In sync, the two said support ers need to "Keep Kamala and carry-on-ala," declared that they share each other's "belief in the promise of America," and delivered the signature "Live from New York it's Saturday

Harris made the surprise trip to New York City with the elec-tion looming, briefly stepping away from the battleground

NBC's iconic sketch comedy show, where she was hoping to generate buzz and appeal to a nationwide audience. Harris came to New York on

Air Force Two after an early evening campaign stop Saturday on in Charlotte, North Carolina. She was scheduled to head to Detroit, but once in the air, aides said she'd be making an unscheduled stop and the plane landed at LaGuardia Airport. Harris arrived at 30 Rockefeller

Plaza in Manhattan, where "SNL" tapes, shortly after 8 p.m., enough time for a quick rehearsal before the show airs live at 11:30 pm. It is the final "SNL" episode before Election Day on Tuesday. The visit wasn't previously announced and an official familiar with Harris planning only officially confirmed it for reporters traveling with the vice president moments before the live airing began. The official insisted on anonymity to discuss plans before they were made public. Harris departed immediately ly campaigning in favor of told reporters, "It was fun!" as mate in 2016.

New York. Host John Mulaney and musical guest Chappell Roan shifted the show away from politics. Neither addressed the election. Mulaney, the standup comic and former "SNL" writer, hosted for the sixth time and talked about his kids with wife Olivia Munn, Catholicism, and his stint in Some expected Roan, the 26-

year-old singer who has become a major star in recent months, to make a political statement in her first appearance on the show. She has previously been harshly critical of the Democratic party and declined to endorse Harris, though Roan has said several times she plans to vote for her. But she played it straight, or as straight as the wildly theatrical performer gets. She sang her hit "Pink Pony Club," on an all-pink set bathed in pink light. Senator Tim Kaine also made a surprise appearance, in a game-show sketch where the gag was that no one remembered him despite his

Trump and Harris crisscross key states in last 50 hours

PTI WASHINGTON

Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris and her Republican rival former president Donald Trump are leaving nothing to chance in the last 50 hours before closing of the polls, making a passionate appeal to their countrymen to support and send them to the White House.

"We will win," Vice President Harris told thousands of her cheering supporters in Wisconsin urging them it's time to turn a page and bring in a new generation of leadership in America.

She was campaigning in Wisconsin and North Carolina

on Saturday. She plans to make closing arguments in Michigan, Georgia and Pennsylvania on Sunday and Monday.

Trump, 78, choose Virginia for campaigning on Saturday. Addressing thousands of his supporters in Salem, the former president promised to bring in a new era of peace and prosperity in the country. He continued to charge Harris of being a liberal Left radical.

Over the next two days, Trump has a hectic schedule in the battleground states of Michigan Pennsylvania, Georgia and North Carolina. To win, a candidate needs 272 electoral college votes.

According to respectable

272towin.com, Harris is assured of 226 electoral votes and Trump of 219. While Harris needs 44 additional electoral college votes to reach the magic figure of 272, Trump requires 51. Both the candidates have multiple pathways to victory running through the seven battleground states of Arizona, Nevada, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina

Political pundits believe that Pennsylvania (with 19 electoral college votes) and Michigan (15 electoral college votes) are now the ground zero. Latest polls indicate that it's too close to call in both Michigan and Pennsylvania.

and Georgia.

'India-US partnership most important globally for future'

PTI PHILADELPHIA

 $T^{
m he\ India-US\ partnership\ is}$ the most important engagement globally and the cooperation will flourish further if Kamala Harris becomes the US president as she recognises the significance of the relationship, prominent Indian-origin Democratic leader Neil Makhija has said.

In an exclusive interview with PTI, the young leader, considered to be close to Harris, also came down very hard on former president Donald Trump for his immigration policy that has triggered some concerns among immigrant communities in the US, including

Indian-Americans. On the India-US partnership, Makhija said it is the most important relationship for the "When you think about the competition the US has been having with China, when you think about the actions that Russia is taking which are at odds with the interests of the US and its allies, India is really the most important country for the US to continue to build the relationship in terms of its sheer size, economic activities, he said.

Makhija said it is very important that the next US president understands that India is a very crucial partner for the US in many ways.

"When it comes to global pri-orities like our defence, tackling global issues like climate change. The US and India can lead the way if they work together. So we need a president who recognises that and Kamala Harris is that person,

Makhija called Trump a threat to democracy. "He is engaging in the same kind of behaviour we have seen in some of the darkest moments in world history where leaders have scapegoated those individuals and communities that do not even have the right to vote," he said. Makhija is presently serving as Montgomery County Commissioner and Chair of the Board of Elections. He is the

first Indian American Commissioner elected in the history of Pennsylvania and many Democrats believe that the young leader could be in Harris' cabinet if she wins the election. You can see that he (Trump) is blaming all of the country's

problems on immigrants and it

is not real, it is not realistic, it

is simply aimed at inflaming

tensions and driving divisions

among people who live here in the US," he said. "Unfortunately history does repeat itself. Hopefully, the

people of our country recognise what happened in the past and we avoid a similar fate in the future," he added.

In his campaign speeches, Trump promised a radical shift to tighten Washington's immigration policy and vowed to stage the "largest deportation operation in American history' if he is reelected.

The Republican leader has even resolved to end birthright citizenship for the children of immigrants living in the US illegally, triggering concerns among various diaspora communities including from Bangladesh, India and

Makhija also appeared to hold the Republican Party responsi-



Neil Makhija

ble for not increasing the cap on H1B visas for Indians. "Kamala Harris was the sponsor of a bill to fix that issue of H1B backlog when she was the senator. The problem was that the Republicans did not support it and they used to say that they were in favour of legal immigration," he said.

"But now it is clear that they do not want any immigration and they do not support immigra-tion reform. They do not sup-port any of the bills that would give people who live here, work here and pay taxes a real pathway to citizenship," Makhija added.

Describing the November 5 presidential election as very significant for the US, he said the country is at the crossroads. "On the one hand, we have a candidate who is protecting democracy and fundamental freedoms. Then we have a candidate who represents the past and wants to turn back the

clock to a time before anyone

from our community was here in the US. Who wants to turn back the clock on fundamen tal rights," he said. 'Their (Trump camp's) belief is

that the country is supposed to be a specific demographic region. We think America is an idea, we think America is an idea that anyone can succeed no matter who you are, Makhija said. 'This is the decision that we are

making which is — do we have a country which is pluralistic. that is welcoming, that is inclusive or do we think it should be exclusive and really meant to serve a particular demography?" he said.

'I think Kamala Harris represents the future that is more inclusive, that will be welcoming and lives up to the ideals that our country truly was founded on," Makhija added.

20 mn euros to Pakistan for forest protection project Islamabad (PTI): Germany will provide 20 million euros to Pakistan for the second phase of a project aimed at the protection

and sustainable management of forests in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to a media report on Sunday. An agreement for financial sup port for the 'Billion Tree Afforestation Support Project' (BTASP) was signed in Islamabad on Saturday between Pakistan Economic Affairs Secretary Dr Kazim Niaz and Director German Development Bank KfW, Esther Gravenkotter. The first phase of BTASP is already under implementation in partnership with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Climate Change, Forestry, Environment and Wildlife Department, the Dawn newspaper reported. It will support the protection and sustainable management of

forests in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The project will focus on new plantations on 10,000 hectares, capacity building of forest departments, and developing a management information system. The project will support nature-based livelihood generation geared to alleviate poverty. It will promote women's economic empowerment and participation in decision-making processes, according to the report. Pakistan is among the nations considered most vulnerable to climatic changes despite being among the countries contributing least to environmental pollution. The country faced massive rains and floods in 2022, which, officials said, were caused by climatic changes.

Trump to rally backers every day until election in North Carolina

Gastonia (AP): Donald Trump will rally supporters in North Carolina every day until Tuesday's election, a flurry of late activity in the only swing state that he won in both his 2016 and 2020 campaigns. Even as Trump looks to

expand the electoral map and project strength with trips to New Mexico and Virginia, two Democratic states not widely viewed as competitive, he is putting considerable time into North Carolina, which last backed a Democrat for presi-

dent in 2008. The former president's path to the 270 electoral votes needed to capture the presidency gets significantly more complicat-

ed if he loses North Carolina. The fast-growing Southern state gave Trump his smallest margin of victory — 1.3 percentage points — over Democrat Joe Biden four years ago. Trump campaigned in Gastonia, west of Charlotte, and Greensboro on Saturday, with a stop in Salem, Virginia, in between. He will be in the eastern city of Kinston on Sunday and in Raleigh on Monday. Those four rallies will bring his total events in North Carolina since Oct. 1 to nine. His running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, has been in the state six times during the same period, most recently on

Vice President Kamala Harris, Trump's Democratic rival, also was in North Carolina on Saturday for a concert and rally in Charlotte. Her campaign has not announced any other travel to the state before Election Day, though she's sending her husband, second gentleman Doug Emhoff, to Greenville on Monday. The extensive damage from Hurricane Helene across western North Carolina has created a dose of uncertainty about the state of play here. Flooding destroyed homes and displaced residents in several counties, including the liberal city of Asheville and the conservative rural areas surround-

early voting

voting. "We don't want to pat ourselves

Across the United States, tens

polling sites. polling sites.
This trend allows voters to avoid potential issues such as inclement weather, long queues, or unforeseen schoduling.

REACTION TO NORTH KOREA'S MISSILE TEST

US flies long-range bomber in drill with S Korea, Japan

 $T^{\text{he United States flew a}}_{\text{long-range bomber in a}} \\ \text{trilateral drill with South Korea}$ and Japan on Sunday in response to North Korea's recent test-firing of a new intercontinental ballistic missile designed to strike the US mainland, South Korea's military

North Korea on Thursday tested the newly developed Hwasong-19 ICBM, which flew higher and stayed in the air longer than any other missile it has fired. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called it "an appropriate military action" to cope with external security threats posed by its rivals. On Sunday, the US flew the B

1B bomber to train with South Korean and Japanese fighter iets near the Korean Peninsula, demonstrating the three countries' firm resolve and readiness to respond to North Korea's advancing nuclear and missile programs, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a state-

The trilateral aerial training was the second by South Korea, the US and Japan this year, the statement said. The US often responds to major North Korean missile tests with temporary deployments of some of its powerful military assets



On Sunday, the US flew the B-1B bomber (file photo) to train with South Korean and Japanese fighter jets near the Korean Peninsula, demonstrating the three countries' firm resolve and readiness to respond to North Korea

such as long-range bombers, aircraft carriers and nuclearpowered submarines to and near the Korean Peninsula. North Korea typically responds angrily to such US actions, calling them part of a US-led plot to invade the North and performing additional weapons

The US has flown the B-1B bomber over or near the Korean Peninsula four times this year, according to South

Korea's military. A B-1B is capable of carrying a large conventional weapons payload. Thursday's Hwasong-19 test, North Korea's first ICBM testfiring in almost a year, showed progress in North Korea's missile program. But many experts say North Korea still has some technological issues to master to acquire functioning ICBMs that can deliver nuclear strikes on the US mainland. The experts say the Hwasong-19

shown in North Korea's state media photos and videos looked too big to be useful in

The ICBM test was seen as an effort to grab American attention ahead of the US presidential election this week and respond to international condemnation of North Korea's reported dispatch of thousands of troops to Russia to support its war against Ukraine,

200 families separated by US-Mexico border reunite

Ciudad Juarez (Mexico): Nearly 200 families gathered Saturday along a stretch of the U.S.-Mexico border for heartfelt but brief reunions with loved ones they had not seen for years because they live in opposite countries. Tears flowed and people embraced as Mexican families were allowed to reunite for a few minutes at the border with relatives who migrated to the US Adults and children passed over the Rio Grande to meet with their loved ones.

This year, the annual event organized by an immigrant rights advocacy group happened three days before the US presidential election, whose monthslong campaigns have focused heavily on immigration and border security. It also took place under increased security, according to the Network in Defense of the Rights of Migrants.

'We did not have barbed wire, we did not have so many soldiers deployed in our community, said Fernando García, the orga nization's director, highlighting the border security changes that the border has seen since the reunions began last decade. "The barbed wire had to be opened so that the families could have this event."

García said he expects migration into the US to continue regardless of who wins Tuesday's election. Family reunions, he said,

Crashing waves, night of terror in Spain village



lapsed houses or in the gorge.

A general view of an area affected by floods in Chiva, Spain

AP CHIVA

Trene Cuevas will never forget $oldsymbol{1}$ the sound of the waves crashing below her apartment's balcony. If only there had been a flash of lightning in the darkness to let her glimpse what sounded like a roaring sea.

"It was a constant fear because we didn't have light to see by," Cuevas told The Associated Press. "We could hear the roar of the waves, which was unbelievable. The street was completely flooded and we were hoping for some lightning so that we could at least see what situation we were in. It was all waves, currents everywhere.

"We have that sound of the waves burned in our memory." The devastating flash floods in eastern Spain this week that claimed over 200 lives and destroyed countless homes and livelihoods also seared a scar of terror in many survivors Cuevas, a 48-year-old embry-

ologist, is a resident of Chiva, a village perched on a hill about 30 kilometres from Valencia city, whose southern outskirts were likewise ravaged by the floods on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Chiva got more rain in eight hours than the town had experienced in the preceding 20 months. Cuevas was at home and saw how the gorge dividing her village suddenly overflowed with rushing water.

The tsunami-like wall of water claimed at least seven lives in Chiva, home to some 16,000 people, and the search goes on for more missing, either in col-

'It was terrifying because that night it began to rain and the water began to overflow the gorge and started carrying away cars and trees," Cuevas said. "The underpasses of the bridges started to clog with debris, and the water started to flow through the entire village." The gorge, called the "Barrancout de Chiva," is normally dry, but it is fed into by several other runoff gorges and channels water to vineyards below. The huge storm sent a blast of water that knocked down two of the four bridges crossing the gorge, while a third was left unsafe to cross. The sides of the gorge were eaten out, bringing down a sidewalk and several houses and tearing holes in others. Cuevas, who moved to Chiva when she got married 18 years ago, lives one street over from the buildings bordering the gorge. She and other people living in her apartment building helped several neigh-bours from the building in front when they feared it would come down. The neighbours said their building trembled from the force of the water.

Cuevas and her fellow residents helped tie ropes or cords across the street so that the people on the other side could hang on as they waded through the rushing water. They then made it up the stairs and some 20 people spent a sleepless night in her second-floor apartment and the apartment above.

Amparo Cerda, Cuevas' upstairs neighbour, described herself as traumatised by her memories of the fury of the waves and the sound of "doors exploding" from the water's

It was as if their building had become a ship lost in a storm at sea in the pitch black night. There were waves in the gorge, waves in the street below where the water came in the other direction and ran into the water coming from the gorge," Cuevas said. "So right here, at this corner, just where the houses fell down, the two currents hit and produced terrifying waves."
"When the daylight came we

could see the damage," Cuevas said. "We saw all the houses that had disappeared and there was a feeling of impotence because you didn't know where to start looking for people." Five days have passed since that night of terror, and in Chiva and other localities, such as Paiporta, Barrio de la Torre, and Massanassa, citizens and volunteers are pitching in to clean up the mountains of debris and the thick brown layers of mud left by the water. Five thousand more soldiers are arriving in the area this week-end to help the 2,500 already deployed. Thousands of police officers have also been sent in. But for now it is the people themselves still leading the way. "Now we need to clean up and try to get back to normal because there are more rains forecast for the weekend, and that won't help," Cuevas said. "We are trying to get everything ready for when the rains comes back. Because they will."

More Indian women seeking employment in S Arabia: Official

Rivadh (PTI): Indians represent the second-largest expatriate community in Saudi Arabia and "welcoming conditions" for women are increasing the kingdom's appeal for Indian women seeking meaningful employment here, according to the country's human resources and social development

Official figures show that as of 2024, over 2.4 million Indian workers reside in the kingdom, with 1.64 million in the private sector and 785,000 in domestic work. Bangladesh has the highest number of expat workers at 2.69 million. A spokesperson in the min-

including women, play a vital role in Saudi Arabia's labour market, comprising a substantial portion of the expatriate workforce.

"Comprehensive reforms, expanded workplace support, and investments in skills development create welcoming conditions for women from diverse backgrounds," the spokesperson said.

"Improved infrastructure, including women-only transportation and childcare support, further enhances the appeal for Indian women seeking meaningful employment, enabling them to contribute to the kingdom's growth while pursuing their professional and personal aspirations," the

spokesperson told PTI. Asked about some instances of Indians being duped by agents and touts in India on employ-ment opportunities in Saudi

Arabia, he said Saudi Arabia is dedicated to upholding international labour standards and has implemented substantial labour reforms to protect workers' rights.

To further support these efforts, Saudi Arabia has established bilateral agreements with various countries, includ ing India, to ensure the protection of workers during recruitment, focusing on information exchange, joint investigations, and capacity-building to combat forced labour," he said. The Musaned and Qiwa plat-

forms allow workers to file complaints regarding wages, contract terms, or mistreatment, ensuring that these connecessary, legal action is taken, he added.

On the over 11,000 lawsuits involving Indian workers this year, the spokesperson said the first stage of consideration of labour disputes between the worker and the employer is the mediation process conducted to resolve the dispute and try to reach an amicable resolution acceptable to both parties if possible or refer the case to the labour court. Elaborating on the working conditions for women, he said that Saudi Arabia's advancements in supporting female employment position the country as a conducive environment for success. The spokesperson said that efforts by the ministry to support and empower women in the workforce have led to an unprecedented reduction in female unemployment in the

Moldovans cast votes in decisive presidential runoff

Moldovans cast votes in a decisive presidential runoff Sunday that pits pro-Western incumbent Maia Sandu against a Russia-friendly opponent, as ongoing claims of voter fraud and intimidation threaten democracy in the European Union candidate country.

In the first round held October 20, Sandu obtained 42 per cent of the ballot but failed to win an outright majority. She is facing Alexandr Stoianoglo, a former prosecutor general, who outper-formed polls in the first round with almost 26 per cent of the

Polling stations will close at 9

pm (1900 GMT). By 1 pm, 850,000 people — almost 30 per cent of eligible voters — had cast ballots, according to the Central Electoral Commission. A poll released by research

company iData indicates a tight race that leans toward a narrow Sandu victory, an outcome that might rely on Moldova's large diaspora. The presidential role carries significant powers in areas such as foreign policy and national security and has a four-year term.

Moldova's diaspora played a key role in a nationwide referendum also held on October 20, when a narrow majority of 50.35 per cent voted to secure Moldova's path toward EU membership. But the results of the ballots including Sunday's vote have been overshadowed by allegations of a major votebuying scheme and voter intim-Instead of winning the over-

whelming support that Sandu had hoped, the results in both races exposed Moldova's judiciary as unable to adequately protect the democratic process. Moldova's Prime Minister Dorin Recean said Friday that people

throughout the country were receiving "anonymous death threats via phone calls" in what he called "an extreme attack" to scare voters in the former Soviet republic, which has a population of about 2.5 million people.

Lawmakers vetting Europian Union chief's new team

AP BRUSSELS

 $F^{ive\ months\ after\ the}_{\text{European Union lurched to}}$ the political right, the influence of nationalist and populist parties will go on public display in Brussels on Monday when lawmakers vet the proposed new members of the EU's increasingly powerful executive branch. Over five days of hearings, the $EU\ parliamentarians\ will\ grill\ 26$ top officials - nominated by their national governments to establish whether they are suitable to lead the next European Commission on policies like agriculture, trade, economic affairs, health or migra-

The commission is the only EU body with the power to draft laws which, once passed by the Parliament and the council of member states, apply in all 27 countries of the bloc. They cover everything from water quality to data protection to competition policy.

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen assembled her new-look executive in September, seeking to balance sensitive political, geographical and gender concerns within a team that will lead the European project for the next five years. The vast majority of the wouldbe commissioners come from the right of the political spectrum, mostly the European People's Party (EPP), a conservative EU-wide political family that counts von der Leven as a member and is the biggest in the parliament. That should makes things easier for her. Despite that advantage, the EPP has already worked with hardright groups — including Italian Premier Georgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy, which has neo-fascist roots, and stridently nationalist lawmakers from Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's ruling Fidesz to secure majorities in the

European Parliament. Other pro-European parties were weakened in the June 6-9 EU elections and von der Leyen can operate without them. The second-biggest group — the center-left Socialists and Democrats — seems ready to rubber-stamp her team. Its leaders say it does not have a "kill list" of nominees that it intends to remove

The commission is akin to a government cabinet, with commissioners instead of ministers. But it proposes laws that influence all aspects of the lives of

around 450 million people in the 27 countries that make up the world's biggest trading bloc. Von der Leyen is the boss of more than 33,000 employees.

The commission handles trade talks, sealing agreements with EU partners in the outside world and managing disputes at the World Trade Organisation. It's also a powerful competition watchdog, whose influence has been felt by tech giants like Apple, Google and Meta.

Von der Leyen's power is growing. Her team led the European drive to secure COVID-19 vaccines, and whipped up a massive rescue package to help Europe's economies cope with the cost of trying to stop the pandemic spreading. It also helped the EU weather the energy crisis sparked by Russia's war on Ukraine. This is von der Leven's second

term. More than half the nominees — 14 of them, compared to 10 last time — are from EPP parties, like her. Ten of them are women. Von der Leyen, a German, is keeping Europe's other major powers France, Italy and Spain close by her side. To the disappointment of mainstream parties, she has penciled in Meloni ally Raffaele Fitto as a new executive vice president — one of five — to oversee "cohesion policy," which helps finance infrastructure projects with a big slice of the EU's mas-

sive budget. Former French Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne was made a VP and secured the industry portfolio. Spanish Socialist Teresa Ribera, another VP, has a powerful post

combining the transition toward a green economy and competition policies

Former Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas will be von der Leyen's foreign policy chief. Ultimately, though, they will all answer to the president.

Nominees are questioned for three hours by the leaders of committees and senior lawmakers most closely linked to their portfolios. The nominees must demonstrate general competence, a commitment to Europe, independence, and good communications skills. Immediately after, an evaluation is made behind closed doors. Candidates must win a two thirds majority vote. If they fall short, lawmakers can ask additional questions in writing or request a further 90-minute

Chinese scholars highlight Ramayan's footprints in China buried in Buddhist texts

hina has had footprints of the stories of Ramayana cloaked in Buddhist scriptures for centuries, scholars here have said, bringing to the fore perhaps for the first time, the influence of Hinduism in the country's checkered history.

At a symposium "Ramayana- A Timeless Guide" organised by the Indian Embassy here on Saturday, a host of Chinese scholars associated with longstanding research on religious influences, made candid presentations tracing the historical routes through which Ramayana reached China and its influence on Chinese art and literature.

"As a classic intertwining the religious and the secular world, the influence of Ramayana has grown ever more significantly through cross-cultural transmission," Dr Jiang Jingkui, Professor and Dean of the

Institute for International and Area Studies of Tsinghua University said.

"China, too, has absorbed elements of this epic, which not only left traces in Chinese (majority) Han culture but was also reinterpreted and given new meaning in Chinese Xizang (Tibetan) culture," he said. China officially refers to Tibet as Xizang.

This cultural migration and adaptation demonstrate the openness and flexibility of Ramayana as a classic and worldly text," Jiang said.

The earliest content related to Ramayana in China was introduced into the Han cultural sphere, primarily through Buddhist scriptures, he said. While it was not fully incorporated as a complete work into the Han cultural sphere, parts of the epic were incorporated into Buddhist scriptures, he said, citing Chinese translations of Buddhist scripts in which "key figures such as Dasharatha

and Hanuman were noted as Buddhist characters".

'A famous example is that Hanuman was transformed into a Monkey King who obeyed Buddhist teachings, blending into classic Buddhist moral narratives," Jiang said. The Monkey King with human characteristics called Sun Wukong, has remained forages in the best-loved and most enduring Chinese literature and folklore.

In his presentation, Pro Liu Jian of the National Institute of International Strategies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said many Chinese scholars agree that Sun Wukong can be traced to Hanuman, though some scholars say he is a "domestic product". "Chinese scholars generally agree that the image of Sun Wukong comes from that of Hanuman. Therefore, Sun Wukong is not a domestic product, but a character from India," he asserted. Speaking on



the topic 'Footsteps of Ram in China, Prof Qiu Yonghuai, Chief expert and Deputy Director of China Centre for South Asian Studies of Sichuan University, in her presentation displayed photos of a wide variety of different Hindu deities in the museum Quanzhou, in China's Fujian province. She even showed a photo of a Buddhist temple managed by a Hindu priest. "It was primarily through

Buddhism that Indian culture took its stronghold in China. This is the reason why in the history of Sino-Indian cultural relations, Hinduism occupies a negligible position," she said. "Multifaceted Indian culture both Buddhist and non-Buddhist — made its mark on Chinese soil," she added. Jiang, in his speech also recalled how the famous seventh-century Chinese scholar Xuanzang

who visited India, studied at

Nalanda University and brought back a host of Buddhist scriptures providing detailed accounts of Ramayana stories he heard during his pilgrimage. "However, due to the Hindu background of Ramayana and the predominance of Buddhism in China, the text was neither fully translated nor widely circulated within Han culture," he said.

The first Chinese translation of Ramayana from Sanskrit was done by Ji Xianlin in 1980. Ji's translation was a "significant

breakthrough for Chinese academia, providing Chinese readers with access to an Indian literary classic and establishing a new bridge for Sino-Indian cultural exchange," Jiang said.

Ii dedicated nearly a decade to translating this vast work of twenty-four thousand verses, and his version has become a cornerstone for the study of Ramavana in China, he said. Jiang added that Ramayana has a more extensive and long-

standing history of influence in Tibet, where it was first introduced during the period of the Tubo Kingdom. Through literary works and

theatrical performances, Ramayana has not only become a subject of in-depth study among Tibetan scholars but has also gained widespread popularity among common people in Tibet.

'This demonstrates the powerful vitality of Ramayana as a cross-cultural classic," he said 'Ramayana is not only an epic but also a profound exposition of the ideal personality and ideal society. Through the actions and words of Rama, as well as the establishment of the 'Ram Rajva' the epic presents multiple dimensions of the concept of 'Adarsh' (ideal) in Indian cul-

ture," he said. In his address, Indian Ambassador to China Pradeep Kumar Rawat said Ramayana is believed to be the oldest poet ic work of human civilisation.

"While the historians have not come to a definite conclusion about the time period when the Ramayana was written, there is astronomy-based research finding that date Ramayana to about 7th Century BC," he said.

The Ramayana has also transcended geographical boundaries, adapting itself to seamlessly merging into local cultural tapestry, while maintaining its core values," he added



Thank you holly spirit for all the blessings Celine Thank you holly spirit for all

the blessings Celine

Thank you holly spirit for all the blessings Celine Thank you holly spirit for all

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Mcap of most valued firms jumps, State Bank, ICICI Bank top gainers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of 6 of the top-10 most-valued firms surged Rs 1.07.366.05 crore last week with State Bank of India and ICICI Bank becoming the biggest gainers.

Leading stock exchanges BSE and NSE conducted a one-'Muhurat special session on the occasion of Diwali on November 1, marking the start of the new Samvat 2081.

Last week, the BSE benchmark climbed 321.83 points, or 0.40 per cent.

While Reliance Industries ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, ITC, Hindustan Unilever, and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) were the gainers, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, and Infosys faced erosion from their market valuation.



The valuation of State Bank of India jumped Rs 36,100.09 crore to Rs 7,32,755.93 crore. ICICI Bank added

9.10,686.85 crore in its market valuation.

LIC's valuation surged Rs 16,887.74 crore to Rs 5,88,509.41 crore and that of Reliance Industries soared Rs 15,393.45 crore to 18,12,120.05 crore.

ITC added Rs 10,671.63 crore, taking its market capitalisation (mcap) to Rs 6,13,662.96

The valuation of Hindustan Unilever climbed Rs 2,537.56 crore to Rs 5,96,408.50 crore. However, the mcap of Infosys tanked Rs 38,054.43 crore to Rs 7,31,442.18 crore and that of Bharti Airtel slumped Rs 27,299.54 crore to 9,20,299.35 crore.

The valuation of TCS eroded Rs 26,231.13 crore to Rs 14,41,952.60 crore.

The mcap of HDFC Bank declined Rs 3,662.78 crore to Rs 13,26,076,65 crore. Reliance Industries remained

the most valuable firm of the country followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, ITC, Hindustan Unilever and LIC

SEBI proposes to allow InvITs, REITs, SM REITs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has proposed allowing Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), Small and Medium REITs (SM REITs) and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) to use interest rate derivatives for hedging

Also, the regulator has suggested approving locked-in units for REITs and InvITs to be transferred among sponsors and their groups, similar to rules for promoters in listed companies, to help sponsors manage holdings without compromising "skin in the

Additionally, Sebi suggested permitting fixed deposits to be considered as cash equivalents when calculating leverage REITs and InvITs, clarifying credit rating requirements REIT and InvIT borrowings, and setting a timeline for filling vacancies on their boards and expanding the asset base for REITs and SM REITs.

The regulator has also proposed to permit REITs to invest in liquid mutual funds. It has suggested measures to facilitate ease of doing business for REITs and InvITs, along with investors' protection.

According to its consultation paper, Sebi is considering allowing REITs and InvITs to hedge against interest rate fluctuations by using derivatives like interest rate

This could help stabilise cash

flows, reduce risks, and protect unitholder interests, especially for long-term infrastructure projects. It is also proposed to define 'Common Infrastructure for REIT regulations.

business enhance flexibility for REITs, it has been proposed to clarify that facilities like power plants, heating/cooling water treatment, and waste treatment plants -- serving one or more REIT assets -will qualify as "common infrastructure" under REIT

This applies even if these



facilities are not located within a single project due to their technical requirements. These facilities should supply and be used exclusively by REIT assets. For power plants, however, any excess power can be sold to the state utility/grid regulations, with any credits or payments going towards the benefit of REIT assets.

To improve transparency, it has been proposed to amend the governance norms for quarterly reporting of InvITs. Currently, quarterly results for the investment manager and its business segments are presented to the investment manager's board, but there is no direct requirement for InvITs to report their performance.

would clarify that quarterly results should specifically reflect the performance of the InvITs themselves, not investment the managers. This change aligns InvIT regulations with REIT regulations, where the focus is on the quarterly results of the REIT itself.

Also, it has been suggested to align the composition of NRCs in REIT and InvIT managers with listed companies under the LODR regulations.

Currently, all NRC members for REITs and InvITs must be independent directors. The proposal allows a mix of independent and nonexecutive directors, similar to listed companies.

enhance investors' protection, reviewing suggested conditions for InvITs to borrow beyond the 49 per cent limit, assessing REIT investments in equity shares and outlining the roles and responsibilities of trustees for REITs, InvITs,

FMCG firms worry over high inflation, hint price hike

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

eading FMCG companies Learning a decline in margins in the September quarter on account of higher input costs and food inflation, which ultimately slowed down the pace of urban consumption

Rising prices of commodity inputs such as palm oil, coffee cocoa were also accentuated and some FMCG firms have hinted at a price

HUL. Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPL), Marico, ITC, and Tata Consumer Products Ltd (TCPL) have expressed concerns over squeezing urban consumption, which according to industry experts forms 65-68 per cent of FMCG total sales.

"We think this is a short-term hit and we will recover the margins through judicious price increase and stabilising of costs," said GCPL Managing Director and CEO Sudhir Sitapati in a Q2 earning statement.

GCPL, makers of Cinthol, Godrej No 1, HIT had a



headwinds of oil costs and tough consumer demand in India and its standalone EBITDA margin was lower, caused entirely by high inflation in palm oil.

The rural markets, which were earlier lagging behind, continued their growth journey ahead of urban. FMCG players growth premium products and from through commerce channels.

Another FMCG maker Dabur India also said the demand environment was challenging in the September quarter "high food marked by steady quarter given the inflation and a resultant sector, which used to be in impact is far higher," said

squeeze in urban demand." The maker of Dabur Chyawanprash, PudinHara and Real juice reported a decline of 17.65 per cent in its consolidated net profit to Rs 417.52 crore and revenue from operations slipped 5.46 per cent to Rs 3,028.59 crore. Recently. Nestle India Managing Chairman & Director Suresh Narayanan also raised concerns over decline and said "middle segment" is under pressure as high food inflation continues to cripple household budgets.

"It is extremely clear that the

market is facing muted

demand. The growth in F&B

quarters ago, is now down to 1.5-2 per cent," he said. Over the rise of food inflation, Narayanan said there is a "sharp uptick" in prices of fruits and vegetables and oil prices 'This could lead to an

double digits a couple of

increase in prices if raw costs become unmanageable for companies. We are ourselves facing a difficult situation as far as coffee and cocoa prices are concerned," he said. Nestle India, which owns

brands such as Maggi, Kit Kat, and Nescafe also reported a marginal decline of 0.94 per cent and its domestic sales growth was at 1.2 per cent. Narayanan also pointed out

that tier-1 and below towns and rural also seem to be reasonably stable. However, "pressure points" are coming from mega cities and metros. TCPL MD & CEO Sunil D'Souza also said urban has softened and has an impact on consumer spending in urban areas.

"My hypothesis is probably food inflation is higher than what we think it is and the

D'Souza in the earnings call for the September quarter.

HUL CEÔ & MD Rohit Jawa said the market volume growth trajectory remained muted in this quarter. At an MAT (moving annual total) level, total FMCG volume growth has slowed down slightly in recent months.

"The pattern is quite clear urban growth has trended down in the recent quarters or quarter and rural has continued to grow gradually and has now for the past few quarters been ahead of urban, and also continues to be ahead of urban this time," Jawa said in an earnings call. HUL, which owns power brands such as Surf, Rin, Lux, Pond's, Lifebuoy, Lakmé, Brooke Bond, Lipton and Horlicks, reported a 2.33 per cent decline in consolidated net profit.

Marico also Similarly, reported "rural growing at 2x the pace of urban" on a yearon-year basis. It also reported "higher input costs in the core portfolios". Though it already had price hikes in the coconut oil portfolio and a favourable reversal in the pricing cycle in Saffola oils.

Magicpin slashes platform fee to Rs 5 per delivery



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hyperlocal e-commerce app magicpin has magicpin has slashed platform charges to Rs 5 per delivery, half of the fee set by its competitors, a top company official said on Sunday.

Around two weeks back Zomato and Swiggy raised platform fees in the range of 42-67 per cent per delivery. Magicpin founder and CEO Anshoo Sharma, on social

platform announced the reduction in platform fees applicable for deliveries during the present calendar year. "We can find a balance

towards the welfare of our delivery heroes and our customers during festive seasons.

Hence, here is a magicpin promise to let more people enjoy the festive season. Magicpin's platform fees slashed by 50 per cent of

the rest of the year," Sharma He said there will be no fee

competition to Rs 5 only for

hike on food delivery for the rest of the year 2024. Zomato increased

platform fee from Rs 7 to Rs 10, which will be charged to customers besides delivery fee per order. Swiggy followed suit and

raised the platform fee to Rs 10 from Rs 6 it charged earlier. Before Diwali, Magicpin was

levying a platform fee of Rs 7, which it has slashed by about 29 per cent, following which it has recorded a two-fold jump in order on a year-overyear basis.

This Diwali, we went against the current trend and took some hard platform pricing decisions.

Result: More than Half a Million orders, Love and Support received during the

Microsoft sees strong momentum in AI spending in India, aims to empower two million with AI skills

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Microsoft does not see any slowdown in technology spends in India, the company's India and South Asia President, Puneet Chandok said, asserting that "a lot of momentum" is building up on AL with buzz building up on AI with buzz around 'Copilot' and rise in number of use cases across industries in this market that the software maker counts as among its fastest-growing regions.

regions.
In an interview to PTI,
Chandok said the general
perception around AI has
shifted from skepticism to
optimism, and now to real
impact on the ground, with
emergence of "real emergence interesting use cases".

Microsoft's AI assistant
'Copilot' has become a "verb"
for artificial intelligence, he

observed. The Redmond, Washington-based company is constantly looking at areas it needs to invest in, he said, describing India as among the fastestgrowing regions globally for Microsoft and a "real opportunity to make a dent" with technology and innovation.

innovation.

Noting that technologies that change the world have to be built responsibly, Chandok emphasised that Microsoft is fully committed to ensuring compliance with all the regulatory requirements, and with new evolving frameworks.

"Copilot has become the yerb

"Copilot has become the verb for AI. We are truly becoming 'Copilot' to India's transformation, which I'm really excited about," Chandok said.

Microsoft is working towards its mission of making AI a reality for everyone in India. Microsoft is "much more than



a technology business in India", Chandok said, adding, "we truly want to be a force that moves India and South Asia forward".

It is pertinent to mention that Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella during his CEO Satya Nadella during his visit to the country in February this year had affirmed the company's commitment to supporting India's transformation into an AI-first nation -- in terms of skilled AI workforce and AI infusion across sectors and industries. The Microsoft global honcho had announced that the company will provide 2 million people in India with AI skilling opportunities.
"...The ADVANTA(I)GE INDIA program that we launched, where we're going to train 2 million people in India over the next two years

India over the next two years on AI... That is on its way... The other one, (is where) 75,000 women developers in 75,000 women developers in India will be trained and certified as part of Microsoft's 'Code Without Barriers' program, which is really exciting. We just launched the Microsoft Micro Degree in AI with the Ministry of Skill Development, as part of our commitment to enhancing businesses. So that is a real opportunity from a demand perspective. "On the supply side, if I look at GitHub, India is just behind the US, and close to 15 million developers in India are now on GitHub. We will overtake the US in the next two or three years," he said,

digital skills across India," Chandok said.

Chandok believes that India is among the most-exciting markets globally for all technology companies, and for Microsoft.

"It is also one of the fastest-growing markets for Microsoft, one of the fastestgrowing regions across the world, and that is the reason you are seeing a lot of commitment, a lot of investments, and a lot of impact," he said.

The company is bringing the concept of 'One Microsoft'

concept of 'One Microsott together in India.
"We have got massive capabilities in India. IDC, which is a development centre, cloud plus AI, Microsoft Research has a massive presence in India, and marks one of the largest presence outside the US. We're bringing all of those capabilities together for our customers and working truly as 'one Microsoft' to make sure that the AI-for-everyone mission in India, is a reality," he said.

The company's India outlook is backed by strong traction it sees on demand and supply sides, as also the on-ground impact.

"From a demand perspective, more than 7,000 listed companies are in India... A massive runway... Third largest startup ecosystem in the world. So we're excited the world. So we're excited about that 60 million-plus small and medium businesses. So that is a real opportunity from a demand

referring to the Microsoft-owned software development platform.

Citing estimates to back the company's optimism about the region, he said one is six AI researchers or AI developers in the world come from India.

"There's a recent study which said every fourth employee that will get added to the workforce in the next 10 years will come from India. So I think just the impact that we have on the world is incredibly important," he said.

The Microsoft India leader said AI conversations need to shift from challenges to real opportunities, given that the India market offers transformative opportunities across sectors.

across sectors.
Citing an example of just how
AI is making a difference in
India, he said, given that a
sizable population here does
not speak English, AI is
helping drive local language

push.

"...So it is reducing the digital divide, which is a fascinating opportunity," he said.

Chandok, however, pointed out that technologies that change the world must be built responsibly, and emphasised that Microsoft is fully committed to ensuring compliance with all the regulatory frameworks.

The regulatory conversations, across the globe, are pushing all tech companies, including

all tech companies, including Microsoft, to re-emphasise and reinforce the commitments on safeguarding data, privacy,

removing transparency, He said 'security' has to be built by design, and can "never be an afterthought".

"It is job number one, security

is above everything else.

India sees significant gains in export competitiveness across key sectors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's export competitiveness has witnessed healthy gains in multiple sectors particularly petroleum, gemstones, agrochemicals and sugar during the last five years, as these segments have increased their share in global trade, according to the commerce ministry data.

according to the commerce ministry data. The other sectors where the share of India's exports has increased during 2018 and 2023 are electrical goods, pneumatic tyres, taps and valves, and semiconductor devices.

The ministry data analysis showed that petroleum exports rose to USD 84.96 billion in 2023, with India's pullon in 2023, with India's market share surging to 12.59 per cent last year from 6.45 per cent in 2018, positioning it as the second-largest global exporter. It was ranked fifth in 2018.

2018. In the precious and semi-precious stones segment, the country's share in global shipments has soared to 36.53 per cent last year from 16.27 per cent in 2018. It has propelled the country to the top position in the category, with exports reaching USD 1.52 billion in 2023 from USD 0.26 billion in 2018. 0.26 billion in 2018.

It was at the second spot in

Similarly, in cane or beet sugar, the country's outbound shipments have more than quadrupled to USD 3.72 billion from USD 0.93 billion in 2018.

India has achieved tremendous growth in the



"As the world's second-largest exporter of sugar, India's success can be attributed to both favourable agricultural policies and its strong production base.

The country has capitalised on the growing global demand for sugar, especially in regions like Southeast Asia and Africa," an official said. India's share of the global market for insecticides and fungicides has also shown healthy improvement.

The country increased its global share from 8.52 per cent in 2018 to 10.85 per cent in 2023, with exports reaching USD 4.32 billion.

India's ability to meet international agricultural and environmental standards and its emphasis on innovation in agrochemicals have led to this improvement, the official said. India is now the third-largest exporter globally against the 5th position in 2018, the data export of cane or beet sugar, with its global market share increasing from 4.17 per cent in 2018 to 12.21 per cent in

in the global market for rubber pneumatic tyres has also strengthened, with exports growing to USD 2.66 billion in 2023 from USD 1.82 billion in 2018.

billion in 2018. India now holds a 3.31 per cent share of the global market, up from 2.34 per cent in 2018, and the country has moved up to the eighth position globally from 13th in 2018, indicating the rising demand for Indianmanufactured tyres, particularly in emerging particularly in emerging markets.

The data also showed that exports of semiconductors and photosensitive devices have increased from a mere USD 0.16 billion in 2018 to USD 1.91 billion in 2023, with the country's share in the world market rising to 1.4 per world market rising to 1.4 per cent, and the country now ranks ninth globally compared to 25th in 2018. This underscores India's potential to become a key player in the global semiconductor supply chain.

long festive weekend! This is 2X of what we did last year," Sharma said in a post **↑** Lower sales

realisation hit

margins of

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Major cement manufacturers reported a decline in margins in the September quarter, mainly on account of lower prices, leading to lower sales realisation.

cement makers

Barring three leading cement producers UltraTech Cement, producers Ultra Iech Cement, Ambuja Cement, and Dalmia Bharat other smaller players, including Nuvoco Vistas Corp, JK Cement, Birla Corporation, and Heidelberg Cement, reported a decline in topline and sales volume in the second quarter of the current fiscal year current fiscal year. Industry observers said the

increase in sales volume of UltraTech and Ambuja Cements is mainly due to the several acquisitions by both companies that consolidated their position further in the

industry.
The industry also faced challenges such as extended monsoon, floods, and a slow pickup in government demand, cumulatively leading towards a weak demand. Power, fuel, and other costs,

however, largely remained stable for the industry. The all-India average cement price was around Rs 348 per 50 kg bag in June 2024. It decreased 11 per cent year-on-year to Rs 330 per bag in September, though it increased 2 per cent on a month-on-month basis. In the first half of FY25, In the first half of FY25, cement prices declined 10 per cent year-on-year to Rs 330 per bag. A year earlier, the average prices stood at Rs 365 per bag and Rs 375 per bag in FY23, according to an Icra report IMA-AYUS celebrates Dhanwantari Day, honours pioneers in traditional Indian medicine promoting Ayurveda, writes ABHI SINGHAL

Ayurveda is an alternative medicine system which has always been pushed to heights for desi and better recovery. The theory and practice of Ayurveda is heavily practised throughout India majorly with the help of Ayurvedic medicines. The IMA-AYUS is an organisation working for the betterment of the integrated system of medicine from the past 12 years.

IMA-AYUS has been organising Lord Dhanwantri Jayanti every year to celebrate Lord Dhanwantri, god of medicine, the founder of Ayurveda, and an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The organisation celebrates the day as a tribute to Lord Dhanwantri and honouring pioneers in traditional Indian medicine.

The event was graced by K. K. Sharma, Founder and Managing Director of AIMIL Pharmaceuticals, as the Guest of Honour, bringing his invaluable

traditional Indian medicine. AIMIL is science-driven company herbal Ayurveda and producing Ayurvedic healthcare products promoting Ayurveda for 40 years.

support

In his keynote speech, Dr. R.S. Chouhan, Patron of IMA - AYUS, reaffirmed the association's commitment to the advancement of Indian medicine and supporting the fraternity's betterment. Dr. Chouhan spoke about the association's role in promoting the rich heritage of Ayurveda, Unani, and other systems, traditional medical

underscoring their significance in

contemporary healthcare. The event inaugurated Ram Niwas Goyal, Hon'ble Speaker of the Delhi Vidhan Sabha, who addressed the audience emphasised on how the Indian system medicine is vital for health future and wellness in the country. The event had sessions

ith historical roots explaining Ayurveda and its impact Students from Ayurvedic & Unani in the Indian deeply to the audience. The Tibbia College Delhi, School of subcontinent, organisation unveiled its monthly

Unani Medical Education and magazine Souvenir 2024, with all the Research, Jamia Hamdard Delhi, yearly events that take place within Gaur Brahmin Ayurvedic College Rohtak Haryana, Shri Krishna Ayush

University Kurukshetra, Divya Jyoti Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital, Modi Nagar, Ghaziabad (U.P.) and more were facilitated as promising students in the field of

In conversation with Dr Raman Khanna

Dr Raman Khanna, B.A.M.S and medical practitioner from the past 41 years is the the National General Secretary IMA-AYUS. He joined the organisation in 1988, it's year of formation. He is dedicated to his career as a doctor and to promote Ayurveda. He talked about Ayurveda, it's incorporation in daily life and the history of Lord Dhanwantari Jayanti. Excerpts

What is the history of the Lord Dhanwantri Jayanti celebrated by **IMA-AYUS?** Integrated Medical association

IMA(Ayus) has been celebrating Dhanwantari Diwas for the last 38 years to honor Lord Dhanwantari, who is regarded as the God of Ayurveda and health. Celebrated on Dhanteras, this recognizes contributions of traditional medicine and promotes awareness about Ayurvedic practices. It serves as a platform to emphasize holistic health, wellness, and the importance of integrating ancient healing traditions into modern healthcare.

Why do you organise this event every year in the field of Ayurveda? All the practitioners of Ayurveda worship Bhagwan Dhanwantari believed to have emerged from the ocean during the churning of the ocean (Samudra Manthan) carrying the nectar of immortality (amrita) and the knowledge of healing. His association with health and wellness makes him a central figure in Ayurvedic practices, symbolizing the holistic approach to healing and the importance of balance in life. Worshiping Dhanwantari is a way for

practitioners to seek blessings for health, knowledge, and the successful practice of Ayurveda.



How do you think this event inspires medical practitioners and students to pursue Ayurveda? Yes, the Celebration of Dhanwantari

Diwas serves as a significant source inspiration for AYUS practitioners and students. It honors Lord Dhanwantari, regarded as the deity of Ayurveda, highlighting the Daily importance of this ancient healing because he is considered the god of for enhancing human wellness. It Ayurveda and the divine physician. also fosters a sense of community Stress and Mental Health: Ayurveda In Hindu tradition, Dhanwantari is and encourages the exploration of traditional knowledge contemporary health practices.

> Do you think incorporating Ayurveda in daily wellness can help

Incorporating Ayurveda into daily wellness routines can be beneficial for many people, as it promotes balance through diet, lifestyle, and natural remedies. Ayurveda, a holistic system of medicine from India, emphasises a personalised approach based on your unique constitution (or "dosha")— Vata, Pitta, or Kapha. It's built around

the idea of maintaining health by harmonising mind, body, and spirit. Here are some needs.

ways it can support daily wellness: Dietary Balance: Ayurveda suggests foods suited to your dosha to promote digestion and energy. For example, grounding, warming foods are advised for the Vata dosha, while cooling foods benefit the Pitta

Routines: Ayurveda encourages routines that support system. This celebration can natural rhythms, like waking up early, motivate practitioners and students oil pulling, and self-massage to deepen their commitment to (Abhyanga). These can promote Ayurveda, emphasizing its potential better sleep, circulation, and stress management.

includes mindfulness practices like yoga, meditation, and breathing exercises (pranayama) to reduce stress and increase mental clarity.

Natural Remedies: Using herbal remedies tailored to your dosha and needs (like turmeric for inflammation or ashwagandha for stress) can provide gentle, plantbased support.

Many find that following Ayurvedic principles helps them feel more in tune with their body, improves digestion, and enhances overall wellbeing. However, it's important to consult an Ayurvedic practitioner, especially if you're new to it, to ensure the practices align with your health

DEBUNKING POPULAR NUTRITION MYTHS

eness 11



BY DR WAJIHA MEHTAB

n today's world, nutrition information is everywhere—from social media influencers to fitness gurus, all are offering dietary advice. But with so much information, how do we separate fact from fiction? Unfortunately, many popular nutrition myths continue to spread, often leading to confusion and unhealthy choices. As a registered dietitian, it's important to set the record straight with science-backed facts. There are some most persistent nutrition myths circulating today that should be debunked.

Carbs Are the Enemy

Fact: Carbohydrates have been vilified by many diets, but they're not inherently bad. In fact, carbohydrates are your body's primary energy source. Whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and legumes are all excellent sources of healthy carbs that provide essential nutrients like fiber, vitamins, and minerals. The key is to focus on complex carbs rather than refined sugars. It's not about eliminating carbs but choosing the right ones.

Eating Fat Makes You Fat Fact: The idea that fat automatically leads

to weight gain is outdated. Healthy fats, such as those found in avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil, play a vital role in your body. They help absorb fat-soluble vitamins, support brain function, and even aid in satiety, making you feel fuller for longer. The type of fat you consume matters more than the amount—trans fats shows that dietary cholesterol has a and excessive saturated fats can be harmful, while unsaturated fats are most people. The yolk is actually packed essential for good health.

MYTH 3

A Detox Diet Will Cleanse Your Body Fact: Detox diets are one of the most popular trends, but the science doesn't back them up. Your body has its own natural detoxification systems—primarily the liver, kidneys, and digestive tract. No special juice, cleanse, or supplement is needed to "flush out toxins." Instead of relying on expensive detoxes, focus on a well-balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, fiber, and water to support your body's natural detox processes.

Gluten-Free Is Always Healthier

Fact: Going gluten-free is medically necessary for people with celiac disease or gluten intolerance, but for the general population, there's no evidence that a gluten-free diet is inherently healthier. In fact, many gluten-free processed foods are lower in fiber and higher in sugar and fat to compensate for the texture and taste of missing gluten. Unless you have a medical reason, there's no need to avoid gluten. Whole grains like wheat, barley, and rye are nutritious and offer many health benefits.

Late-Night Eating Causes Weight Gain Fact: Weight gain is more about what and how much you eat overall than the specific time of day. While late-night snacking can sometimes lead to overeating, particularly of less healthy, high-calorie foods, it's the excess calories that contribute to weight gain—not the timing. If you're hungry in the evening, opt for a light, balanced snack like yogurt or a handful of nuts, rather than worrying about the clock.

You Need to Eat Small, Frequent Meals to Boost Metabolism

Fact: The idea that eating every few hours your boosts metabolism c o m m o n The misconception. reality is that the number



of meals you eat has little to do with your metabolic rate. What matters most is the total number of calories consumed and the quality of those calories. Whether you prefer three meals a day or six smaller ones, the key is to eat a balanced, nutrientdense diet that meets your body's needs.

You Should Only Eat Egg Whites

Fact: For years, eggs were demonized because of their cholesterol content, and many people opted for egg whites to avoid fat and calories. However, research now minimal impact on blood cholesterol for with essential nutrients, including vitamins D and B12, choline, and healthy fats. Eating the whole egg provides a nutritious and filling meal, so there's no need to skip the yolk.

You Need Supplements to Be Healthy Fact: While some people may benefit from

specific supplements (e.g., vitamin D, B12 for vegans, or folic acid during pregnancy), most people can meet their nutritional needs through a well-balanced diet. Whole foods provide a complex mix of nutrients that work together in ways supplements can't replicate. Over-reliance on supplements can lead to nutrient imbalances or toxicity. Always consult with a healthcare professional before starting any new supplements.

You Can Spot-Reduce Fat

Fact: Unfortunately, spot-reducing fat, such as targeting belly fat through crunches or specific exercises, is not possible. When you lose fat, it happens across your entire body, not just one specific area. The best approach for fat loss is a combination of regular exercise (both cardio and strength training) and a balanced, calorie-controlled diet.

CONCLUSION

Trust the Science

It's easy to be swayed by the latest diet trends or celebrity-endorsed health tips, but it's essential to approach nutrition with a critical eye. Rather than falling for myths and misinformation, trust the science and rely on credible sources, like registered dietitians, for guidance. Your health is too

important to base on fadsbalanced, evidence-based nutrition will always stand the test of time.

> The author is MSc, PhD, Consultant Nutritionist, Founder & Director, Artisan Academy of Advanced Clinical Nutrition.



SheShield Conclave Concludes

SheShield Conclave, organised by Mediways Health Foundation in association with Inner Wheel District 301, concluded with impact. Held during Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the Conclave

underscored an urgent message: breast cancer awareness and early detection are vital to securing a healthier, empowered India

Non-performance of batters is worrying, we will strive to do something special in Australia: Rohit

disastrous performance of star batters is certainly a cause of concern for India, admitted Rohit Sharma after a stunning reversal against New Zealand but the skipper promised that the team will fight to deliver something 'very very special' Australia.

New Zealand went strength to strength in the series while hosts India could not bring their floundering campaign back on track and ended up suffering a rare and humiliating 0-3 whitewash. Rohit (91) and Virat Kohli (93) managed less than 200 runs across three Tests, a major reason for India's debacle.

"It's a cause of concern without a doubt. If the batters are not performing, that is a cause of concern, Rohit said.

"What is done, is done now. As a player, as a captain, as a team, we all have to look forward and see how we can correct what we didn't manage to achieve here. There is a good opportunity for us to go and do



something really, really special in Australia. We will focus on that?

India have already been displaced from the top of the World Test Championship following embarrassing result at home and it could hasten the impending transition for the rather than to Test side but Rohit preferred happens after.

to look only at the immediate challenge of Australia tour.

"I don't think we can look that far ahead. I'm not going to look beyond Australia series. Australia series, for us is now very, very important. We will try and focus on that rather than thinking what

from their last two series

before, which is why we are trying to go there a little early just to get used to the conditions. Rohit said India will have to draw a lot of confidence

guys haven't been there

for the first time ever.

"Australia is not an easy place to play cricket. But we can take a lot of confidence how we played in the last two series in Australia. In the back of our mind, we have to think like that," said Rohit. Rohit, of late, has adopted an ultra aggressive and risky approach while batting, and it has resulted in him losing

his wicket rather quickly. He maintained that he has not lost faith in his defensive skills and his style of batting was more of an evolution process he chose for himself but promised to have a relook into it.

"I haven't defended a lot in this series because I haven't been there to defend. Clearly I have to look at my own game and try and see what best I can do. When I go to bat, I always think how I can put the team in the best situation of the game."

'When the openers go in, they set the tone and sometimes you can fall on the other side of it as well. This series, I have fallen on the other side of it. But I don't see that I have lost faith wins with the team set to in my defence.

Parthavi, Vanshika, Hemant win gold, Indian boxers return with 17 medals from U-19 World C'ships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Parthavi Grewal, Vanshika Goswami and Hemant Sangwan punched their way to gold as Indian boxers made a strong impression, clinching a haul of 17 medals at the inaugural U-19 World Championships organised by World Boxing in Colorado, USA.

It was the female boxers who stole the show with as many as 10 of them standing on the podium at the age group tournament.

While Parthavi notched a dominant 5-0 win over Netherlands' Aalivah Hoppema in the women's 65kg final Vanshika emerged victorious in the woman's +80kg category against Germany's Victoria Gatt by Referee Stops Contest (RSC) one minute and 37 minutes on Saturday.

In the next bout, Hemant clinched India's sole gold medal in the men's category by securing a 4-1 split decision victory over the USA's Rishon Sims in the 90kg category.

Nisha (51kg), Supriya Devi Thokchom (54kg) and Kritika Wasan (80kg) lost their respective finals to sign off with silver medals. This significant medal count was highlighted by the contributions of 11 Khelo India Athletes (KIAs), of which eight are SAI National Centre Excellence (NCOE) trainees.

The medallists also included three NCOE trainees who are non-KIAs, all training out of NCOE Rohtak.

Medal-winning Khelo India Athletes:

Boys - Sumit, Lakshay Rathi, Krrish Pal (all NCOE Rohtak), Aryan, Rishi Singh. Girls - Krisha Verma (NCOE Aurangabad), Chanchal Chaudhary, Nisha, Vini, Akansha Phalaswal (all NCOE Rohtak), Supriya

Medal-winning Athletes: NCOE Rohtak - Parthavi, Vanshika (Gold), Chanchal,

Devi.

Nisha, Vini, Akansha, Kritika (Silver), Krrish Pal, Sumit, Lakshay Rathi (Bronze). NCOE Aurangabad - Krisha Verma (Gold)

Overall medal winners: Gold: Krisha Verma (F75kg), Parthavi Grewal (F65kg), Vanshika Goswami (F+80KG), Hemant Sangwan (M90kg).

Nisha Silver: Devi Thokchom Supriya Kritika Wasan (F54kg), Chanchal (F80kg), Chaudhary (F48kg), Anjali Singh (F57kg), Vini (F60kg), Akansha Phalaswal (F70kg), Akansha Pilalaon ... Rahul Kundu (M75kg).

Rishi Singh (M50kg), Krrish (M55kg), Sumit (M70kg),

Aryan (M85kg), Lakshay Rathi (M90+kg).

Pool H features Manipur

Hockey, Hockey Bengal,

Hockey Bihar, and Assam

The tournament will open

with a series of matches,

including Uttar Pradesh

Hockey vs Kerala Hockey

and Hockey Karnataka vs

Uttarakhand,

Hockey.

Hockey

Rashid ends tied 25th, Canadian Lee wins title in Jakarta

PTI JAKARTA

 $\mathbf{I}^{ ext{ndian}}$ golfer Rashid Khan, who was tied third at the halfway stage, faltered in the last two rounds with 72-71 and finished tied 25th at the BNI Indonesian Masters here on Sunday.

Rashid (67-67-72-71) totalled 11-under as fellow Indian SSP Chawrasia (68) was T-41st at 7-under and the 2023 champion Gaganjeet Bhullar (72) was T-44th.

Canadian Richard T. Lee finally ended his long and frustrating seven-year wait for a third victory on the Asian Tour when he recorded a fine four-shot wire-to-wire

After dozens of opportunities to win again following his success at the 2017 Shinhan Donghae Open he was relieved to prevail at Royale ahead at the turn. A one-and-Jakarta Golf Club after firing a-half-hour weather delay,



a closing two-under-par 70 for a four-round total of 23-

Chinese Taipei's Chang Wei-Phachara and Khongwatmai from Thailand secured second place, after both carded 64s. Zimbabwean Kieran Vincent

Lee was six in front at the start of day and in cruise control after lying seven

finished fourth following a

hole 10 failed to unsettle him. However, an unexpected double-bogey on the 16th, where he took two to get out of a greenside bunker and missed a six-foot bogey putt, led to some uncertainty. It meant his lead was cut to

four over Chang, who was in the clubhouse, but he steadied the ship with a brave five-foot putt for par on the next hole followed by a par on the last.

which began when he was on

The victory continued a brilliant run of form as he was tied for second in last week's International Series Thailand, finished joint ninth in the Black Mountain Championship, and came home in 10th at the Yeangder

American John Catlin, who closed with a 69 here and was tied for sixth, leads the rankings.

Top teams compete for honours in 14th senior men's National Hockey Championship

PTI ■ CHENNAI

 A^{total} of 31 teams will fight for the top honours at the 14th edition of the Hockey India Senior Men National Championship set to begin here on Monday.

The 31 teams were divided into eight pools, and the tournament will conclude on November 16.

During the league stage, each team will play against every other side in their pool. The top team from each pool

advance to quarterfinals to be played on November 13, followed by semifinals on November 15 and the final and 3rd/4th place play-off match on November 16.

Pool A features defending champions Hockey Punjab along with Dadra & Nagar Haveli And Daman & Diu Hockey and Chhattisgarh Hockey.

Pool B includes Hockey Haryana, Telangana Hockey, Hockey Himachal, and



Hockey Mizoram, while Pool C comprises Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu, Hockey Madhya Pradesh, Hockey Andhra Hockey Pradesh, and Andaman & Nicobar. Pool D consists of Hockey

Karnataka.

Chandigarh, Hockey Uttarakhand, and Tripura

Hockey Association of Odisha will compete with Le Puducherry Hockey Hockey, Hockey Rajasthan, Hockey and Hockey Arunachal,

while Pool F includes Uttar Pradesh Hockey, Delhi Hockey, Kerala Hockey, and Hockey Jammu and Kashmir. Pool G consists of Hockey Iharkhand, Hockey Maharashtra, Goans Hockey,

and Hockey Gujarat, while

other among exciting fixtures, setting the stage for a thrilling championship. Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey expressed his enthusiasm upcoming tournament.
"We are delighted to host the

14th Hockey India Senior Men National Championship in Chennai, a city with a rich hockey legacy. This championship provides a platform for showcasing the best talent from across the country and is a key event in developing the future stars of Indian hockey. I wish all the teams the very best as they compete for top honours,"

Tirkey said.

Rio Takeda wins Toto Japan Classic after six suddendeath playoff holes for her first LPGA Tour win

Rio Takeda of Japan won the LPGA's Toto Japan Classic on Sunday in a playoff that lasted six sudden-death holes, defeating Marina Alex of the United States.

It was Takeda's first victory on the LPGA

Takeda had a birdie on the par-5 18th hole, edging Alex with par. The two were tied after 54 holes at 15under 201. The tournament was

restricted to 54 regulation holes after Saturday's third round was washed out They were also even after the first five playoff holes in the sudden-death

format, each with a birdie on the first playoff hole and pars on the next four holes. All of the playoff holes were par-5s - the 18th hole and the 13th. Alex shot a 6-under 66 in the final round

and Takeda shot 67. Haeran Ryu of South Korea was one shot



behind after regulation with a 66. She finished at 14-under 202.

Hana Wakimoto of Japan, the leader after the first two rounds, slipped to a 1over 73 and finished three strokes behind the leaders. She was also seeking

her first LPGA Tour win. The Japan tournament concludes a fourevent Asian swing for the LPGA Tour that included events in China, South Korea and Malaysia.

India slips to 2nd in WTC as Australia takes top spot

India lost their top position in the World Test Championship standings, slipping to second place after suffering an embarrassing home series defeat to New Zealand on Sunday. India lost to New Zealand by 25 runs in the third and final Test in Mumbai resutling in

Test in Mumbai resutling in a 0-3 whitewash, their first in a home Test series since South Africa's 2-0 win in 1999-2000. This was also for the first time India have been swept 0-3 in in a home series.

It was India's fifth loss in the ongoing WTC cycle, causing a significant drop in their points percentage (PCT), which fell from 62.82 to 58.33.

champions Australia, who have regained the top spot



with a PCT of 62.50. India thus dropped to the second spot behind reigning Down Under to play the five-Border-Gavaskar match Trophy, which has gained

more significance now as both teams will be vying for

the top two spots. India were considered favourites to win a majority

of their remaining matches in their quest for a third consecutive WTC final appearance.

However, to qualify for the final without depending on external results, they now must win four of their remaining five games -- a challenging task in Australia. Australia, on the other hand, are in a better position as they need to win four of their

remaining seven Tests. New Zealand's historic series sweep in India has also bolstered their WTC final

aspirations.
They have climbed to the fourth spot with a PCT of 54.55, while Sri Lanka occupy third place with a PCT of 55.56 PCT of 55.56.

South Africa, currently fifth with a PCT of 54.17, also remain in contention for a top-two finish and a place in the next year's one-off Test at

AP ATLANTA

Xande Silva scored with about a minute to go in stoppage time shortly after a goal by Lionel Messi was waved off by a clear offside, giving ninth-seeded Atlanta United a 2-1 victory over Inter Miami and evening the best-of-three MLS playoff series at one game apiece.

series at one game apiece. Silva on Saturday blasted a right-footed shot into the top left corner to beat goalkeeper Drake Callender in the 94th minute. The Atlanta player celebrated by ripping off his shirt and dancing in front of the supporters section at Mercedes-Benz Stadium while the announced crowd of 68,455 cheered.

Messi had plenty of good scoring chances but only found the back of the net

Silva scores in stoppage time, Atlanta rallies to beat Messi's Miami 2-1 to even playoff series with the flag raised for game in the 58th minute after

offside. Atlanta United took off the other way for Silva's

game winner. United rallied from a 1-0 halftime deficit, the result of a huge error by keeper Brad Guzan, to force a decisive game next Saturday in South Florida. Atlanta has a chance to pull off a major upset, having finishing a whopping 34 points behind Messi's starstudded squad, which had the best regular-season record in Major League Soccer.

Derrick Williams tied the



a corner kick was turned away by the Herons. Pedro Amador sent a cross back into the box from long range and Williams dove to get a head on it, skipping it past

Callender. Guzan's blunder handed Miami the opening goal in the 40th minute.

the 40th minute.
After easily grabbing a cross into the box, Guzan went to boot the ball away - only to stumble and loose control Miami's Federico Redondo running along beside him. Redondo sent

the free ball to David Martínez, who casually flicked it over four United defenders into the unguarded goal while Guzan looked on helplessly.

The 40-year-old keeper claimed he was interfered with by Redondo, but the replay clearly showed Guzan tripped himself up.

Messi misfired on at least three shots, going wide a couple of times before blasting one over the net in the 83rd with Miami pressing for the go-ahead goal. He walked away rubbing his

beard, clearly frustrated at

his lack of accuracy. In the 89th, United missed a prime chance to grab the lead when Saba Lobjanidze rocketed one off the crossbar. Bartosz Slisz collected the ricochet, but fired it over the net. Silva made sure it didn't matter. Miami won the opening game of the series 2-1 at home.

UP NEXT The winner of Game 3 will advance to the conference semifinals, facing the team that emerges from the Orlando-Charlotte series.