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Manipur volatile, HM monitoring state

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid escalating unrest in Manipur, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday cancelled all his rallies in poll-bound Maharashtra and returned to Delhi to hold a meeting to review the volatile situation. Irate mobs set fire to the residences of three more Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislators, one of whom is a senior Minister, and also the home of a Congress MLA in various districts of Imphal Valley, even as security forces foiled the attempt of agitators to storm the ancestral residence of Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh, officials said.

Later in the evening, the Home Minister held a meeting with senior security and intelligence officials, and reviewed the Manipur situation. Meanwhile, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) chief Anish Dayal Singh reached Imphal on Sunday, to monitor and coordinate the security operations in the region. The fresh incidents of violent protests took place on Saturday night even as an indefinite curfew was clamped after people, agitated by the killing of three women and children each by militants in Jiribam district, attacked the residences of three state Ministers and six MLAs earlier on Saturday. Meanwhile, the Manipur Government has requested the Centre to review and withdraw AFSPA from areas falling under the jurisdiction of six police stations in the State. The Centre has reimposed the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 in Manipur's six police station areas, including violence-hit Jiribam.

Union Ministry of Home



Security personnel patrol in a sensitive area of Manipur. Search operations and area domination were conducted by security forces in the fringe and vulnerable areas of hill and valley districts of the state

Affairs had, on November 14, reimposed AFSPA in areas falling under Sekmai PS and Lamsang PS in Imphal West district, Lamlai in Imphal East, Moirang in Bishnupur, Leimakhong in Kangpokpi and Jiribam in Jiribam district. Enraged people torched the houses of PWD Minister Govindas Konthoujam at Ningthoukhong, Hiyanglam's BJP MLA Y Radheshyam at Langmeidong Bazar, Wangjing Tenth's BJP MLA Paonam Brojen in Thoubal district and Khundrakpam's Congress MLA Th Lokeshwar in Imphal East district, the officials said. The legislators and their family members were not at home when the angry mob stormed their residential compounds, vandalised properties and set the houses on fire, police said,

NPP withdraws support to BJP

PTI ■ SHILLONG/IMPHAL

The National People's Party (NPP) on Sunday withdrew support to the BJP-led government in violence-hit Manipur, claiming that the N Biren Singh dispensation has "completely failed to resolve the crisis and restore normalcy" in the Northeastern state. The NPP has 7 MLAs in the 60-member Manipur assembly. In the last few days, the situation in Manipur further deteriorated and many more innocent lives have been lost

and people in the state are "going through immense suffering", the NPP claimed in a letter to BJP chief J P Nadda. "We strongly feel that the Manipur state government under the leadership of Shri Biren Singh has completely failed to resolve the crisis and restore normalcy. Keeping the current situation in mind, the National People's Party has decided to withdraw its support to the Biren Singh government in the state of Manipur, with immediate effect," the letter said.

adding the houses were partially burnt in the incidents. Fire services rushed to the spots and doused the blaze

before the flames engulfed the houses. On Saturday night, protesters also advanced towards Biren

Singh's ancestral residence at Luwangsangbam in Imphal East but were stopped short of 100-200 metres by security forces. Security personnel, including Assam Rifles, BSF and state forces, fired several rounds of tear gas shells, rubber bullets to disperse the protesters and foiled the attempt to damage Singh's house, officials said. Later, protesters burnt tyres on the main road leading to Biren Singh's residence and piled iron roads to prevent vehicular movement. Protests continued till around 11 pm in Mantripukhri area, some 3-4 km from the CM's ancestral home. Many of the protesters had come in vehicles from other constituencies, and not from the Heingang Assembly seat, which the CM represented.

Embarrassed by 'Sheesh Mahal', infighting Kailash Gahlot quits AAP

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) received a massive setback just months before the Delhi Assembly elections, as senior minister and veteran leader Kailash Gahlot, who had claimed to be Kejriwal's "Hanuman", on Sunday resigned from the primary membership of the party and the council of ministers, citing the 'sheesh mahal' controversy, and the party unnecessary fighting with the Centre for setting their own political agenda.

With this, four MLAs, including three ministers, have resigned from the AAP - Rajendra Pal Gautam joined the Congress in September, Patel Nagar and Chattarpur MLAs Raaj Kumar Anand and Kartar Singh Tanwar joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during the Lok Sabha polls. Gahlot is the third minister of the AAP led Delhi government who quitted in the past one-and-a-half years. In his resignation letter addressed to AAP's National Convener Arvind Kejriwal and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, Gahlot also cited unfulfilled promises and recent controversies as reasons for stepping down. Gahlot has held key positions within the Delhi government, including the portfolios of Transport, Law, Information Technology, Administrative Reforms, and Women and Child Development. Gahlot pointed to the "grave challenges" facing the party Gahlot, a prominent figure in the party, also took a job at Kejriwal while flagging some



FILE PHOTO

"awkward" and "embarrassing" controversies like 'sheesh mahal', saying it makes everyone doubt if 'we still believe in being the 'Aam Aadmi''. Gahlot's reference to the 'sheesh mahal' controversy comes against the backdrop of BJP leaders' charge that Kejriwal spent crores on lavish items and modern facilities at his former official residence at 6 Flagstaff Road. The BJP had dubbed Kejriwal's earlier residence as 'sheesh mahal'. Meanwhile, the AAP national convener refused to take a question on Gahlot's shock resignation at a press conference held at the party office hours after Gahlot's resignation and promptly turned the microphone towards MLA Durgesh Pathak, seated next to him. When pressed for his response, Kejriwal said with a smile, "You want an answer, right?" before Pathak began speaking. In fact, the former Chief Minister spoke soon after, criticised the BJP but did not mention Gahlot's exit.

Holding the BJP responsible, Pathak said Gahlot was being questioned and raided by Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Income Tax for months. "So he did not have a choice. But this makes it clear that BJP has lost the Delhi election. They have no issue, they are fighting on the basis of ED, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Income Tax and we are fighting on people's issues," he said. Earlier, AAP's Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said Gahlot's resignation is a part of BJP's "dirty politics". "It's a 'dirty political conspiracy' of the BJP and it wants to win the Delhi Assembly polls by misusing the ED and CBI", he charged. On the other hand, the BJP was quick to respond to Gahlot's announcement. Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva welcomed Gahlot's resignation, saying he took a brave step. "Gahlot stepped down raising the same issues for which the BJP was protesting and fighting against Kejriwal and AAP.



Communal clashes in Murshidabad puja pandal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

At least 50 people were injured and many houses were torched and shops vandalised after clashes broke out between members of two communities at Beldanga area of Murshidabad district in central Bengal, bordering Bangladesh. The injured include at least five women and many others from both the groups, sources said adding the entire area was tense though no new reports of clashes had come in till Sunday evening. The incident took place late on Saturday night after members of one community resorted to stone-pelting as reports of alleged sacrilegious comments written on electrical light boards at a Kartik Puja pandal in ward number 10 became public. Kartik Puja is usually organised by women who want to become mothers.

India successfully flight-tests long-range hypersonic missile



Flight trial of DRDO's long range hypersonic missile being successfully conducted at Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island, off-the-coast of Odisha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India has joined the elite league of nations after it successfully flight-tested a long-range hypersonic missile off the coast of Odisha. Russia and China are the two other countries having this capability. The missile can strike targets at a range of more than 1,500

kms while travelling five times more than the speed of sound and evade most air defence systems. Hailing the test conducted late Saturday night, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday described it as a "stupendous" achievement and a "historic moment". The missile, developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), is designed to carry

various payloads for ranges greater than 1,500 km, an official readout said. "India has achieved a major milestone by successfully conducting flight trial of long range hypersonic missile from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island, off-the-coast of Odisha," Rajnath Singh said in a social media post. "This is a historic moment and this significant achievement has put our country in the group of select nations having capabilities of such critical and advanced military technologies," he said. Generally, the hypersonic missiles, capable of carrying conventional explosives or nuclear warheads, can fly in the range of five times the speed of sound (Mach 5 which is roughly 1,220 km) per hour at sea level. However, some advanced versions of hypersonic missiles can even fly at the speed of over 15 mach. At present, Russia and China are way ahead in developing hypersonic missiles while the US is in the process of developing a range of such weapons under an ambitious programme. Several other countries, including France, Germany, Australia, Japan, Iran and Israel, are also pursuing projects to develop hypersonic-missile systems.

GRAP Stage IV invoked in NCR

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

As a thick blanket of smog continued to engulf Delhi, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) sub-committee has decided to implement Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) for Delhi-National Capital Region, that will come into effect from Monday at 8 am, owing to 'severe' air quality conditions which include complete halting of construction and demolition activities that generate dust and a ban on truck entry.



(AQI) worsened, reaching 457 at 8 pm. Due to unfavourable weather conditions and dense fog, visibility reduced to less than 50 metres in some parts of the National Capital, leading

to disruptions in flights at Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA). The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued an orange alert, warning of dense

fog on Monday morning. The decision to impose GRAP Stage IV was taken by the CAQM after meeting with all stakeholders on Sunday. According to the order, no trucks will be allowed into Delhi except for those carrying essential items or using clean fuel (LNG/CNG/BS-VI diesel/electric). Non-essential light commercial vehicles registered outside Delhi will also be prohibited, except for EVs and CNG and BS-VI diesel ones. Delhi-registered BS-IV or older diesel medium and heavy goods vehicles are banned, except for those in essential services, the Commission said in its order. The CAQM order will be applicable for the NCR.

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Sports infrastructure continuously developing in MP: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has said that sports infrastructure is continuously developing in the state. With the way the work is going on under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance, the players of the state are not far away from receiving Vikram Award and other awards in Asiad and Olympics.

The state and the country have many talented players from Kushabhau Thackeray Stadium and Tukojirao Pawar Stadium in Dewas. With the gift of synthetic athletic track being given to Dewas on the birth anniversary of Tukojirao Pawar, players will get more opportunities to hone their talent. Efforts will continue to expand sports facilities in

Dewas. Chief Minister Yadav was addressing the Bhoomi puja programme of the synthetic athletic track at Kushabhau Thackeray Stadium, Dewas virtually from New Delhi. Chief Minister Yadav said that the area is being developed as a mega metropolis by connecting Dewas, Ujjain Dhar and Indore. The state government is working rapidly for industrialization. In the changing times, this sector will have a unique identity in the country. Chief Minister Yadav said that Dewas is blessed by two goddesses, Maa Tulja Bhavani and Chamunda Mata, and the area is also blessed by Kaila Devi. Malwa, abounding in diverse characteristics, became independent after Chhatrapati Maharaj Shivaji through

Holkar-Pawar-Scindia and Bajirao Ji Maharaj after the restoration of the empire by the Hindavi army. This also increased the aura of the Devasthanams of Malwa region. The presence of Pt. Kumar Gandharva and the bank note press make Dewas unique. Notably, 114 sports infrastructure (stadiums/sports complexes/indoor halls) have been constructed by the Sports and Youth Welfare Department in Madhya Pradesh, and 30 sports infrastructures are under construction. A total of 8 synthetic athletic tracks have been constructed in the state. The 9th synthetic athletic track is being set up at Kushabhau Thackeray Stadium in Dewas. Apart from this, 3 more athletic tracks have also been

approved in Indore, Ratlam, and Chhatarpur. 12 synthetic hockey turfs have been established by the Sports and Youth Welfare Department in the state and 6 synthetic hockey turfs are under construction. The state government will build sports stadiums in all the districts under 'One District-One Sports Complex' and there is a plan to build sports stadiums in all blocks under the Chief Minister Sports Infrastructure Scheme. **Synthetic athletic track costing Rs 9 crore 18 lakh to come up in Dewas** The Kushabhau Thackeray Stadium of Dewas is spread across 10.00 acres of land. The stadium has 4 synthetic courts for badminton, 2 courts for basketball, a 25-meter swimming pool, an open gym, and softball and chess games, besides

imparting training for women's self-defense. A synthetic athletic track is being set up in the stadium by the Sports and Youth Welfare Department for the athletic players at a cost of Rs 9 crore 18 lakh in which 400 meter synthetic athletic track and 8 lane facility will be available. Gym equipment worth Rs 26 lakh will also be provided for the fitness of the players. Deputy Chief Minister and in-charge of Dewas district Jagdish Deora, Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Vishwas Sarang joined the programme virtually. Dewas MP Mahendra Singh Solanki, District Panchayat President Leela Ataria, MLA Gayatri Rajee Pawar, Mayor Geeta Durgesh Aggarwal and other public representatives were present in the programme held in Dewas.



Minister for Panchayat and Rural Development Prahlad Patel addresses an executive body meeting of Akhil Bharatiya Lodha-Lodhi Mahasabha MP, at Manas Bhawan in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

SDM discovers waste dumping at restricted area

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Smashing to smithereens the civic body's sanitation claims, SDM Ravish Shrivastava on Sunday discovered a large amount of waste dumped into a lake in the vicinity of the defunct Union Carbide factory in the state capital. Leading an inspection, Govindpura

Leading an inspection, Govindpura SDM Shrivastava found water hyacinth and waste dumped into the lake

SDM Shrivastava found water hyacinth and waste dumped into the lake, which has emerged as an encroachment hotspot. Following the discovery, civic authorities swung into action, deploying earth-moving equipment to free the water body of the contaminating waste. Residents say the lake was being used as a dumping site by Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) sanitation workers. Corruption and negligence are rampant among municipal workers, who often dump waste at locations within the city instead of transporting it to the designated landfill at Adampur. BMC Commissioner Harendra Narayan has repeatedly urged employees to adhere to Swachh Survekshan 2024 guidelines while undertaking sanitation

work, but the directives have obviously fallen on deaf ears. Confirming the discovery of the vast amounts of garbage dumped at the site, SDM Shrivastava said, "Municipal workers are clearing the lake. The work should be completed by Monday." Meanwhile, excavators continued to remove waste and water hyacinth from the lake until late on Sunday evening. District administration officials said that the area of the six-acre lake has been mapped to prevent encroachments on the water body. Once a haven with dozens of water bodies, Bhopal is fast emerging as a pollution hotspot, with civic body officials and employees hijacking sanitation and ecology plans for the state capital.

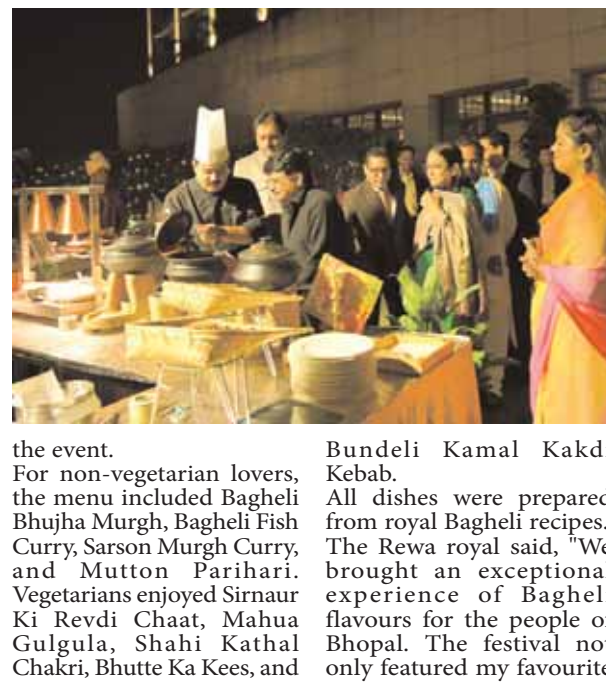
Girl reunited with her parents

Bhopal: Timely action by the First Response Vehicle (FRV) reunited a little girl with her family after she was discovered in the Vijay Market area of Barkheda on Saturday. The FRV staff, Constable Rameshwar Singh and Pilot Surendra Singh, reached the spot after receiving information from the state-level Police Control Room at 6 PM on Saturday. The FRV located the four-year-old and took her to their care while scouring the area in search of her family members. FRV staff soon discovered family members who were frantically looking for the missing child. The little girl was handed over to the family after the officers checked their antecedents. The action was applauded by the family, especially the mother who was overjoyed at being reunited with the child.

Five-day Bagheli and Bundeli food festival concludes at hotel Taj

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The aroma of Bagheli and Bundeli flavours wafted through the city for five days as the Royal and Rustic Food Festival introduced the gastronomically inclined to mouth-watering delicacies from the two regions. Held at the Taj Lakefront from November 13-17, the festival was graced by a host of eminent personalities. Bollywood star Raghuvir Yadav and Durgesh Kumar were among those relishing the regional delicacies. The daily menu featured dishes like Indrarhar Sabzi, Shikari Gosht, Bagheli Murgh, rotis made from nine grains, Kodo Pilaaf, and Mahua Rabri. Special guest Maharaja Pushpraj Singh Judev of Rewa added to the charm of



the event. For non-vegetarian lovers, the menu included Bagheli Bhujja Murgh, Bagheli Fish Curry, Sarson Murgh Curry, and Mutton Parihari. Vegetarians enjoyed Sirmour Ki Revdi Chaat, Mahua Gulgula, Shahi Kathal Chakri, Bhutte Ka Kees, and Bundeli Kamal Kakdi Kebab. All dishes were prepared from royal Bagheli recipes. The Rewa royal said, "We brought an exceptional experience of Bagheli flavours for the people of Bhopal. The festival not only featured my favourite dishes but offered a unique chance to taste royal Bagheli cuisine." He added, "With the support of Madhya Pradesh Tourism, we plan to take these flavours to other states across the country." Executive Chef at the Taj, Anup Gupta, said that the team visited Rewa to learn about authentic Bagheli and Bundelkhandi culinary traditions. "This festival focuses on women empowerment and its socio-economic impact, while helping to spread traditional Bagheli flavours," he said. The event was attended by senior officials, including Manu Srivastava, Additional Chief Secretary of the Indian Administrative Service, and Avinash Lavania, MD of MP State Road Development Corporation.



Minister for Minority Welfare Krishna Gaur, BJP MLA Rameshwar Sharma and Mayor Malvi Rai at the inauguration ceremony of KISNA gold and diamond jewellery showroom at 10 no bus stop Arera colony in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

State committed to accessible, advanced healthcare for all: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav stated that strengthening and expanding healthcare services in Madhya Pradesh is the state government's highest priority. He highlighted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi believes that the foundation of a self-reliant and empowered India lies in healthy citizens. To realize this vision, the state government is continuously working to provide every citizen with accessible and advanced medical services. On November 21, Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav will lay the foundation stone of the Ujjain Medical College, a step that will give new dimensions to the state's healthcare services. Dr. Yadav also emphasized that the project will be prioritized to meet the requirements of Simhastha-2028. The college will provide high-quality tertiary-level healthcare services to patients in Ujjain and near-

by districts. The Chief Minister noted that there were only five government medical colleges in the state until 2003, which have now increased to 17. MBBS seats in the state have also grown from 720 to 2,575. Medical colleges are under construction in Sheopur, Singrauli, Mandla, and Rajgarh, while additional colleges are being established in Chhatarpur, Damoh, and Budhni through self-financing grants. Furthermore, the process of opening medical colleges in 12 districts under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model is underway. Dr. Yadav stated that the establishment of 20 new medical colleges will increase MBBS seats by more than 2,000. Bed capacities in hospitals in Bhopal and Gwalior are being increased to 2,500, while speciality hospitals are operational in Indore, Gwalior, Jabalpur, and Rewa. Initiatives such as the School of

Excellence in Pulmonary Medicine in Jabalpur and the School of Excellence for Eye Care in Indore are positioning the state as a leader in healthcare. To promote nursing and paramedical education, nursing colleges are being established in 14 medical colleges. Currently, 24 government nursing colleges are operational, soon to increase to 37. The state has 250 paramedical colleges, where around 25,000 students are pursuing education. Additionally, Madhya Pradesh is the only state in the country where medical studies have been initiated in Hindi. Dr. Yadav also announced that community health centers across the state are being equipped with advanced medical facilities to provide district-level hospital-grade services. Additionally, more than 30,000 medical and auxiliary positions will be filled in accordance with Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS). "Only

healthy citizens can build a self-reliant Madhya Pradesh," Dr. Yadav asserted. The medical college will be constructed on 14.97 acres of land, with a planned built-up area of 1,42,034 square meters. The total estimated cost is 592.3 crores. The facility will include state-of-the-art fire safety systems, energy-efficient LED lighting, solar energy, and HVAC systems. Provisions for rainwater harvesting, wastewater reuse, and a sewage treatment plant have also been incorporated. The campus will feature a foot-over bridge, library building, service block, MGPS block, and ESS block. The Ujjain Medical College will have a teaching hospital with a capacity of 550 beds. The Ujjain Medical College will have an initial intake of 100 MBBS students. It will feature four state-of-the-art lecture theaters (with a capacity of 180 each) and two examination halls (with a capacity of 250 each).

In an innovative step, BJP appoints WhatsApp Pramukh in the State

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The BJP has appointed its first-ever WhatsApp Pramukh here on Sunday. Ramkumar Chaurasia, an MSc graduate, has been entrusted with the role, of using WhatsApp to connect with the masses and disseminate information about government schemes. Ramkumar Chaurasia, a resident of Bhopal and a private sector employee, has been tasked with using WhatsApp to engage with the public and spread information about the party's policies and initiatives. In an exclusive conversation with India Today sister site, Aaj Tak, Chaurasia, who holds an MSc degree, shared that he hails from Raisen district of the state but has lived in Bhopal for the past 30 years. He is associated with booth number 223 of the BJP and expressed that his admiration for Prime Minister Narendra Modi played a pivotal role in his decision to join the party. Chaurasia spoke about how PM Modi's leadership has inspired a sense of national pride amongst the young

people of the country and how India is now being recognised globally, which further motivated his decision to become part of the BJP. Initially, Chourasia started small programs in his locality, but now, with his new responsibility as the first WhatsApp head of the state, his focus will be to use the platform to communicate BJP's ideology and government schemes to voters in his booth area. His goal is to ensure that every voter in his booth receives information about the party's policies through WhatsApp. This move comes as the BJP gears up for organisational elections. Recently, State BJP President VD Sharma took charge as booth head from Ward-80 in Bhopal, marking the launch of the "Booth Organisation Festival." The party has devised a structure for each of the 65,015 booths in the state, with 12 key officials assigned to each. These positions include the booth president, booth minister, BLA-2 (party workers), WhatsApp head, Mann Ki Baat head, beneficiary head, and panna head.

Fire at railway tower at main railway station

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Goods and documents broke out in fire that broke out in the outdoor store of the railway microwave tower near the GRP police station on platform one of Bhopal station on Sunday afternoon. After the information, 8 fire brigade vehicles reached and controlled the fire within an hour. This store is present on the main road outside Bhopal station. The goods of the Signal and Telecom Department of the Railways were kept in it. Apart from this, some oil and cupboards were also kept. Mohammad Iftakhar, in-charge of the control room of the Municipal Corporation, said that the fire has been completely extinguished. During this time, about 8 fire engines were used pressed into service. A passerby Jaspal Singh Yadav, informed Municipal Corporation control room and informed about the fire. Jaspal told that, when he was passing through this area, he saw flames coming out. After which he informed the Municipal Corporation about it.

Hit by unidentified vehicle, mechanical engineer dies at Nishatpura

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 23-year-old youth died after he was hit by an unidentified vehicle in Nishatpura area of Bhopal in the wee hours on Saturday, he used to visit parents every Friday while working as he was a mechanical engineer in TCS company in Mumbai. Anand Rajput came from Mumbai to meet his mother and father in Berasia on Friday. The same night he left home to meet his brother living in Karod and on Saturday morning at 3:30 am, people informed his family that he was found in an injured state. With the help of an ambulance, he was admitted to a private hospital where he died during treatment at around 4 am on Sunday. Anand Rajput was a resident of Langarpur Berasia. He had studied B.Tech from a private college in Bhopal. He got a job in a TCS company in Mumbai 6 months ago. His father said that he often used to come to Bhopal on Friday night while his other son Arvind Rajput lives on

rent in Karod and is doing B Pharma. Anand had left home on Friday night to meet Arvind. Later in the wee hours on Saturday we got information that their son had met with an accident on Jail Road in front of the main gate of Comfort Loss Green Colony. No one knows which vehicle hit him. We asked to take the son to the hospital immediately. We rushed to the hospital in Bhopal where he died during treatment. Anand was the eldest son of the Rajput family, Arvind is younger to him and he has a sister. The sister is a school student. Father does farming in the village itself. He went to Mumbai to make a career. His dream was to settle in the big city. After the death of the son, the mother is crying badly, she kept trying to lift him up. Head constable Chatar Singh Ahirwar, who is investigating the case, said that they are checking the footage of CCTV cameras installed around the incident site. A case has been registered, some people have said that Anand had gone to Mumbai by bike, but the family members did not confirm this.



Visitors go through a Bonsai exhibition organised by Lake City Bonsai Association, Bhopal at Rose Garden in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

SARANSH workshop organised at AIIMS Bhopal

Bhopal: The five-day workshop on Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis organized under the SARANSH (Systematic Analysis and Research Advancement in National Scientific Health) initiative concluded successfully on Saturday at AIIMS Bhopal. The workshop was held from November 12 to 16, 2024, with the aim of promoting evidence-based medical research in India.

In his address at the valedictory function, Prof. Singh emphasized the critical importance of evidence-based medicine, stating: "Evidence-based research is the cornerstone of effective and efficient healthcare services. This workshop has not only enhanced research capabilities but also fostered collaborative learning. AIIMS Bhopal remains committed to advancing healthcare

research and education in the country." The workshop brought together participants from diverse states and medical disciplines, providing them with practical skills in systematic reviews and meta-analysis. These skills are essential for strengthening evidence-based research methodologies, which contribute to improved healthcare practices.

Uddhav forgot Sanatan culture in his power hunger: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, said that the Mahayuti government of Maharashtra is working to make Chhatrapati Shivaji's dream come true and to promote Sanatan. He was addressing a public meeting in support of the candidate in Shindkheda Assembly of Dhule district of Maharashtra and a social meeting organized in Yashwantrao Chavan Auditorium of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar Central Assembly of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar district on Sunday. A Mahayuti alliance government should be formed here so that Maharashtra's development continues uninterrupted. Congress and its allies have a problem with Lord Shri Ram and Shri Krishna. Congress and its allies have

denied the existence of Lord Shri Ram. We are people who follow the path of religion. Whenever we talk about religion and our Sanatan culture, Congressmen get angry. Late Baba Saheb Thackeray spent his entire life for the upliftment of Sanatan Dharma and now those who do politics in his name have forgotten Sanatan culture in their hunger for power. For power, Congress and its allies are conspiring to divide the Sanatan society into castes. All of you are wise, if we divide into castes, then anti-national forces will become more active in the country. If we are united, we are safe. Yadav said that for BJP, the nation comes first, but for the Congress party and its allies, family comes first. Yadav said that the country is completely safe under the leadership of Prime Minister

Narendra Modi. Whoever understands the Prime Minister in which language, he knows how to make him understand in his own language. During the reign of Congress, terrorist blasts used to take place in the country every day. There used to be terrorist activities from Pakistan on the border. After Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister in 2014, blasts in the country have completely stopped. Now when Pakistan thinks of firing a bullet, a shell falls in its house. When our army sets new records of bravery, enters the enemy country and carries out surgical strikes and air strikes, then the Congress leaders and its allies make a despicable attempt to break the morale of the army by asking for proof from them. The Chief Minister said that the Bharatiya Janata Party takes along every section of society and

works for the development and welfare of all. BJP is working to promote Sanatan culture. If any person from India goes to any country in the world and says that he has come from the land of Lord Shri Ram and Shri Krishna, then people of the whole world recognize that this person has come from Hindustan. The Mahayuti government in Maharashtra has given the status of Rajmata to cow, so Congress is having a stomachache. They are opposing giving respect to cow. Cow, which is the abode of 33 crore gods and goddesses, gives milk to feed her child as well as to feed the children of humans. Those who oppose cow and oppose the construction of Lord Shri Ram's temple in Ayodhya, did nothing for the construction of Lord Krishna's temple in Mathura, teach such Congress party and its allies a lesson. Yadav

said that Maharashtra is such a state, it gives a direction to the country. Seeing the atmosphere in Maharashtra, the entire opposition including Congress has started believing that a Mahayuti government is going to be formed here. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has done a historic work towards empowering women by making Nari Shakti Vandan law to give them 33 percent reservation in the country's Parliament. The BJP government has implemented the Ladli Behna Yojana in Madhya Pradesh. In Maharashtra, the BJP, NDA-Mahayuti alliance has announced the Ladki Behna Yojana. By implementing this scheme, the NDA government will work to make the sisters of Maharashtra millionaires. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav said that our culture teaches to respect mothers and sisters.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav during an election campaign in support of BJP candidate Jaykumar Bhau in Sindkheda state assembly constituency, Dhule district Maharashtra on Sunday. Pioneer photo



Preparations underway for the upcoming Aalimi Tablighi Ijtema, an annual muslim congregation, scheduled for Nov 29 to Dec 2, at Eitkhedi, Ghasipura near Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

BJP, Congress lash out at AAP over Gehlot's resignation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP and Congress on Sunday lashed out at the ruling party at the issue of the senior AAP leader and former Delhi Minister Kailash Gehlot leaving the government over 'awkward' and 'embarrassing' controversies like 'sheeshmahal' while the AAP called it a 'dirty political conspiracy' of the BJP and said that it wants to win the Delhi Assembly polls by misusing the ED and CBI. Attacking the AAP, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva in a press conference said, "Delhi government minister Kailash Gehlot, in the letter he has written while resigning from his ministerial post, has raised the issues of corruption

in Arvind Kejriwal's Sheeshmahal building construction and Yamuna cleaning work, which demand answers from Kejriwal but he is trying to divert the topic but now the time has come for his departure." Stating that resignation in the political field is not a new thing, Sachdeva asserted that the questions asked by Gehlot are definitely shocking. "Kailash Gehlot has written some of the same issues while resigning, which shows that no Delhi resident who wants development of Delhi will be a partner in Arvind Kejriwal's corruption. Kejriwal, who has sworn on the heads of his children that he would not take government housing, should explain what is the compulsion that he not only

committed corruption in housing but also wasted the money of the taxpayers of Delhi like water?" he said. He accused the AAP supremo of throwing away the mike instead of answering the journalists when they asked him about the resignation of his 12-year-old colleague Kailash Gehlot. Union Minister Harsh Malhotra said that we all have just seen in the Mayor elections that eight councillors of AAP did cross voting without leaving his party. "Rajkumar Anand and Kailash Gehlot have resigned being ministers, the biggest reason for this is the corruption within AAP and the dictatorial attitude of Arvind Kejriwal due to which AAP MLAs and councillors are

feeling suffocated," he added, adding that the councillors, troubled by the allegations of corruption against the party, cross-voted in an attempt to elect a good mayor. Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Vijender Gupta called the resignation 'a clear sign of the party's disintegration and collapse'. "AAP's own leaders and ministers are dissatisfied with the working style of the party's leadership and are feeling suffocated within." Calling AAP a sinking ship, he added that even the party's ministers have realized that the personal ambitions of some of its senior leaders have started to outweigh the party's stated objectives. Referring to the issues raised in Gehlot's resignation, Gupta

said, "Gehlot himself has now acknowledged that the promises made by the party to the people of Delhi remain unfulfilled." The LoP declared that AAP's lies and corruption won't last much longer and accused Arvind Kejriwal's government of deceiving, exploiting, and looting the people of Delhi. He predicted that in the coming days, more senior leaders might follow Gehlot's example and abandon this sinking ship. Reacting to the resignation by the former senior leader of AAP, Delhi Congress President Devender Yadav said "We have received the information that Kailash Gehlot submitted his resignation and he has made some clear allegations against the party."

Madhya Pradesh: Tourist paradise, spiritual heart of India

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh, known as the "Heart of India", has a rich fabric of religious and spiritual heritage, with many sites that attract pilgrims and tourists alike. Under the visionary leadership of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, the State Government is taking significant steps to enhance these sites and promote religious tourism, which plays a pivotal role in the cultural economy of the State. On the occasion of the first anniversary of the present government, December 13, the Government is focusing on the renovation of existing religious sites and development of new spiritual sites to establish Madhya Pradesh as a major hub for religious tourism. The diverse religious landscape of Madhya Pradesh comprises of Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Islam, making it an important destination for spiritual seekers. Madhya Pradesh has witnessed a significant increase in the number of tourists in recent years, especially after the successful launch of "Mahakal Mahalok" in Ujjain. There has been a substantial increase in the number of visitors to Mahakal Lok, underlining the potential of religious tourism as a catalyst for economic development and cultural preservation. The state government, under the guidance of Mohan Yadav, has prioritized the restoration and promotion of important religious sites across the state. The aim of this initiative is not only to preserve cultural heritage but also to enhance the visitor experience. Mahakal Mahalok is the centerpiece of these efforts, which has been developed as a

vibrant spiritual hub around the Mahakaleshwar temple. This redevelopment improves management and enriches the spiritual environment of this historic site. Many religious sites in the state are being developed in accordance with their traditions. Devi Lok in Salkanpur has been developed as a Shakti Mandir site to provide easy Darshan of deity along with better access and facilities for pilgrims. Shri Hanuman Lok in Chhindwara will celebrate Lord Hanuman, creating an appealing environment for devotees and tourists. Ram Raja Lok in Orcha will honour Lord Rama and attract visitors interested in both spirituality and history. The revival of Sant Ravidas Lok in Sagar aims to honour the legacy of Sant Ravidas, to attract his followers and tourists interested in his teachings. Historical sites like Rani Durgavati Memorial and Rani Avantibai Memorial in Jabalpur are also being promoted by highlighting their cultural significance, while also taking care of visitors interested in both history and spirituality. Besides, improvements are being made at Maa Narmada Mahalok in Amarkantak to enhance visitor amenities and promote its natural beauty. The government is also focusing on developing new spiritual sites like Devi Ahilyabai Lok in Khargone, Nagalwadi Lok in Barwani district, with an emphasis on creating a serene atmosphere. While Jam Sawanli Hanuman Lok in Gwalior will celebrate the power and devotion of Lord Hanuman, the Janapav, known as the birthplace of Lord Parshuram, will be developed as

Parshuram Lok, which will have a new temple dedicated to Lord Parshuram with various facilities for visitors. The project also includes bringing Narmada water and constructing a ropeway for easy access. Maa Pitambara Lok in Datia is another important site dedicated to Goddess Pitambara. Mata Mandir Lok in Ratangarh will also become a major religious tourist destination with an iconic temple dedicated to Goddess Durga. The Madhya Pradesh government is also going to launch the Vrindavan Gram Yojana, under which selected gram panchayats will be converted into model villages promoting rural development. Gashalas will be built in each selected village to protect cows while promoting local dairy production. To further enrich the spiritual landscape of urban Madhya Pradesh, Gita Bhawan centres are being set up in all urban bodies. These centres will focus on spreading the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita and other scriptures, as well as provide access to literature related to spiritual teachings. The nearly 100 tourism projects will see an investment of about Rs 2,200 crore from the government, reflecting Madhya Pradesh's commitment to boosting religious tourism. Recognising the potential of international tourism, the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board is actively engaging with global markets to attract tourists from abroad. Initiatives such as promoting rural home-stays with subsidies for local tribes boost security for international tourists through training programmes as well as provide them with a good accommodation experience.

Vehicle lifter nabbed, 4 bikes recovered

Bhopal: Booked for over 11 crimes of theft, burglary and assault a vehicle thief was arrested by Ayodhya nagar police and recovered 4 two-wheelers including Royal Enfield worth Rs 4.5 lakh from his possession, vehicle-lifting was done to fulfil his hobbies and for drugs. The accused was trying to sell a Bullet motorcycle stolen from Ayodhya Nagar Police Station area in Raisen area, when he was caught by the police. The accused Pawan Kathotiya has several crimes including theft, burglary registered against him in the past. He used to commit thefts to fulfill his hobby of roaming around and drug addiction. Station In-charge Inspector

Mahesh Lilhare and his team arrested Pawan Kathotiya who confessed 4 stolen two-wheelers which were recovered from him and were worth about Rs. 4.5 lakh. Pawan who was going to sell the stolen Royal Enfield (Bullet) vehicle in Raisen area was stopped near Arahedi and was questioned about the motorcycle bearing registration number MP20NS0640. The accused revealed that he had stolen it from Basant Kunj Colony 5 months ago. He also admitted to have stolen Bajaj CT 100, an Activa from Chhatrapati Nagar about 02 months ago and a TVS bike in front of a liquor shop in Ayodhya Nagar about 02 months ago.

12000 Ayushman cards issued in Bhopal district

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Issuance of Ayushman Cards to senior citizens aged 70 and above is fast becoming a social movement in the state capital, with support from civic officials, welfare organisations, and government departments. District Chief Medical and Health Officer Dr Prabhakar Tiwari said on Sunday that nearly 12,000 Ayushman Cards had been issued to the elderly in the city. The special camps organised by the civic body have now been adopted by social organisations and government departments. A health

check-up and Ayushman card distribution camp was held at the library building in Vasant Kunj Colony on Sunday, where nearly 100 elderly individuals underwent medical check-ups. Around 40 Ayushman cards and 98 ABHA cards were also distributed. Residents' welfare association office bearers led the event. The district health department collaborated with the Vjesh Lunawat Foundation to organise another Ayushman camp at the Shwetambar Jain Temple, Second Stop. Dr Shailesh Lunawat, the camp coordinator,

informed senior citizens about the available packages and procedures under the scheme. The camp also offered health check-ups, free medicines, and pathology tests. Dr Tiwari added that various social institutions are actively facilitating the issuance of Ayushman cards. A similar camp will be held at the Lokayukta Office on Monday. The scheme is open to all senior citizens aged 70 and above, with no income or poverty line restrictions. Through the card, seniors can avail of cashless treatment up to Rs 5 lakh in the event of hospitalisation.

No farewell to alms, signal Bhopal beggars

ANKUSH SINGH ■ BHOPAL

Seeking alms on city streets is a lucrative occupation, as experienced beggars who knock on car windows at traffic intersections or park themselves at permanent spots can take home in excess of Rs 60,000 every month. "I earn around Rs 2,000 a day by begging. This amount fluctuates based on the number of people passing by," says an elderly lady who begs in the vicinity of the district court on the busy Jail Road. Closer scrutiny of her statement reveals that beggars in the city include both amateurs and professionals, with earnings commensurate with skills and location, colloquially known as a "Thiya". Those who know the workings of the trade that functions in the city's ever-grow-

The professionals of the trade are people who take to the streets as young kids to carry forward a family tradition and rake in the millions that the occupation offers

ing underbelly say that these Thiya take years to develop and command a price that runs into several lakhs. Amateur beggars are mostly elderly castaways who are driven to alms-seeking by penury. The professionals of the trade are people who take to the streets as young kids to carry forward a family tradition and rake in the millions that the occupation offers. "We don't go to school. We sleep at the railway station, beg, and give whatever we earn to our parents," says the eldest in a group of three that begs at the Bhopal railway

station. Their father maintains a vigil from across the street. Civic officials say that the trend has only grown in recent years, as cultural drivers of fear, religiosity, and kindness often overcome any efforts to move beggars, who have now taken to squatting on busy roads and streets. "The Municipal Corporation takes action, but after a few days, things settle down, and we return to our spots and start begging again," said an elderly man at Parihar Square near Ashoka Garden. Joint Director for

Social Justice in Bhopal, RK Singh, says that a survey has been conducted to understand the burgeoning trend, and a subsequent report has been forwarded to the central government under the Smile Scheme. The Smile Scheme provides for Bhikshu Grih residential facilities for kids who beg on the streets in urban areas. Singh informs that approvals are still awaited for the launch of the project, and work will commence soon after a nod from the center. Singh adds that the elderly castaways can also be shifted to homes for the elderly, and training can also be organised for those who wish to return to the social mainstream. However, the initiatives find few takers due to the attraction of the big bucks that are just for the asking.

BJP's two-time former MLA Anil Jha joins AAP

New Delhi: The BJP's Purvanchali leader and two-time former MLA from Kirari Anil Jha joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the presence of party supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday. The development came a few hours after the AAP suffered a big blow as its Najafgarh MLA and Transport Minister Kailash Gehlot quit the party. Kejriwal welcomed Jha to the AAP at party headquarters near Mandi House and dubbed him as one of the "biggest" Purvanchali leaders in Delhi politics. He will boost the AAP not only in Kirari but all over the city, the AAP supremo said. AAP's national convener also hit out at the opposition (Congress and BJP) accusing both parties of serving injustice to the community. He further praised the AAP government for bringing devel-

opment to the "illegal colonies" of the Purvanchal community. Party sources claimed that Jha could replace the sitting AAP MLA from Kirari, in the Delhi Assembly polls due in February. The Kirari constituency, home to a large population from the Purvanchal region, has been a challenging area for AAP to penetrate. With Jha's influence and credibility among Purvanchali voters, AAP hopes to make significant inroads in the upcoming elections. The upcoming elections will be crucial for both AAP and BJP as they vie for control over key constituencies like Kirari. Jha's move may influence voter sentiment and reshape electoral strategies. Purvanchali voters, once seen as a Congress stronghold, shifted significantly toward the AAP in the 2015 assembly polls, helping 13 AAP

leaders from the community win the seats. Jha praised Kejriwal, saying, "If there is one person who has worked for the Purvanchali community Delhi, it is Arvind Kejriwal." He noted that residents in the region lived with inadequate infrastructure, including unauthorised water pipes and faulty sewer lines. "In 10 years under Arvind Kejriwal, drinking water reached every household," Jha added. Jha, a two-time BJP MLA from the Kirari Assembly constituency in North West Delhi, has joined the AAP, citing disillusionment with the saffron party's leadership and policies. Kejriwal alleged that while the AAP government built 10,000 km of roads and streets, laid 6800 km of sewer lines and provided piped water in 1,650 unauthorised colonies, "the BJP did nothing".

5 including cop booked on abduction, extortion charges

Bhopal: Kolar police have booked five persons including a police constable for kidnapping and extortion of Rs 30 lakh from a real estate businessman; the accused was held captive for two days and released after wife provided Rs 30 lakh in October last month now kidnapers are demanding Rs 10 crore after which complaint was lodged by the victim. A case of kidnapping of real estate businessman Nilesh Singh Thakur, who lives in Danish Hills, Kolar, Bhopal, has surfaced. The incident took place between October 27 and 29. An FIR was lodged on the evening of November 17. He was invited to Gwalior by inviting him for an engagement. On the way, he was kidnapped from Ghodapur near Morena toll. All the accused are his former acquaintances. The accused held him hostage in the basement of an unknown hotel and assaulted him, they demanded one crore rupees in exchange for not killing him. Later, they assured his wife that they would release him for Rs 30 lakh rupees. The wife gave 30 lakh rupees to the accused on 28 October in Kolar, Bhopal. On 29 October, the accused left him in Bhopal. Now the miscreants have again started demanding a ransom of Rs 10 crores. Then the victim lodged an FIR against the accused. Nilesh Singh Thakur said that he lives in Danish Hills, Kolar. He is in the real estate business in Bhopal. Recently, he sold a land worth Rs 32 crore in Misrod. He was acquainted with Sanjay Rajawat resident of New Dwarakapuri Purani Cantonment Gwalior, Pankaj Parihar Piproli Gadhiya District Etawah Uttar Pradesh, Hemant Chauhan who was a constable of Bhopal Traffic Police, Om Rajawat resident of Purani Cantonment Gwalior and Akash Rajawat resident of Gwalior.



Artistes perform at a cultural event organised by Nrityanjali Bharatanatyam Nritya Academy at Shaheed Bhawan in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

Mumbai police makes new arrest in Baba Siddique murder case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

The Mumbai Crime Branch on Sunday arrested a Gujarat resident from Akola in Maharashtra in connection with the Baba Siddique murder case, taking the number of people held in the sensational assassination to 25, an official said.



Salmanbhai Iqbalbhai Vohra, a resident of Petlad in Gujarat's Anand district, was held from Balapur in Akola, some 565 kilometres from Mumbai, with the help of the police there, the Crime Branch official said. The 66-year-old NCP leader

Singh, brother of arrested accused Gurmil Singh, Rupesh Mohol and Harishkumar. He has also helped others connected to the crime," the official said. Gurmil Singh from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh resident Dharmaraj Kashyap were held from the spot immediately after the murder. The police recently got a major breakthrough in the case when it arrested alleged main shooter Shivkumar Gautam from Bahraich in Uttar Pradesh. Gautam, who was on the run since October 12, was held while trying to flee to Nepal, as per police.

PM praises 'The Sabarmati Report' movie

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday praised the film 'The Sabarmati Report', saying the "truth is coming out." "Well said. It is good that this truth is coming out, and that too in a way common people can see it. A fake narrative can persist only for a limited period of time. Eventually, the facts will always come out!" the prime minister said in a social media post. He made these assertions while replying to an social media user who had tagged him with a video of the trailer of the film, which released on Friday. 'The Sabarmati Report' is based on the

burning of S-6 coach of Sabarmati Express near Godhra station of Gujarat on February 27, 2002, in which 59 Hindu devotees returning from Ayodhya were burnt to death. The incident triggered riots in Gujarat that year. Dheeraj Sarna has directed "The Sabarmati Report", produced by Shobha Kapoor, Ektaa R Kapoor, Amul V Mohan and Anshul Mohan. The film features Vikrant Massey, Raashii Khanna and Ridhi Dogra. This is not the first time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi has praised a film. In 2022, he praised Vivek Agnihotri's 'The Kashmir Files'.

Nadda repeats PM claims on Bangladeshis, infiltration in Jharkhand



PTI ■ RANCHI

J.P. Nadda, president of the BJP, on Sunday attacked the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-led coalition government in Jharkhand, accusing it of sheltering Bangladeshi infiltrators in madrasas in the state and ensuring Aadhaar, voter ID card, gas connection, ration card and land for them. Nadda also hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi saying he wants to become champion of OBCs, but questioned how many OBC members were in Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and National Advisory Committee. "I have received an intelligence report just now. It says that Bangladeshi infiltrators are given shelter in madrasas here. Their Aadhaar, voter ID, gas connection and ration card are facilitated and then the Hemant Soren government ensures land for them.

"Hemant Soren looted jai-jungle-jameen of Jharkhand, infiltration is rampant here. Infiltrators are marrying tribal women and grabbing their land. We will bring a legislation to ensure that their offspring is debarred from land. Only PM Modi-led BJP government can check infiltration," Nadda said while addressing a poll rally at Gomia in Bokaro district. He also termed the entire JMM-RJD-Congress as a kunba (family) of corrupt leaders and added that INDIA bloc leaders were either in jail or on bail. "Hemant Soren, who is out on bail, will again go to prison. He has indulged in Rs 5,000-crore mining scam, Rs 236-crore land scam, and several other scams," Nadda alleged. "The Hemant Soren government followed divide and rule policy and created unrest among people. Now it is time for their exit. We will be forming the government here," Nadda said.

He alleged that the Hemant Soren government betrayed people, looted state and promoted dynastic politics. "I say this with pride that there are 27 OBC ministers in PM Modi's cabinet," he said. PM Modi-led NDA government is bringing OBCs, tribals and SCs to the mainstream, he claimed. "The BJP-led government at the Centre spent Rs 19 lakh crore to augment infrastructure and will spend Rs 10 lakh crore more on it," he added. Nadda also said that under the Modi regime, agriculture budget increased by five times and India became the third-largest automobile manufacturer, second-largest steel maker, third-biggest market for toys and produces the world's most affordable drugs. He said five medical colleges were being set up in Jharkhand and PM Modi had allocated Rs 250 crore each for them.

Rahul urges PM to visit Manipur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Saturday termed the recent string of violent clashes and continuing bloodshed in Manipur "deeply disturbing", as he urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit the state and work towards restoring peace in the region. A day after the bodies of three out of six missing persons were fished out of a river in

Manipur, protesters on Saturday attacked the residences of three state ministers and six MLAs, prompting the government to clamp prohibitory orders in five districts for an indefinite period besides suspending internet services in parts of the state. In a post on X, Rahul Gandhi said the recent string of violent clashes and continuing bloodshed in Manipur is deeply disturbing. "After more than a year of

division and suffering, it was the hope of every Indian that the Central and state governments would make every effort at reconciliation and found a solution," the former Congress chief said. "I urge the PM once again to visit Manipur and work towards restoring peace and healing in the region," Gandhi said. In Imphal, angry protesters ransacked the houses of three legislators, including that of Chief Minister N Biren Singh's son-

in-law, and set their properties on fire even as the security forces fired tear gas shells to disperse the agitators. The Congress has been attacking the prime minister for not visiting Manipur, besides slamming the Centre for its handling of the situation in the ethnic strife-torn northeastern state. The violence between Meitei and Kuki communities in Manipur has claimed more than 200 lives since May last year.

BJP claims cleanchit on 40 per cent commission barb

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BENGALURU

The BJP in Karnataka on Sunday claimed that the Lokayukta probe has cleared the party's previous government from 40 per cent commission charges, and that the allegations levelled by the Congress against it as completely false. The BJP leaders said that it is proved that the 40 per cent commission allegation was part of the Congress' "tool kit". During the 2023 Assembly polls, the then opposition Congress had used the Karnataka State Contractors' Association's allegations of 40 per cent commission charge as a major weapon to corner the then BJP government, which is said to be one among the factors that led to the saffron party's debacle in the election.

Three women drown to death in Mangalore

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Three young women, all in their early 20s, drowned on Sunday morning in the swimming pool of a beach resort in Someshwara Uchula near Mangalore where they were staying. The youngsters, Nishita (21), Parvathi (20) and Keerthana (21), all hailing from Mysuru, were playing in the swimming pool of the resort when tragedy struck leading to the mishap.

According to persons close to the Wa Beach Resort, where the incident occurred, one of the youngsters drowned in the water, and when another tried to rescue her, she too drowned, leading the third woman to enter the water. This incident reportedly occurred within a matter of minutes. The resort staff discovered the incident and raised the alarm. Visuals from the CCTV installed in the

resort recorded the incident showing the young women struggling in the water. A team led by Ullal police inspector HN Balakrishna has visited the scene and is conducting an investigation. Though the resort and police authorities claim that it was a mishap caused by the negligence, there are instances like young women getting killed in mysterious circumstances in Kerala and Karnataka.

In November 2021, Anjana Shajan (first runner-up in Miss Kerala championship) and Ansi Kabeer, a model, were killed in the wee hours of the day when the car they were travelling crashed against a two wheeler. Though the police had taken into custody the owner of the star hotel where the ladies had their dinner and entertainment, nothing has been heard since then.

Bhramo Samaj, RK Mission clash over property in Shimla, seven injured



PTI ■ SHIMLA

Seven people, including three police personnel were injured following a dispute between two Hindu groups here -- the Himalayan Brahma Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission Ashram -- in the heart of the state capital, police said on Sunday. The premises of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashram, located within the Brahma Samaj property near the Vidhan Sabha was also damaged in the conflict, they said. The clash occurred after over a 100 people, including elderly women associated with the Himalayan Brahma Samaj, peacefully entered the ashram premises on Saturday evening to perform prayers. Sanjeev Kumar Gandhi Shimla superintendent of police (SP) said. The group wished to continue their prayers into the night, but the members of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashram, who are in possession of the premises, objected, citing that they wished to close the ashram for the night, Gandhi said. Anticipating a possible takeover attempt, as there is an ongoing dispute over the ownership of the property reported worth crores, the ashram authorities called the police and administration for

assistance, said ashram office bearers. According to the SP, it was a sensitive issue as it involved religious sentiments, hence police and administration were present at the spot, to mediate and resolve the matter. However, when the Himalayan Brahma Samaj followers completed their prayers and agreed to leave on the condition that they will be allowed to perform prayers on Sunday, people gathered by the Ramakrishna Mission started pelting stones injuring seven people including three police personals, the SP said. Two FIRs have been registered against seven people including Sheetal Vyas, her husband ABVP leader Nitin Vyas, under sections 132 (assault against public servant discharging their duty), 121 (causing hurt to public servant), 221 (obstruction), 191 (unlawful assembly), 194 (2) (public fight disturbing peace) and 196 (2) (offence at place of worship) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the police said. Swami Tanmahimanand, secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashram, alleged that the property was handed over to the ashram by the Brahma Samaj for religious purposes and that the mission has been residing there since 2014.

Tanmahimanand said on Saturday, their gardener, who also looks after the ashram premises, and some union leaders held a conference in Kali Bari temple. Thereafter, they entered the ashram as devotees and performed puja, heard pravachan and when at 8:30 pm they wished to close the ashram, members of the Himalayan Brahma Samaj raised slogans of 'Jai Brahma, this is our temple and you have occupied it' and refused to vacate, he said. "Everyone has the right to perform puja but no one has the right to take possession of the ashram and our demand is that the people of Himalayan Brahma Samaj should vacate the temple (ashram)", he added. Swami Ram Rupanand, co-secretary of the ashram said that an attempt was made to forcefully take possession of the temple and alleged that the administration and police remained a mute spectator to the incident. He also demanded a CBI inquiry into the incident. Trustee, Himalayan Brahma Samaj, Shimla MR Sagroli said that a two-day Brahma Samaj conference was held in Shimla and their members from across the country wanted to visit the temple (ashram) and they should be allowed to access.

Delhi court grants exemption to Vikash Yadav from appearance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has granted exemption from personal appearance to Vikash Yadav, accused of attempting to kill alleged Khalistani terrorist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun in the USA, in a case of kidnapping and extortion lodged against him after he claimed threat to life. Special Judge Sumit Dass granted the exemption to Yadav for November 16 on an application moved by his lawyer, claiming that his personal details have been made public, putting his life at risk. The judge directed him to appear before the court on February 3, the next date of hearing. Yadav was arrested by the Special Cell of Delhi Police in December last year following a complaint by a Delhi-based businessman, accusing him of



extorting and kidnapping. A charge sheet was filed in March and Yadav was granted bail in April. Yadav, said to be a former RAW official, was named by the US in connection with the failed assassination attempt on Pannun.

published all over the world, exposing the applicant to serious threat to his life from nefarious elements". "The applicant is being hounded by continuous surveillance by inimical elements who are trying to trace the applicant at all possible places leaving no option for the applicant but to ensure his safety in confines. Threat to the life of the applicant is clear, present, grave, imminent and potential and physical appearance of applicant before the court is likely to lend an opportunity to annihilate the applicant," the application claimed. It claimed that even to appear through video conference was "extremely unsafe" as Yadav's location might be detected by use of electronic technology. The applicant is keen to earn his innocence through trial and is represented by his counsel, it claimed.

NGT asks UP to maintain Adi Ganga Gomti

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed authorities in Uttar Pradesh to take expeditious steps to tap untapped drains, besides taking all possible measures to maintain the riverine ecology of the Adi Ganga Gomti river in Jaunpur district. The green body was hearing a matter regarding the drying up of the river and its chemical pollution, which has caused the death of a large number of fish. In an order dated November eight, a bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Srivastava noted that a joint team of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB) and district authorities had inspected the river and submitted a report.

India's decarbonisation policies will impact global greenhouse gas emissions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A report by Climate Action Tracker 2020 has said that India's policy and programmes for decarbonising its cities will have a significant impact on global greenhouse gas emissions. Decarbonising the Indian Transport Sector Pathways and Policies, India's transport sector is responsible for 13.5 per cent of the country's energy-related CO2 emissions, with road transport accounting for 90 percent of the sector's final energy consumption. While transport emissions have been steadily increasing

in the backdrop of growing demand for Internal Combustion Engine, policy interventions, investments and initiatives by central and state governments is playing a pivotal role in enabling and expanding green public and private mobility in urban areas. These large-scale public initiatives to decarbonise cities and transport are supported by public, private and development sectors. Home to the world's largest population, India's action will significantly impact global emissions, especially around transport. The Indo-Gangetic Plain (IGP), encompassing Uttar

Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand, remains one of India's most polluted and climate-vulnerable regions. Decarbonising urban mobility here is crucial for addressing the dual crises of air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. In this context, The Climate Agenda will be hosting first Regional Convention on Clean and Inclusive Urban Transport Systems that will focus on fostering equity and inclusivity in sustainable mobility solutions. It aims to spotlight the challenges faced by marginalized groups, such as women, children, and the elderly, while promoting their

active participation in shaping urban transport systems that cater to their needs. "The convention seeks to align with and support existing government initiatives like the Smart Cities Mission and FAME. By identifying unique regional challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and informal transit systems, the event aims to offer actionable solutions tailored to these states. With a focus on electrifying public transport fleets, the convention will present a roadmap to accelerate adoption and set the foundation for future

collaborations, ensuring that the region contributes significantly to India's climate goals while fostering sustainable urban growth" said Ekta Shekhar, Founding Director, The Climate Agenda. The convention will also be an opportunity to launch first-of-its kind collaborative platform with aim for knowledge-sharing, demand generation and joint action in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand in promoting the electrification of public transport, fostering collaboration across sectors, and supporting a transition to cleaner, more sustainable urban mobility solutions.

Ragging kills 18-year-old in Gujarat medical college

PTI ■ PATAN

An 18-year-old MBBS student of a medical college in Gujarat's Patan district died after allegedly after being made to stand for three hours during ragging by his seniors, an official said Sunday. The college has started a probe into the incident which took place on Saturday. The deceased, who apparently fell unconscious after being made to stand for a long time, was a first year MBBS student at the college. The victim, Anil Methaniya, fell unconscious and died allegedly after being made to stand for three hours during ragging by his seniors at a hostel of the GMERS Medical College and Hospital at Dharpur in Patan on Saturday night, the college dean, Dr Hardik Shah, said. "The student was rushed to the hospital after he collapsed, and attempts to revive him failed and he was declared dead. His classmates said Methaniya died after being made to stand for three hours and introduce himself before seniors at the college hostel," Shah informed. He said the anti-ragging committee of the college has initiated a probe into the matter, and punitive measures will be taken against the senior students if they are found responsible for ragging. The student's body was sent for postmortem and a case of accidental death was registered, an official from Balisana police station said. A first-year medical student at the college said seven-eight senior students forced a group of juniors to stand for around three hours and introduce themselves one by one. "They forced us to keep standing and asked us not to get agitated. At last, a student, who was also standing with us, fell unconscious. We rushed him to a hospital where he died," he said on condition of anonymity. A cousin of Methaniya told reporters that the family was hopeful of getting justice from the college and government.

Politicians across party lines pay homage to Bal Thackeray



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and former Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray were among the leaders who paid homage to Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray on his 12th death anniversary on Sunday. In his tribute, PM Modi said, "I pay homage to the great Balasaheb Thackeray Ji on his 12th death anniversary on Sunday. He was a visionary who championed the cause of Maharashtra's development and the empowerment of Marathi people. He was a firm believer in enhancing the pride of Indian culture and ethos. His bold voice and unwavering spirit continue to

inspire generations."

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, in a post on X, wrote, "Remembering Balasaheb Thackeray ji on his 12th death anniversary. My thoughts are with Uddhav Thackeray ji, Aditya and the entire Shiv Sena family." Others who paid tribute to Bal Thackeray, among the state's most charismatic politicians with a fanatical following, were Chief Minister (CM) Eknath Shinde, Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis, NCP (SP) head Sharad Pawar, Mumbai Congress president Varsha Gaikwad and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray. Pawar, in an online post, wrote, "Salutations to late

Balasaheb Thackeray, the founder of Shiv Sena party, satirist and politician who fought against the injustice to the Marathi people." Gaikwad said Balasaheb Thackeray ruled over Marathi minds and fought for justice, rights of the Marathi people throughout his life. Senior BJP leader Fadnis in his message said, "Humble tributes to Hinduhriday Samrat Balasaheb Thackeray on his Smrutidina." Earlier, Shiv Sena (UBT) head Uddhav Thackeray and his wife Rashmi Thackeray visited the late stalwart's memorial at Shivaji Park in Mumbai and offered floral tributes. Several members of the two rival Sena factions also visited the memorial as a

mark of respect to Bal Thackeray. The Shiv Sena founder passed away on November 17, 2012 at his residence, Matoshree, in Mumbai after prolonged illness. The Shiv Sena split in 2022 after Shinde-led a rebellion against the party leadership, triggering the collapse of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government under Uddhav Thackeray. Shinde subsequently joined hands with the BJP to form government. The Election Commission of India later recognised the Shinde-led faction. However, both factions continue to engage in a bitter tussle to claim the legacy of Bal Thackeray, who championed Hindutva policy.

Jagannath temple alleges its land being encroached, illegally sold across state

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan on Sunday said strong action will be taken against all persons who made attempts to illegally encroach upon and sell land belonging to Lord Jagannath in Puri. The Jagannath temple in Puri owns around 60,426 acres of land spread across 24 districts in Odisha, besides 395 acres outside Odisha. The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) on Saturday filed a complaint at Baseli Sahi police station in Puri alleging attempts are being made to sell land belonging to Lord Jagannath under Matitota mouza in Puri.

Speaking to media persons here, Harichandan said, "We will take strong action against all persons involved in the act. If any plot has been sold to some person, we will take stringent action against persons including seller, buyer, sub-registrar, who transferred the land." The government will not tolerate unauthorised sale of a single inch of land of Lord Jagannath in any circumstances, he assured. The temple administration has also initiated its move in this direction, the minister said. The government is mulling steps for settlement of Jagannath temple land available in Odisha and outside as per uniform policy

formulated in 2003, as maximum land parcels are under encroachment, he said, adding, "Through this move, a big corpus fund for the temple can be created." In a statement, SJTA chief administrator Arabinda Padhee has urged the district collector and SP to take immediate measures to stop the illegal sale attempt. The disputed property, registered under khata no 38, comprises 109 plots that are legally owned by the deity. The temple administration has cautioned the public against engaging in such illegal activities, warning that any attempts to transfer or encroach on temple property would lead to severe legal consequences.

Death toll rises to 11 in Jhansi hospital tragedy



BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ JHANSI

Another rescued infant succumbed to death on Sunday. District Magistrate (DM) Avinash Kumar clarified that the death was not caused by burns. The aftermath of the devastating fire at the Special Newborn Care Unit (SNCU) of Maharani Laxmibai Government Medical College continues to unfold, with the death toll rising to 11. Autopsies conducted on the victims revealed that the infants were burned beyond recognition, with over 80% of their bodies affected. Three teams of two doctors each carried out the postmortems. Initially, seven bodies were sent for examination. Identification of three more infants was delayed due to the severity of burns. By Sunday, the remaining infants were identified, and their bodies were handed over to grieving families. DNA samples were collected from the charred remains to confirm identities and for use in any future disputes. The findings disclosed that the intense heat had exposed bones, and the infants died within minutes of the fire breaking out.

DM Avinash Kumar stated that 49 newborns were in the SNCU at the time of the fire, and 39 were rescued. However, earlier reports suggested 55 children were present, highlighting discrepancies in official accounts. The ward, designed to care for critically ill newborns with conditions such as jaundice and pneumonia, was reportedly operating at three times its capacity. Warmers and monitoring machines, essential for neonatal care, were running continuously. Experts noted that these devices require periodic breaks to prevent overheating, a safety protocol allegedly overlooked on the night of the incident. Questions abound over safety lapses and administrative negligence, as the heart-wrenching cries of grieving parents such as Rema Devi, whose first baby died, continue to echo through hospital corridors. "Let me see the face of my child," she wailed, encapsulating the anguish of a mother whose hopes were cruelly extinguished. While the hospital administration attributes the fire to a short circuit, the

exact cause remains under investigation. Preliminary findings suggest that excessive electrical load caused a short circuit, which ignited an oxygen concentrator and escalated the fire. However, officials have yet to provide a definitive explanation for the incident. Bereaved families have raised serious questions about overcrowding, safety lapses, and negligence by hospital staff. The tragedy has sparked widespread outrage, with many demanding strict action against those responsible. Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak has ordered a three-tier investigation to determine accountability for the catastrophic fire. While the investigation initially involved Jhansi Divisional Commissioner Vimal Kumar Dubey, the government later transferred the responsibility to Director General of Medical and Health Department Kinjal Singh. The government's decision to alter the investigation committee has not been explained, but the findings from all three investigations are awaited to establish culpability.

Cops recover IEDs, foil plans to disrupt elections in Gadchiroli

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a joint operation, the Mumbai police and central security agencies foiled a purported attempt to disrupt the November 20 Assembly election in naxalite-infested Gadchiroli district of eastern Maharashtra, by recovering two improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Acting on a tip-off that a group of Maoists had planted some IEDs to blow up a crucial bridge along the Palakot River in Bhamragad tehsil of Gadchiroli district, a team of Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad rushed to the targeted area in an helicopter for an aerial survey. Subsequently, a joint team of Gadchiroli Police, a company of the Central Reserve Police Force and Border Security Force carried out an extensive search operation

and succeeded in locating the two IEDs, on the Palakot River bridge that links Bhamragad and Tadgaon. As the search team was preparing to neutralise the two deadly IEDs, one of them exploded, while the other one was controlled by the team. Police said that no one suffered injuries nor was there any damage to public property in the explosion. The search is now carrying out combing the areas to detect any more explosives that might have been planted there. The police said that the motive behind planting IEDs was either to create panic among the people or trigger actual explosions on election day. Following the recovery, security agencies have intensified patrolling in

many sensitive areas and are also taking other precautions such as keeping vigilance over naxal hiding areas in the forests and increasing security at critical public and private installations such as bridges, important roads and highways. The security agencies have chalked out elaborate plans to deploy adequate security personnel in three Maoist-infested constituencies of Gadchiroli, Armori and Aheri in Gadchiroli district, Chimur and Bramhapuri constituencies in the neighbouring Chandrapur district and Amgaon constituency in Gondia district to ensure smooth polling on November 20. These six Assembly constituencies have over the years been registering sizeable voter turnouts in the elections.

Punjab Governor GC Kataria pays tributes to martyrs

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Tributes were paid to the martyrs here on Sunday as a precursor to the eighth edition of Military Literature Festival (MLF), with Punjab Governor and UT Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria laying a wreath at the Chandigarh War Memorial here. General (Retd) VP Malik, former army chief, BS Dhanoa, former Indian Air Force chief and Lieutenant General (Retd) TS Shergill chairperson of the MLF association were also present on the occasion. A Bravehearts Ride motorcycle rally carrying the message of courage, sacrifice and patriotism was also organised in Chandigarh on

Sunday as part of the events connected with the MLF. The eighth edition of the MLF will be held in Chandigarh on November 30 and December 1. "We paid our tributes to the martyrs, who made supreme sacrifices for the motherland," Kataria told reporters after laying a wreath at the memorial. He said the valour of the bravehearts continues to inspire generations and exhorted the youth to embrace the noble path of serving the nation with the same courage and dedication shown by these heroes. Replying to a question, Kataria said even today the youth have a great fascination for the armed forces.

Railways plays cupid, creates special corridor to help a groom reach marriage

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Indian Railways proved that they are "with you ... for always," a genuine friend indeed. But for the timely intervention of the Indian Railways officials at Howrah Station, a prospective groom might have failed tying the nuptial knots. Upon receiving a message that the grooms' party comprising about 35 people, including women, old and children bound for Guwahati was arriving late at the Howrah Station from Mumbai in Gitanjali Express running and could miss the connecting train, which was about to leave the station, the Divisional Railway Manager

and the Chief Commercial Manager of the Eastern Railways swung into action, alerting the entire staff and issuing necessary directions. "It was nearly impossible for us to catch Saraighat Express, which was just about to leave. Our train was somewhere around the outer signal when the pilot was asked to hurry up. As our train rolled into the station, we found railway employees had created a special corridor for the groom's party. We managed to cross 15 platforms to catch the Saraighat Express," said one of the members of the groom's party while thanking the entire railway fraternity. Sensing trouble as the Gitanjali Express -scheduled

to reach Howrah at 1 pm on Friday - was running behind schedule and there was more chance of missing than catching the Guwahati bound train, Chandrasekhar Bag, a member of a wedding party, pleaded helplessness on X to Railway authorities. He tagged several top officials and even the Union railway minister. The Eastern Railways, in a post on X, said, "IR arranged to detain Saraighat Express at Howrah for a few minutes so that a marriage party with dulha; coming by Gitanjali Express and going to Guwahati can catch the train. The marriage party has expressed their thanks to Railways for this helping gesture."

Nagaland government to meet Center, after NSCN-IM threatens armed conflict

PTI ■ KOHIMA

With the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) (NSCN-IM) threatening to go back to jungles due to delay in the resolution of the Naga political dialogue with the Government of India (GoI), the Nagaland cabinet has decided to meet both negotiating parties at the earliest, official sources said on Sunday. A delegation of Nagaland cabinet led by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio and his deputies TR Zeliang and Y Patton are scheduled to leave for Delhi on Monday to meet home minister Amit Shah to press for expediting the Naga political negotiations. In a statement, NSCN-IM general secretary Th Muivah has alleged that the Centre was deliberately refusing to honour the key provisions of

the historic agreement, specifically the recognition of the Naga national flag and constitution. Threatening violent armed conflict, the NSCN-IM on November 7 sought a third-party intervention to address the impasse over the Naga political issue. The group, which has maintained ceasefire since 1997, accused the Union government of betraying the Framework Agreement signed on August 3, 2015. In an interview with a news channel on Saturday, Zeliang had said that a cabinet meeting held during the day had deliberated on Muivah's statement and therefore decided to meet the Union home minister and also the NSCN-IM leadership. On NSCN-IM seeking third-party intervention, Zeliang had said that unless there is an understanding between



Sources also said that the state cabinet would also apprise the Union home minister about the decision of the September 12 consultative meeting of the state government with Naga tribal bodies and civil societies seeking appointment of a proper interlocutor and also to elevate the ongoing Naga political dialogue to ministerial level. "The House appealed to the GoI to elevate the ongoing dialogue and peace process to the highest political level by appointing an interlocutor of, who has the confidence and mandate of the government," the meeting had resolved. Former Governor of Nagaland, RN Ravi was the last interlocutor for the talks but after being shifted to Tamil Nadu, the Centre appointed AK Mishra only as a representative. The Centre has been holding negotiations with NSCN-IM

since 1997 after the ceasefire agreement and inked the Framework Agreement on August 3, 2015. It also started parallel talks with the Working Committee of Naga National Political Groups (WC NNPGs) in 2017 and signed the Agreed Position the same year. The then interlocutor Ravi had declared talks have concluded on October 30, 2019. However, the persistent demand of NSCN-IM of a separate flag and constitution for Nagas and integration of all Naga inhabited areas has not been accepted by the Centre, delaying the final solution. On the other hand, WC NNPGs, composed of seven Naga groups, have declared to accept whatever is possible for now and continue further negotiations for the remaining demand.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Left turn ho!

Anura Kumara Dissanayake's election triumph could prove to be a turning point for Sri Lanka's politics and South Asia

Sri Lanka has done it again. After electing Anura Kumara Dissanayake as President his left-leaning party has secured a majority in the parliament, which gives Anura a complete control over Sri Lanka. What is more startling is that his party has decimated the Tamil parties in the northern Sri Lanka, which was the stronghold of Tamil parties. This is indeed a stunning political shift. Anura Kumara Dissanayake, leader of Sri Lanka's National People's Power (NPP), has achieved a resounding victory in the country's parliamentary elections, winning 123 out of 225 seats in Sri Lanka's Parliament. This outcome, which comes barely two months after Dissanayake's election as President on September 21, marks a pivotal moment in the nation's political landscape and could have significant ramifications not only for Sri Lanka but also for the wider South Asian region. Dissanayake's rise to prominence is both unexpected and historic. His party, despite winning only 42 per cent of the presidential vote, has managed to galvanise a



broad cross-section of Sri Lankan society, particularly in regions where other political forces have traditionally held sway. His victory represents a rejection of the traditional political elites that have long governed the island since its independence in 1948, and it signifies the growing appeal of his platform advocating for economic revival and social justice. Notably, the NPP's win in the Jaffna district—a historically Tamil-majority area in the northern part of Sri Lanka—has surprised political pundits. For decades, Tamil ethnic parties have dominated this region, a legacy of the civil war (1983-2009) that left a deep divide between the Tamil minority and the Sinhalese-majority government.

This victory in Jaffna is symbolic of a new approach to ethnic relations in Sri Lanka. Traditionally, the Tamil population has been wary of Sinhalese-majority leaders, given the traumatic history of the civil conflict, where over 100,000 lives were lost according to conservative UN estimates. Dissanayake's success in these areas suggests that many Tamils are willing to embrace a new kind of leadership, one that offers economic promise and a path forward, beyond ethnic divisions. Dissanayake's victory carries significant implications for the future of Sri Lanka. First and foremost, his strong mandate gives him the political capital needed to implement his economic revival agenda, which is urgently needed as Sri Lanka grapples with economic instability and growing debt. Dissanayake has long advocated for Marxist economic policies, including land reforms, wealth redistribution and greater state control over key industries. If successful, his administration could lead to a reshaping of Sri Lanka's economy, potentially benefiting marginalised communities, including Tamils and other ethnic minorities. Dissanayake's popularity, especially among younger voters and ethnic minorities, suggests a growing demand for alternative political solutions. But can he live up to people's expectations, bring about radical changes and maintain ethnic harmony? That is the big question only time can tell!

PICTALK



Labourers thresh paddy at a field on the outskirts of Amritsar

The smog capital of India

As Delhi battles a toxic mix of seasonal stubble burning and local pollution sources, its residents are exposed to severe and potentially life-threatening health risks



RAJDEEP PATHAK

The National Capital Territory of Delhi, which is home to nearly 30 million people, has been grappling with dangerously high pollution levels for over two weeks. On Wednesday, November 13, 2024, the air quality index (AQI) across Delhi remained in the 'very poor' category, marking the 15th consecutive day when residents faced increased health risks from the polluted air. According to official data (the Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi, managed by the Central Government), this situation will likely persist for at least six days. In parallel, the city is also experiencing an unusually warm spell that defies typical seasonal trends, adding complexity to an already challenging situation for residents. This grim forecast highlights the role of unfavourable meteorological conditions that limit the dispersal of pollutants, essentially trapping them close to the ground. The AQI measures levels of harmful pollutants in the air, with a higher value indicating a greater concentration of pollutants. While an AQI between 300 and 400 is considered "very poor," levels above 400 are classified as "severe," meaning the pollution is severe enough to affect even healthy individuals.

The IMD has reported that the typical winter season may not arrive in Delhi as quickly as expected, thereby disrupting long-established weather patterns that typically bring cooler, less polluted air to the region. The dense fog mixed with thick smog has created a near-total obscurity, as citizens found themselves enveloped in a hazardous blend of pollutants and moisture resulting in keeping daytime temperatures lower than expected for this time of year — because of fog and smog — although overall temperatures remain warmer than the seasonal norm. This combination of high pollution and unusual weather patterns has compounded the health concerns for residents, particularly the elderly, children and those with respiratory ailments. Delhi's persistent air pollution crisis is fuelled by a combination of local and regional sources.



There are many contributors to this game, the primary being: vehicle emissions, industrial activities, construction dust, and the neighbouring states of Punjab and Haryana which engage in the seasonal burning of crop residue. The primary pollutant in Delhi's air, according to IQAir — a global air quality monitoring agency based in Switzerland — is PM2.5, a fine particulate matter that can penetrate deeply into the lungs. Earlier this month, parts of Delhi recorded Air Quality Index (AQI) levels as high as 1,133, placing them in the "hazardous" category. Prolonged exposure to such elevated PM2.5 levels poses serious health risks, including respiratory infections, asthma attacks and even heightened mortality rates among vulnerable populations. Warmer-than-normal temperatures hinder the ability of pollutants to disperse, as colder temperatures usually facilitate the movement of these particles away from the urban air layer. The combination of stagnant weather conditions, pollution, and warm temperatures has created a perfect whirlpool of the smog's persistence over Delhi, making it more difficult for the city to "breathe" as it would in cooler conditions. Health experts believe that exposure to high levels of pollution can lead to short-term



THE DENSE FOG MIXED WITH THICK SMOG HAS CREATED A NEAR-TOTAL OBSCURITY, AS CITIZENS FOUND THEMSELVES ENVELOPED IN A HAZARDOUS BLEND OF POLLUTANTS AND MOISTURE RESULTING IN KEEPING DAYTIME TEMPERATURES LOWER THAN EXPECTED

effects like coughing, throat irritation and chest tightness. In the long term, the risks increase substantially, with studies linking air pollution exposure to chronic respiratory diseases, lung cancer, heart disease, and even impacts on cognitive functions. Air pollution is a severe health crisis in India, causing between 1.2 million and 1.8 million premature deaths each year. The 7 million annual deaths from air pollution worldwide exceed those from COVID-19, as well as combined fatalities from war, homicide, car and plane accidents. Clean air is essential for human health, yet scientific studies continue to reveal new health risks linked to air pollution, including respiratory diseases, heart issues, stroke, and lung cancer, as well as emerging links to premature births, diabetes, and brain damage. Poor air quality can also worsen outcomes for COVID-19 by increasing vulnerability to respiratory illnesses. Dr David R Boyd, Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability, University of British Columbia, CA, Associate Professor in law, policy and Sustainability in his paper "The Human Rights to Breathe Clean Air" published in The National Library of Medicine (2019) necessitates the urgency for treating air pollution as a human rights issue and that "Air pollution on

today's scale, clearly violates the rights to life and health, the rights of the child and the right to live in a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment" and that there is an urgent need to voice that the legal support of a human rights issue, since Dr David says that "The human rights perspective changes everything — because governments have clear, legally enforceable obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights. As Delhi battles yet another season of toxic air, the health and wellbeing of millions are at stake. The situation demands urgent and coordinated action from the government, industry, and residents (read citizens). Sustainable improvement requires systemic changes to reduce pollution at its source. While the road to a cleaner, healthier Delhi may be long, there is hope in ongoing technological and policy developments aimed at reducing pollution. As more people become aware of the critical importance of air quality, public support for environmental initiatives will continue to grow, fostering a collective movement toward cleaner air and a better quality of life for all Delhiites and others who visit to see the grandeur of the Capital City. When... It's in our hands! (The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhii Smriti and Darshan Smriti; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INFANT LIVES LOST

Madam — The shocking fire accident in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) of Maharani Laxmibai Medical College in Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh, in which at least 10 newborn babies died due to burns and suffocation and some still struggling for their lives, is really heart-wrenching. Just a few months back, a devastating fire in a newborn care unit of a children's hospital in Delhi had claimed the precious lives of infants. Lack of preparedness, readiness to tackle fire accidents, be it due to short circuit or any other sort and lack of awareness on what to do in case of such incidents make us victims to infernos. The death of these little innocent infants poses a big question: when are we really going to learn our lessons? Be it hospitals or hotels, movie halls or malls, people may not have the slightest bit of idea about the escape routes, layouts and other possible ways of escape in case of an inferno. Staff of the concerned establishments should be prepared to rescue or at least guide the guests to safety. Intensive care units and baby care units should definitely have safety arrangements so that such fire accidents can be prevented. Buildings should have a common way to exit that anyone, irrespective of age and gender, should be able to identify and escape immediately. Buildings should have proper fire and electricity safety devices and these must be checked occasionally. Staff, especially in sensitive places like hospitals, schools, and hotels, should take part in mock drills and be ever ready in case of emergency. Schools and colleges should include fire disaster management lessons in their physical education curriculum so that we can groom citizens who can face such emergencies boldly, wisely, and bravely and even help the weak and those who are very young.

M Pradyu | Kannur

BULLDOZER RULE ENDS

Madam — The spirit of the verdict should sensitise all the concerned. Bulldozing the structures of those who are branded as

Secure online transactions



The rapid growth of digital payments, from banking to shopping, has made everything done online nowadays; it has opened doors for scammers as they continue to evolve their methods to con people in newer ways. Cybercriminals are

employing new tricks to defraud individuals, like fake UPI transaction images, net banking fraud through emails, etc. And from common citizens to government officials, no one is untouched by these scammers. There are various things that we must do if we fall prey to such scammers, like contacting authorised customer care centers, reporting incidents immediately to the National Cyber Crime Helpline, documenting everything, keeping strong passwords, and staying informed through social media, etc. A strong and rigorous awareness campaign has to be started by the government of India so that these scammers do not have a free run & individuals are safe.

Bal Govind | Noida

DELHI POLLUTION CRISIS

Madam — The Delhi Chief Minister Atishi has directed all educational institutions, particularly the primary schools, to shift to online classes while going by the very high risk of AQI in the state. The Delhi civic authorities started implementing methods like sprinkling water with dust suppressants on roads, as well as mechanised sweeping that would help settle dust, which also came into effect. There is a ban on non-essential constructions in the world's most polluted capital. The air quality has worsened to the level that the image of the Taj Mahal appears to be a kind of ghost at the moment. The manmade calamity by worsening air conditions and the cleaning up of the image by the Delhi government's AAP has become like a war for them, which is symbolic of the party's election symbol, the 'Broom', to rebuild their unclean image nearing the elections along with other major issues.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Let us be comfortable with silence to discover inner self



ASHA IYER KUMAR

Silence is empowering, it not only gives peace but also strength and clarity. It invites us to reconnect with our inner calm, a solitude we often shun

I am writing this column from the quiet environs of an Alpine valley in Germany. The winter has set in, turning the skies grey and the air bleary. This small town in Bavaria withdraws into its living rooms as early as 4.30 pm when darkness falls and then there is only silence all around, made palpable by the dwindling traffic and people on the streets. For someone who is used to the non-stop noise of metropolitan Dubai, this silence is new and comforting.



there's often an instinctual drive to fill the void, a compulsion to keep the hum of interaction alive lest silence brings its "awkwardness" into the room. But I often wonder, is silence something to be avoided? Or is it, in fact, a sanctuary we have lost touch with, one that could lead us back to ourselves? I think of the times I have seen people—close friends, even strangers—grapple with the discomfort of a pause, reaching for words as if they were life preservers in a sea of quiet. We are, it seems, constantly seeking refuge in noise, hoping it will drown out whatever solitude and reflection might stir in us if given the chance. Silence is perceived as

emptiness, a fearful space, rather than a fertile ground for connection and self-discovery. We are conditioned to believe that engagement is strength and that silence, somehow, signals inadequacy.

To be quiet in conversation is almost seen as a failing; we are regarded as "shy" or "distant." Yet, silence has its richness, a subtle power that invites us into the fullness of presence, something words cannot always offer. In silence, we are called to listen, not only to others but also to our inner voice and perhaps that's where the unease begins. The quiet holds a mirror up to us, revealing what lies within when the outside world fades to a hush. Silence invites us to reconnect with an inner calm, a solitude we often shun. Instead of fearing what might emerge in the absence of chatter, we might learn to find comfort in simply being—without the compulsion to fill every moment with talk. In this way, silence is not a void; it is an invitation to pause, to settle our racing minds and to let the

dust of daily life drift gently to the ground. Consider, too, the depth that silence brings to relationships. When we share a moment of quiet with someone, we are not erasing the connection; we are deepening it.

It is in these pauses that we see each other most clearly, unfiltered by words, and held by the simple act of shared presence. Yet, our tendency to fear silence as awkward makes us miss the power of these moments—times when we could breathe alongside one another, unburdened by the need to perform or impress. It is time we learn to embrace silence not as an absence but as a presence—a steady, gentle force that grounds us when words have exhausted their role. For in those quiet spaces, we can find not just peace, but a reservoir of strength and clarity, one that restores rather than depletes, and brings solace to our weary souls.

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



FIRST COLUMN

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Servant leadership redefines leadership, emphasising the leader's role as a servant to their team



SAKSHI SETHI

In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, the traditional top-down leadership model is often insufficient for addressing the challenges organisations and communities face. The concept of servant leadership approach which, prioritises service to others over self-interest, has emerged as a vital alternative for fostering trust, collaboration and sustainable success.

Servant leadership is grounded in a set of key principles such as empathy, awareness, commitment to growth, stewardship that distinguish it from traditional, top-down leadership models. Trust in leadership across industries is at an all-time low, exacerbated by scandals, corporate greed and exploitative practices. By putting people first, servant leaders create a foundation of reliability and authenticity that restores faith in leadership.

Nowadays modern employees seek more than just a paycheck. They want meaningful work, supportive environments and leaders who genuinely care about their growth and wellbeing. Servant leadership aligns with these expectations by fostering empowerment, empathy and commitment to growth. This approach helps organisations attract and retain top talent in competitive job markets. Servant Leadership has proven effective in various contexts, from corporate settings to community organisations. Companies like Southwest Airlines and Starbucks have integrated servant leadership into their management philosophies, resulting in loyal employees and strong customer relationships. In education, servant leadership fosters supportive environments where teachers and students thrive. Similarly, nonprofit organisations benefit from servant leaders who prioritise the needs of the communities they serve.



It is often believed that, in times of crisis, such as economic downturns or global pandemics, organisations with servant leaders are more likely to thrive as these leaders provide stability and reassurance to their teams; prioritise people over profits during tough times and even empower employees to adapt and innovate. In an era where businesses are held accountable for their societal and environmental impact, servant leadership helps organisations fulfill their social responsibilities. By focusing on stewardship and community building, servant leaders ensure that their organisations contribute positively to society.

While servant leadership offers numerous benefits, it is not without its challenges. Its emphasis on service, empathy and community-building can sometimes create complexities, especially in environments that demand rapid decision-making or highly competitive strategies. Undeniably, this approach is a compassionate and effective approach in many scenarios but is not a one-size-fits-all solution. To succeed, it must be carefully balanced with the demands of the organisation and tailored to the specific context in which it is applied. By placing the wellbeing and development of others at the forefront, servant leaders foster trust, collaboration and sustainable success. In an era where ethical leadership is more important than ever, adopting the principles of servant leadership can lead to profound, lasting impact not just within organisations, but in society as a whole. By serving first, leaders ultimately inspire and empower others to achieve their fullest potential.

In essence, servant leadership is about flipping the traditional power dynamic. Instead of a command-and-control approach, servant leaders focus on collaboration, ethical behaviour and the empowerment of others to create more effective and meaningful outcomes. In a world that increasingly demands empathy, collaboration and accountability, servant leadership is more than a philosophy it is a necessity.

(The writer is an educator; views expressed are personal)

Supreme Court strikes down 'bulldozer injustice'



K S TOMAR

By reinforcing legal safeguards, the Apex Court seeks to restore public trust in the justice system and ensure that no citizen is denied their constitutional rights

A historic Supreme Court verdict against "bulldozer justice" promises broad legal, social, and administrative impacts, addressing concerns around the unchecked, high-handed demolition of properties linked to criminal accusations. Such actions have often violated the fundamental tenets of the Indian Constitution. This ruling holds direct implications for BJP-ruled states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Assam and the Delhi Municipal Corporation, which have been accused of misusing administrative powers to punish marginalised sections of society without due legal process.

The concept of "bulldozer justice" was notably invented by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath, earning him the nickname "Bulldozer Baba" among supporters. The Court's verdict marks a setback to the UP government, though CM may not express regret for actions nullified by the ruling, which had previously jeopardised the constitutional guarantees afforded to all Indian citizens.

Social Implications Protection of Marginalised Communities: The ruling acknowledges that bulldozer justice has disproportionately impacted marginalised groups. By mandating due process, the Court aims to prevent biased or retaliatory actions against vulnerable communities, promoting equal treatment under the law. **Public Trust in the Rule of Law:** By condemning bulldozer justice, the Supreme Court seeks to rebuild public confidence in lawful governance, fostering trust that the state will not bypass legal safeguards to punish alleged offenders.

Awareness and Advocacy: This judgment may empower civil rights groups to challenge arbitrary demolitions, advocating for the rights of those affected by unilateral property destruction. Administrative and Policy Impact.

Reduced Arbitrary Actions: Administrative bodies may now face restrictions against immediate demolition practices that bypass judicial processes, holding them accountable to legal frameworks designed to protect against arbitrary punishment. This could encourage a fairer and more equitable application of laws. **Policy Revisions at the State Level:** States that have regularly employed demolitions as a form of "bulldozer justice" may need to revisit their policies, ensuring alignment with constitutional rights to property and due process. This could result in tighter guidelines and even statutory changes. **Limit on Executive Power:** The Court's disapproval of unilateral demolition reinforces the separation of powers, signaling that executive decisions must strictly adhere to legal boundaries.

Legal and Judicial Consequences Strengthened Due Process: The ruling reaffirms that demolitions must respect due process, requiring legal scrutiny rather than administrative discretion. This will likely lead to the implementation of judicial approval for demolition orders, protecting citizens' rights against arbitrary state actions.

Increased Judicial Oversight: The ruling could result in heightened court involvement in cases where demolitions serve as punitive responses to alleged crimes, particularly in cases involving minority or marginalised groups.

Pressure for National Guidelines: The Supreme Court suggested nationwide stan-



ADMINISTRATIVE BODIES MAY NOW FACE RESTRICTIONS AGAINST IMMEDIATE DEMOLITION PRACTICES THAT BYPASS JUDICIAL PROCESSES, HOLDING THEM ACCOUNTABLE TO LEGAL FRAMEWORKS DESIGNED TO PROTECT AGAINST ARBITRARY PUNISHMENT

dards for property demolitions related to criminal cases, which could formalise rules for state authorities to follow, reducing current ambiguities.

Supreme Court Guidelines on Demolitions Justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan made impactful assertions, noting that demolitions based solely on accusations violate fundamental rights. The Court emphasised the presumption of innocence and mandated a 15-day notice period, allowing tenants or owners time to challenge demolition orders or make necessary arrangements. This highlights the right to shelter under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.

The Court warned that contempt proceedings could follow violations of these guidelines and responsible officials may face compensation liabilities for restitution. This ruling stemmed from controversial demolitions in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, alongside a Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind petition challenging demolitions in Delhi's Jahangirpuri in 2022. Data show that state laws on demolitions were often violated in Uttar Pradesh, a state pioneering "bulldozer justice."

The Uttar Pradesh Urban Planning and Development Act, 1973, requires a minimum 15-day notice before unauthorised structures can be removed, with a right to appeal. However, the 2022 demolitions, where structures were razed without due process, led to the Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind's petition to the Supreme Court. In another significant instance, former Chief Justice Chandrachud, before his retirement on November 9, and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra directed the Uttar Pradesh government

to pay Rs 25 lakh as compensation to a man whose home was demolished in 2019 for a road-widening project.

The Court expressed concern over state actions that could potentially use demolitions as selective reprisals, noting that citizens' voices must not be stifled by the threat of losing their homes. In Rajasthan, demolition laws under Section 245 of the Rajasthan Municipalities Act, 2009, require prior written notice detailing the grounds for eviction.

Following communal tensions in Udaipur, authorities issued a quick notice before demolishing a house on alleged forest land encroachment, contravening local law requirements for a reasonable response period. Section 91 of the Rajasthan Forest Act, 1953, restricts eviction orders to be issued only by a Tehsildar.

The Madhya Pradesh Municipalities Act, 1961, stipulates that any unauthorised building alteration or construction may be removed, but only after notice. However, this was ignored when a labourer's home was demolished immediately after his son's arrest, raising rights violation concerns.

Under the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, the commissioner can remove illegal structures but must give reasonable opportunity for owners to dispute the action.

The Jahangirpuri incident in 2022 highlighted the need for due process, intensifying scrutiny on such practices. In Haryana, demolitions are governed by Section 261 of the Haryana Municipal Corporation Act, 1994, which mandates a notice period with an opportunity to contest. However, after communal violence in Nuh

in 2023, authorities demolished over 440 structures, mostly affecting Muslim households. Although similar to Delhi's DMC Act, Haryana's compliance period is notably shorter—only three days, leaving owners little time for appeals.

Strengthening Accountability: The Supreme Court's new guidelines aim to check arbitrary demolitions and uphold legal protections, particularly for vulnerable tenants. These regulations emphasise that adequate notice, transparency, and due process must be integral to any demolition order. While state laws vary, adherence to these guidelines will be essential in ensuring that demolitions respect both legal and constitutional rights, strengthening administrative accountability.

A Fundamental Shift in the Justice System: The Supreme Court of India's recent ruling against "bulldozer justice" was a response to cases where properties of individuals accused of crimes, especially those involving communal violence, were demolished without legal due process.

The Court underscored that demolitions must be legally justified and cannot bypass established procedures. It criticised this practice for disproportionately impacting marginalised communities, violating human rights, and eroding public trust. In essence, this ruling reaffirms the constitutional right to due process, expected to curb the trend of using demolitions as extrajudicial punitive measures. The ruling marks a shift toward a justice system grounded in fairness, procedure, and accountability.

(The author is a political analyst and strategic affairs columnist; views are personal)

Tackling the epidemic of diabetes and hypertension: Urgent action needed

Lack of awareness and limited early screening make these two lifestyle diseases rampant

Diabetes and hypertension are two interconnected yet distinct chronic diseases that collectively strain public health. Both conditions share underlying risk factors, such as unhealthy diets, physical inactivity and high stress levels. They also frequently co-occur, accelerating the onset of severe complications and amplifying each other's impact.



PANKAJ BHARDWAJ

Diabetes and hypertension significantly increase the risk for cardiovascular diseases, chronic kidney disease, stroke, and eye disorders, forming a "double-edged sword" for health. In particular, hypertension, when combined with diabetes, can increase the likelihood of heart disease and stroke. Management of these conditions in India is challeng-

ing due to lack of awareness, inadequate early screening and inaction, particularly in rural and resource-poor areas. More than half a billion people are living with diabetes globally. This is only expected to more than double in the next 30 years, in almost every country, according to a Lancet study. When it comes to hypertension, over a billion people—

1 in every 4 men and 1 in 5 women—are living with this condition, which ranks as one of the leading causes of premature death worldwide. In addition to this, WHO states that more than 50 per cent of people with diabetes and about 46 per cent of adults living with hypertension don't even know about their condition. It is safe to argue that lack of awareness is the biggest problem here. Both conditions have become the largest, silent, dual epidemics currently challenging India. The Cost of Inaction: Tertiary treatment for complications from advanced diabetes and hypertension—such as heart disease, kidney failure, or stroke—is exponentially more costly than primary health interventions. In 2024, reports from different

Insurance companies showed that the cost of a kidney transplant in public sector hospitals in India generally goes up to 6 lakhs.

This estimate is significantly lower than in private hospitals, which can go up to INR 15 lakhs or more, due to higher administrative and facility fees. Similarly, cardiac surgery can range anywhere between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 15 lakhs. In contrast, medication for diabetes and hypertension cost potentially up to only Rs 10,000 yearly, which is otherwise completely free of cost if obtained from a Government hospital.

Thus, investing in primary care interventions is far more cost-effective and sustainable than managing advanced complications. Reducing the



Burden: Encouraging people to take ownership of their health and get regular check-ups could prevent costly treatments.

One person's decision to monitor their blood pressure or blood sugar levels could save thousands in healthcare costs—covering medication, hospital beds and medical staff—funds that could otherwise be allocated to proactive community health services.

This alone could lead to a decrease in the incidence of severe complications, ultimately saving lives and reducing the overall societal cost.

A Path Forward: Our country needs to work on three fronts parallelly: first, increasing awareness campaigns, second, enhancing access to screenings and third, ensuring widespread support for affordable primary care.

Educating communities, especially in rural areas, about the importance of early detection can create a more health-conscious society that seeks intervention before these conditions spiral.

At the same time, the government's initiatives, such as the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes,

Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS), need robust on-the-ground implementation to reach every corner of the country. The National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases, and Stroke (NPCDCS) was launched in 2010 by the Government of India, as a game changer.

It aims to reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) through early diagnosis, management, and health promotion. The programme focuses on four major NCDs—cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and stroke—due to their high prevalence and impact on public health. It equips our communities to battle hypertension and dia-

betes through accessible screenings and preventive care. By catching issues early and promoting lifestyle change, we're not just treating diseases—we're transforming health outcomes and reclaiming years of productive life across India.

Conclusion: Addressing diabetes and hypertension isn't just a medical issue; it's a societal one. India's battle against these diseases demands the willingness of individuals to seek preventive care, awareness of the risks, and action by both govt and citizens to implement and utilise early detection programs. Only then can we mitigate these silent but pervasive epidemics and prevent a looming healthcare crisis.

(The author is a public health expert; views are personal)

Xi cautions US to 'make wise choice' to keep ties stable

AP ■ LIMA

China's leader Xi Jinping met for the last time with US President Joe Biden on Saturday but was already looking ahead to President-elect Donald Trump and his "America first" policies, saying Beijing "is ready to work with a new US administration". During their talks on the sidelines of the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, Xi cautioned that a stable China-US relationship was critical not only to the two nations but also the "future and destiny of humanity".

"Make the wise choice," he cautioned. "Keep exploring the right way for two major countries to get along well with each other."

Without mentioning Trump's name, Xi appeared to signal his concern that the incoming president's protectionist rhetoric on the campaign trail could send the US-China relationship into another valley.

"China is ready to work with a new US administration to maintain communication, expand cooperation and manage differences so as to strive for a steady transition of the China-US relationship for the benefit of the two peoples," Xi said through an interpreter.

Xi, who is firmly entrenched atop China's political hierarchy, spoke forcefully in his brief remarks before reporters. Biden, who is winding down more than 50 years of public service, talked in broader

brushstrokes about where the relationship has gone. He reflected not just on the past four years but the decades the two have known each other.

"We haven't always agreed, but our conversations have always been candid and always been frank. We've never kidded one another," Biden said. "These conversations prevent miscalculations, and they ensure the competition between our two countries will not veer into conflict."

Biden urged Xi to dissuade North Korea from further deepening its support for Russia's war on Ukraine. The leaders, with top aides surrounding them, gathered around a long rectangle of tables in an expansive conference room at Lima's Defines Hotel and Conference Center. China "hosted" the meeting this year, after Xi and Biden met a year ago on the APEC sidelines in northern California, a gathering hosted by the US. They had much to discuss, including China's indirect support for Russia, human rights issues, technology and Taiwan, the self-ruled democracy that Beijing claims as its own. On artificial intelligence, the two agreed on the need to maintain human control over the decision to use nuclear weapons.

There's much uncertainty about what lies ahead in the US-China relationship under Trump, who campaigned promising to levy 60 per cent tariffs on Chinese imports. Already, many American com-

panies, including Nike and eyewear retailer Warby Parker, have been diversifying their sourcing away from China. Shoe brand Steve Madden says it plans to cut imports from China by as much as 45 per cent next year.

In a congratulatory message to Trump after his victory over Vice-President Kamala Harris, Xi called for the US and China to manage their differences and get along in a new era. In front of the cameras Saturday, Xi spoke to Biden — but it was unmistakable that his message was directed at Trump.

"In a major flourishing sci-tech revolution, neither decoupling nor supply chain disruption is a solution," Xi said. "Only mutual, beneficial cooperation can lead to common development. Small yard, high fence is not what a major country should pursue."

Biden administration officials would advise the Trump team that managing the intense competition with Beijing will likely be the most significant foreign policy challenge they will face, White House national security advisor Jake Sullivan said.

On Saturday, Sullivan said Biden had reinforced to Xi "that these next two months are a time of transition", and the president would like to pass it off "in stable terms" to the new administration.

Biden has viewed his relationship with Xi as among the most consequential on the international stage and put much effort into cultivating it. The two first got to know each other

on travels across the US and China when both were vice-presidents, interactions that both have said left a lasting impression. But the last four years have presented a steady stream of difficult moments.

The FBI this week offered new details of a federal investigation into Chinese government efforts to hack into US telecommunications networks. The initial findings have revealed a "broad and significant" cyberespionage campaign aimed at stealing information from Americans who work in government and politics. US intelligence officials also have assessed China has surged sales to Russia of machine tools, microelectronics and other technology that Moscow is using to produce missiles, tanks, aircraft and other weaponry for use in its war against Ukraine. Biden is looking for Xi to step up Chinese engagement to prevent an already dangerous moment with North Korea from further escalating. Biden, South Korean President Yoon Seok Yul and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba on Friday condemned North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's decision to send thousands of troops to help Moscow rezip Ukrainian forces who have seized territory in Russia's Kursk border region.

Biden called it "dangerous and destabilising cooperation". White House officials have expressed frustration with Beijing, which accounts for the vast majority of North Korea's trade, for not doing more to rein in Pyongyang.

Trump names fossil fuel executive Chris Wright as energy secretary

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President-elect Donald Trump has selected Chris Wright, a campaign donor and fossil fuel executive, to serve as energy secretary in his upcoming, second administration.

CEO of Denver-based Liberty Energy, Wright is a vocal advocate of oil and gas development, including fracking, a key pillar of Trump's quest to achieve US "energy dominance" in the global market.

Wright has been one of the industry's loudest voices against efforts to fight climate change and could give fossil fuels a boost, including quick action to end a year-long pause on natural gas export approvals by the Biden administration.

Wright also has criticised what he calls a "top-down" approach to climate by liberal and left-wing groups and said the climate movement around the world is "collapsing under its own weight". Wright, who has never served in government, has written that more fossil fuel production is needed around the globe to lift people out of poverty. Consideration of Wright to head the administration's energy department won support from influential conservatives, including oil and gas tycoon Harold Hamm.

Hamm, executive chairman of Oklahoma-based Continental Resources, a major shale oil company, is a longtime Trump supporter and advisor who played a key role on energy issues in Trump's first term.

Hamm helped organise an event at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in April where Trump



President-elect Donald Trump attends UFC 309 at Madison Square Garden, Saturday in New York, with Kid Rock, Donald Trump Jr., Dana White and Elon Musk.

reportedly asked industry leaders and lobbyists to donate USD 1 billion to Trump's campaign, with the expectation that Trump would curtail environmental regulations if reelected.

Mike Sommers, president of the American Petroleum Institute, the oil and gas industry's top lobbying group, said Wright's experience in the energy sector "gives him an important perspective that will inform his leadership" of the Energy Department. "We look forward to working with him once confirmed to bolster American geopolitical strength by lifting DOE's pause on LNG export permits and ensuring the open access of American energy for our allies around the

world," Sommers said. Jackie Wong, senior vice president for climate and energy at the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group, called Wright "a champion of dirty fossil fuels" and said his nomination to lead the Energy Department was "a disastrous mistake".

"The Energy Department should be doing all it can to develop and expand the energy sources of the 21st century, not trying to promote the dirty fuels of the last century," Wong said.

"Given the devastating impacts of climate-fueled disasters, DOE's core mission of researching and promoting cleaner energy solutions is more important now than

ever." The Energy Department is responsible for advancing energy, environmental and nuclear security of the US. The agency is in charge of maintaining the country's nuclear weapons, oversees 17 national research laboratories and approves natural gas exports, as well as ensuring environmental cleanup of the nation's nuclear weapons complex. It also promotes scientific and technological research. Republican Senator John Barrasso of Wyoming, who is expected to become chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, said Trump promised bold choices for his Cabinet, and Wright's nomination delivers.

Young woman found murdered in car boot in UK

London (PTI): A 24-year-old woman believed to be of South Asian origin has been found murdered in a car boot in east London after a missing person inquiry was launched for her in the East Midlands region of England.

Northamptonshire Police named the victim as Harshita Brela on Saturday night as the force launched a murder inquiry and appealed for information in the case.

Police said it had received a call on Wednesday regarding concerns for Harshita's welfare and officers were deployed to her home address at Skegness Walk in Corby, Northamptonshire.

After getting no answer, the police launched a missing person investigation and fast-track enquiries were made which led to the discovery of the victim's body inside the boot of a vehicle on Brisbane Road in the Ilford area of east London in the early hours of Thursday.

A post-mortem was conducted at Leicester Royal Infirmary on Friday which established the murder victim as Harshita Brela, whose name indicates a South Asian heritage, but there is no further confirmation of her family background at this stage of the inquiry.

"First of all, I want to express my heartfelt condolences to everyone who loved Harshita Brela," said Detective Chief Inspector Johnny Campbell, Senior Investigating Officer from the East Midlands Special Operations Major Crime Unit (EMSOU). "She was a young woman in her early 20s with her whole life ahead of her and it is absolutely tragic that her life has been cut short in this way. Detectives from EMSOU and Northamptonshire Police are working around the clock to establish the circumstances behind her death, including the exact location and timeframe in which it took place," he said.

Israeli strikes kill 12 people in Gaza



Residents and rescuers gather at the site of an Israeli airstrike that hit a building in central Beirut's Ras-el-Nabaa neighborhood, Lebanon, Sunday.

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip overnight killed 12 people, Palestinian medical officials said on Sunday. Israeli police meanwhile arrested three suspects after flares were fired at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's private residence in the coastal city of Caesarea. In Lebanon, Israeli warplanes pounded the southern suburbs of Beirut after the military warned people to evacuate from several buildings. The Hezbollah militant group has a strong presence in the area, known as the Dahiyeh, and the strikes came as Lebanese officials are considering a United States-brokered cease-fire proposal. One of the strikes hit central Beirut for the first time in weeks.

Netanyahu and his family were not at the residence when two flares were fired at it overnight, and there were no injuries, authorities said. A drone launched by Hezbollah struck the residence last month, also when Netanyahu and his family were away. The police did not provide details about the suspects behind the flares, but officials pointed to domestic political critics of Netanyahu. Israel's largely cere-

monial president, Isaac Herzog, condemned the incident and warned against "an escalation of the violence in the public sphere". Netanyahu has faced months of mass protests over his handling of the hostage crisis unleashed by Hamas' October 7, 2023 attack into Israel, which ignited the ongoing war in Gaza. Critics blame Netanyahu for the security and intelligence failures that allowed the attack to happen and for not reaching a deal with Hamas to release scores of hostages still held inside Gaza. Israelis rallied again in the city of Tel Aviv on Saturday night to demand a cease-fire deal to return them. Israeli strikes killed six people in Nuseirat and another four in Bureij, two built-up refugee camps in central Gaza dating back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. Another two people were killed in a strike on Gaza's main north-south highway, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the central city of Deir al-Balah, which received all 12 bodies. The war between Israel and Hamas began after Palestinian militants stormed into Israel on October 7, 2023, killing about 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducting 250 others. Around 100 hostages

Pope calls for investigation to determine if Israel's attacks in Gaza constitute 'genocide'

Rome (AP): Pope Francis has called for an investigation to determine if Israel's attacks in Gaza constitute genocide, according to excerpts released on Sunday from an upcoming new book ahead of the pontiff's jubilee year.

It's the first time that Francis has openly urged for an investigation of genocide allegations over Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip. In September, he said Israel's attacks in Gaza and Lebanon have been "immoral" and disproportionate, and that its military has gone beyond the rules of war. The book, by Hernan Reyes Alcaide and based on interviews with the Pope, is entitled "Hope never disappoints. Pilgrims towards a better world." It will be released on Tuesday ahead of the pope's 2025 jubilee. Francis' yearlong jubilee is expected to bring more than 30 million pilgrims to Rome to celebrate the Holy Year. "According to some experts, what is happening in Gaza has the characteristics of a genocide," the pope said in excerpts published Sunday by the Italian daily La Stampa.

"We should investigate carefully to determine whether it fits into the technical definition formulated by jurists and international bodies," he added.

Last year, Francis met separately with relatives of Israeli hostages in Gaza and Palestinians living through the war and set off a firestorm by using words that Vatican diplomats usually avoid: "terrorism" and, according to the Palestinians, "genocide".

Francis spoke at the time about the suffering of both Israelis and Palestinians after his meetings, which were arranged before the Israeli-Hamas hostage deal and a temporary halt in fighting was announced. The pontiff, who last week also met with a delegation of Israeli hostages who were released and their families pressing the campaign to bring the remaining captives home had editorial control over the upcoming book.

The war started when the militant Hamas group attacked Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and abducting 250 as hostages and taking them back to Gaza, where dozens still remain. Israel's subsequent yearlong military campaign has killed more than 43,000 people, according to Gaza health officials, whose count doesn't distinguish between civilians and fighters, though they say more than half of the dead are women and children.

are still inside Gaza, about a third of them believed to be dead. The Health Ministry in Gaza says around 43,800 Palestinians have been killed in the war. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants but has said women and children make up more than half the fatalities. Around 90 per cent of Gaza's population of 2.3 million Palestinians have been displaced, and large areas of the territory have been flattened by Israeli bombardment and ground operations.

ISRAELI WARPLANES POUND S BEIRUT

The Israeli military posted evacuation warnings on X about an hour before the strikes on southern Beirut, which came early Sunday. Local media reported church bells ringing in and around the area to alert residents. There were no immediate reports of casualties. One of the strikes hit

a building in central Beirut belonging to the Arab socialist Baath party. It was the first strike in the central part of the city in weeks. An Associated Press photographer at the scene saw four lifeless bodies and four wounded people. People could be seen fleeing the neighbourhood after the strike, which came without warning. There was no immediate comment on the strike from the Israeli military. The Israeli military also renewed calls on Sunday for residents in over a dozen villages in southern Lebanon to flee as ground troops pushed farther north. Hezbollah began firing rockets, missiles and drones into Israel the day after Hamas' 2023 attack, drawing retaliatory airstrikes. The conflict steadily escalated and erupted into all-out war in September. Israeli forces invaded Lebanon on October 1. Hezbollah has continued to fire dozens of projectiles into

Israel each day and has expanded their range to the central part of the country. A rocket barrage on the northern city of Haifa on Saturday damaged a synagogue and wounded two civilians. More than 3,400 people have been killed in Lebanon, according to the country's Health Ministry, and over 1.2 million driven from their homes. It is not known how many of the dead are Hezbollah fighters. On the Israeli side, Hezbollah's aerial attacks have killed at least 76 people, including 31 soldiers, and caused some 60,000 people to flee from communities in the north.

Netanyahu ally wants to revive divisive plans to overhaul judiciary. Israeli Justice Minister Yariv Levin seized on the flare attack on Netanyahu's home to call for a revival of his plans to overhaul the Israeli judiciary, which had sparked months of mass protests before the war.

Trump takes break from making Cabinet picks

AP ■ PALM BEACH

President-elect Donald Trump is attending the UFC heavyweight championship clash at Madison Square Garden on Saturday night, combining two things close to his heart — fierce battles inside the octagon and New York City. After a year's delay, Stipe Miocic is getting his shot at a third heavyweight championship reign when he battles current champion Jon Jones at UFC 309.

Trump is a longtime UFC enthusiast and frequent attendee of major fights. He made promoting hypermasculine tones a signature of his latest, successful campaign for the White House — as he looked to further widen the gap among male voters between himself and his Democratic opponent, Vice-President Kamala Harris.

Trump and his top supporters embraced alpha-male terms and often accentuated them with vulgar and demeaning language. While campaigning, Trump appeared frequently on podcasts, gaming platforms, and with key supporters who described a vote for Trump as a way to demonstrate true manliness. Trump also spent three hours taping a podcast with Joe Rogan, who himself has spoken about hypermasculinity.

Harris failed to do a similar appearance with Rogan, citing scheduling conflicts.

A return to Madison Square Garden means revisiting the place where a comedian caused an uproar at a Trump rally last month by likening Puerto Rico to a "floating island of garbage". Yet Trump continues to relish visits to New York, where he lived for decades, before moving to his Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida.

Trump boarded his plane for the flight to New York accom-

panied by Robert F Kennedy Jr, his choice to lead the Department of Health and Human Services after his new administration begins on January 20.

Except for a day trip to Washington this week to meet for nearly two hours with President Joe Biden, and separately address House Republicans, Trump has been spending his time since his Election Day victory at Mar-a-Lago. The club has hosted galas and conservative events throughout the week.

Trump has been close to UFC President Dana White for more than two decades.

White hosted a 2001 UFC battle at Trump Taj Mahal, a former casino-hotel in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and Trump has frequently attended UFC matches since — including during his 2024 campaign. Trump has turned up at fights recently with famous entourage, including White, musician Kid Rock and former Fox News Channel host Tucker Carlson.

In 2018, during Trump's first term, he and White starred in a UFC video where the then-president was called the "Combatant in Chief".

As Trump strengthened his grip on the national Republican Party over the last near-decade, White's personal political profile has grown exponentially. White spoke at the 2016 and 2020 Republican conventions, and when the party gathered in Milwaukee this past July.

He also addressed the crowd at Trump's Florida victory party in the wee hours of the morning after Election Day. "This is what happens when the machine comes after you," White said then. "What you've seen over the last several years, this is what it looks like — couldn't stop him. He keeps going forward. He doesn't quit."

COP29 week one ends in deadlock as divisions stall climate action progress

Baku (Azerbaijan) (PTI): The first week of the COP29 summit concluded in Baku without significant breakthroughs, as deep divisions between developed and developing nations stalled progress on key issues like climate finance, trade measures, and equitable responsibility for climate action.

India, representing the G-77/China and BASIC blocs, demanded accountability from wealthier countries on unmet financial commitments.

The G-77/China bloc reiterated the call for USD 1.3 trillion annually in climate finance, with an emphasis on grants and concessional funding to avoid

burdening vulnerable economies already grappling with the impacts of climate change.

"Loans make up nearly 70 per cent of climate finance provided so far. This is unacceptable and places undue pressure on developing economies," an Indian negotiator had asserted, urging developed nations to move away from debt-inducing mechanisms.

UN Executive Secretary Simon Stiell added to the urgency, urging G20 countries to take bolder action, warning that without it, no economy in the grouping would be spared from climate-driven economic losses.

However, his call for solidarity failed to resolve the deadlock.

Cosima Castle, of E3G's climate diplomacy team, acknowledged the challenges posed by geopolitical tensions but underscored the potential of the upcoming G20 Leaders' Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

E3G is an engineering and environmental consulting firm.

"We're seeing strains everywhere, from the Middle East to Africa to Ukraine, yet there's collective resolve among many nations to work toward a deal," she said.

Castle pointed out that the G20 countries, responsible for 80

per cent of global emissions and 85 per cent of the world economy, hold the key to unlocking ambitious climate agreements.

The contentious issue of the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) also fuelled sharp exchanges.

India and other developing nations criticised the measure for disproportionately penalising their economies, calling it a violation of equity principles and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). "CBAM shifts the responsibility of climate action onto

nations with minimal historical emissions, undermining industrial growth in the developing world," warned a negotiator from Bolivia, echoing India's concerns.

Technology transfer emerged as another unresolved issue. Developing nations demanded a robust technology implementation programme supported by dedicated financial backing.

"Without equitable access to climate technologies, the promises of the Paris Agreement will remain unfulfilled," an Indian negotiator stated.

India also opposed any

attempts to impose external regulations on its climate targets, emphasising that mitigation efforts should align with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and national sovereignty.

The BASIC bloc criticised developed nations for attempting to dilute their commitments under the Paris Agreement by shifting additional obligations onto emerging economies.

The BASIC countries include Brazil, South Africa, India, and China.

The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Arab Group joined forces with India,

highlighting the disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable populations and demanding scaled-up financial and technological support.

The negotiations in Baku have also highlighted the urgent need for a comprehensive climate finance package that addresses both mitigation and adaptation.

"The costs of inaction are far greater than the costs of action," Castle warned, adding that countries must come together not only for climate action but also for long-term economic stability.

South Africa, which will

assume the G20 presidency in 2025, is expected to play a crucial role in bridging the gap between developed and developing countries.

Gillian Hamilton, a civil society leader from South Africa, emphasised the country's commitment to debt relief and reforms in multilateral financial systems.

"South Africa has been closely working with the African Union to reflect the priorities of the Global South, focusing on equity and solidarity," she said, adding that the country's leadership would build on themes introduced by Brazil and India.

Russia launches fiercest attack on Ukraine's infrastructure

AP ■ KYIV

Russia on Sunday launched a massive drone and missile attack on Ukraine, described by officials as the largest over the past months, targeting energy infrastructure and killing civilians. The attack came as fears are mounting about Moscow's intentions to devastate Ukraine's power generation capacity ahead of the cold winter. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Russia had launched a total of 120 missiles and 90 drones in a large-scale attack across Ukraine. Various types of drones were deployed, he said, including Iranian-made Shaheds as well as cruise, ballistic and aircraft-launched ballistic missiles. Ukrainian defences shot down 140 air targets, Zelenskyy said in a statement on the Telegram messaging app.

"The enemy's target was our energy infrastructure throughout Ukraine. Unfortunately, there is damage to objects from hits and falling debris. In Mykolaiv, as a result of a drone attack, two people were killed and six others were injured, including two children," Zelenskyy said. Two others were killed in the Odesa region, where the attack damaged energy infrastructure and disrupted power and water supplies, said local Gov. Oleh Kiper. The combined drone and missile attack was the most powerful in three months, according to the head of Kyiv's City Military Administration Serhii Popko. Russian strikes have hammered Ukraine's power infrastructure since Moscow's all-out invasion of its neighbour in February 2022, prompting repeated emergency power shutdowns and nationwide rolling blackouts. Ukrainian officials have routinely urged

Western allies to bolster the country's air defences to counter assaults and allow for repairs. Explosions were heard across Ukraine on Sunday, including in capital Kyiv, the key southern port of Odesa, as well as the country's west and central regions, according to local reports. The operational command of Poland's armed forces wrote on X that Polish and allied aircraft, including fighter jets, have been mobilised in Polish airspace because of the "massive" Russian attack on neighbouring Ukraine. The steps were aimed to provide safety in Poland's border areas, it said. One person was injured after the roof of a five-story residential building caught fire in Kyiv's historic centre, according to Popko. A thermal power plant operated by private energy company DTEK was "seriously damaged", the company said.



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, emergency services personnel remove part of a Russian missile that hit an apartment house during massive missile attack in Kyiv, Ukraine, Sunday. AP/PTI

Latest typhoon lashes Philippines

Manila (Philippines) (AP): A powerful typhoon wrecked houses, caused towering tidal surges and forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee to emergency shelters as it cut across the northern Philippines on Sunday in the sixth major storm to hit the country in less than a month. Typhoon Man-yi slammed into the eastern island province of Catanduanes on Saturday night with sustained winds of up to 195 kilometers (125 miles) per hour and gusts of up to 240 kph (149 mph). The country's weather agency warned of a "potentially catastrophic and life-threatening situation" in provinces along its path. There were no immediate reports of casualties from the typhoon, which was forecast to blow northwestward on Sunday across northern Luzon, the archipelago's most populous region. The capital region of metropolitan Manila would likely be spared from a direct hit but was placed, along with outlying regions, under storm alerts and warned of dangerous coastal storm surges. "The rain was minimal, but the wind was very strong and had

this eerie howling sound," Roberto Monterola, a disaster-mitigation officer in Catanduanes, told The Associated Press by telephone. "Along a main boulevard here, the tidal surges went up to more than 7 meters (23 feet) near the seaside houses. It looked really scary." The entire province of Catanduanes had no power after the typhoon knocked down trees and electricity posts, and disaster-response teams were checking how many more houses were damaged in addition to those impacted by previous storms, he said. "We need tin roofs and other construction materials, aside from food. Villagers tell us here that they still haven't gotten up from the past storm and were pinned down again by this typhoon," Monterola said. Nearly half of the island province's 80,000 people were sheltering in evacuation centers. Catanduanes officials were so concerned as the typhoon approached that they threatened vulnerable villagers with arrest if they did not follow orders to evacuate to safer grounds. More than 750,000

people took refuge in emergency shelters, including churches and a shopping mall, due to Man-yi and two previous storms mostly in the northern Philippines, Assistant Secretary Cesar Idio of the Official of Civil Defense and other provincial officials said. The rare number of back-to-back storms and typhoons that lashed Luzon in just three weeks left more than 160 people dead, affected 9 million people and caused such extensive damage to residential communities, infrastructure and farmlands that the Philippines may have to import more rice, a staple food for most Filipinos. In an emergency meeting as Man-yi approached, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. asked his Cabinet and provincial officials to brace for "the worst-case scenario." At least 26 domestic airports and two international airports were briefly shut and inter-island ferry and cargo services were suspended due to rough seas, stranding thousands of passengers and commuters, according to the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippine and the coast guard.

Lanka's new Cabinet to be sworn in today

Colombo (PTI): Sri Lanka's new Cabinet will be sworn in on Monday in the presence of President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, his media office said on Sunday. National People's Power led by Dissanayake swept the parliamentary elections held on Thursday by winning a two-thirds majority. It also dominated the Jaffna electoral district - the heartland of the nation's Tamil minority. "The swearing-in of the new Cabinet of the government will take place tomorrow (18) at 10:00 am at the Presidential Secretariat, in the presence of President @anuradissanayake, President's Media Division posted on X. The 10th Parliament is set to convene for its first session on November 21. According to Article 46 of the Constitution, the total number of Cabinet ministers is limited to 30. The number of deputy ministers shall not, in the aggregate, exceed 40. The NPP has been advocating

a smaller government to reduce costs for the public. Since the NPP won the presidential election in September, the government functioned with just 3 ministers, including the President. The NPP's victory in the parliamentary election has created many firsts and records. It received 61.56 per cent of the total votes counted. The previous best was 60.33 per cent by former president Mahinda Rajapaksa's party in the 2010 election. The NPP won the highest number of polling divisions, 152 out of 168, the previous best was Rajapaksa's 136. It also won the highest number of districts 21 out of 22, the previous best was 19 by Rajapaksa in 2010. It has the highest number of 159 parliamentary seats over Rajapaksa's 145 in 2020. Under the proportional representation system of elections, they became the first party to cross the 150 mark to gain a two-thirds absolute majority.

Senegal votes in election that will decide if prez can carry out reforms he promised

Dakar (Senegal)(AP): Polls opened in Senegal on Sunday for a parliamentary election that is set to determine if the country's newly elected president can carry out ambitious reforms. More than 7 million registered voters in the West African country are choosing 165 lawmakers in the national assembly, where the party of President Bassirou Diomaye Faye currently does not hold a majority. Faye, who was elected in March on an anti-establishment platform, says that has blocked him from executing the reforms he pledged during his campaign, including fighting corruption, reviewing fishing permits for foreign companies and securing a bigger share from the country's natural resources for the population. In September, he dissolved the opposition-led parliament, paving the way for a snap legislative election. His party is facing the Takku Wallu opposition platform led by former President Macky Sall, alongside 39 other registered parties

and coalitions. Polls will close at 6 p.m (1800 GMT). The first provisional results are expected to be known by Monday morning, but the final count will only be published later during the week. Faye's political party, PASTEF, needs at least 83 seats in order to gain a majority in the assembly. Analysts say it has a high chance of securing that, given its popularity and Faye's margin of victory in the March presidential election. Faye, 44, was elected with 54 per cent in the first round, becoming Africa's youngest elected leader, less than two weeks after he was released from prison. His rise has reflected widespread frustration among Senegal's youth with the country's direction - a common sentiment across Africa, which has the world's youngest population and a number of leaders accused of clinging to power for decades. Over 60 per cent of Senegalese are under 25 and 90 per cent work in informal jobs. Senegal has been hit by skyrocketing

inflation in recent years, making it difficult for them to get by. The country is also a major source of irregular migration to Europe, with thousands leaving every year on rickety, artisanal fishing boats in search of economic opportunities. The campaign for the legislative election was marked by sporadic clashes between supporters of different parties. The headquarters of an opposition party were set on fire in the capital, Dakar, and clashes have erupted between supporters in central Senegal in recent weeks, the interior ministry said Monday. On Tuesday, Ousmane Sonko, the country's prime minister who helped catapult Faye to victory, denounced attacks against supporters of PASTEF in Dakar and other cities. "May each patriot they have attacked and injured be proportionally avenged. We will exercise our legitimate right to respond," he wrote on X, before back-peddalling and asking his supporters to remain peaceful in a speech later that day.



Miss Denmark Victoria Kjaer Theilvig waves after winning the 73rd Miss Universe Beauty Pageant in Mexico City, on Saturday. AP/PTI

Sudha Murty praises son-in-law Rishi Sunak's 'good Indian cultural values'

London (PTI) Well-known author and Rajya Sabha MP Sudha Murty has spoken of her pride in son-in-law Rishi Sunak, a British citizen with "good Indian cultural values" imbibed from his parents' upbringing in the UK. Murty joined Sunak and her daughter Akshata Murty as the guest of honour at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's annual Diwali gala in London on Saturday evening. The parents of the British Indian former prime minister, Usha and Yashvir Sunak, were also in the audience as Bhavan UK students showcased a variety of Indian classical music and dance forms. "I always believe when you are abroad, your parents must do two things: one is good education, which gives you wings in return and you can fly anywhere and settle; the second is great culture, your origin which is Indian origin or roots which you can get at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan along with your

parents," said Murty, delivering her keynote address. "I want to congratulate Ushaji, my sambandhi and a good friend of mine, who gave her son Rishi Sunak, former prime minister, a great route to identify with the culture, making him a proud British citizen as well as [having] good Indian cultural values," she said. The philanthropist went on to appeal to the British Indian community to enable the work of Bhavan UK's cultural activities, "mentally, physically and financially". "You must send your children here to understand Indian culture because when you grow old you go towards your roots... that gap is addressed by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, so you have to help them in every way to survive," said the staunch supporter of the cultural centre over the years. Indian High Commissioner to the UK, Vikram Doraiswami, reflected upon Murty's writings which inspire readers to

be true to themselves because our "origin story matters" as he went on to trace the pan-Indian message of Diwali. "The Krishna story is relevant to Diwali in the south, just as the 'Ramayana' story and the return of Lord Ram to Ayodhya from Lanka is connected to the Diwali story of the north and the story of Kali Puja is connected with the story of Diwali in the east," he said. "Diwali connects up with the Sikh tradition, with the Jain and Buddhist traditions too. It tells us that light also means there is no such thing as a single certainty because in the light you recognise the diversity of the human condition, the diversity of everything we live with. So, in a world in which we spend our time fighting about certainties, it is a really good idea to look at Diwali as an opportunity to consider how so many things look differently in the light." Subhanu Saxena, chairman of

The Bhavan UK, and Executive Director Dr M.N. Nandakumara opened the event with Vedic chants as they highlighted the cultural centre's many achievements over the years as a centre of excellence in Indian arts, music, dance, Yoga and languages, offering over 120 classes across 23 different subject areas. Rishi Sunak and Akshata Murty presented mementoes to the team behind the centre's many activities since the 1970s. Its students and teachers showcased their Kuchipudi, Kathak and Bharatanatyam skills at the annual Diwali celebration as they appealed for donations from the British Indian community to enhance their summer school and scholarship offerings. "The Bhavan UK is a great organisation promoting Indian culture and deserves our full support," said NRI industrialist Lord Swraj Paul, one of the many supporters of the centre.

Pak religious body faces backlash over anti-VPN decree

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's leading constitutional religious body came under severe criticism after it issued an edict terming the use of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to access blocked content on the internet as 'un-Islamic'. The unprecedented pro-claim by the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), which advises parliament on aligning legislation with Islamic teachings, enraged digital rights activists as well as some religious scholars. According to the Dawn newspaper, the CII chief Raghbir Naeemi said that using VPNs to access "immoral or illegal content" was against Sharia. In a social media statement on Saturday, Maulana Tariq Jameel, a prominent religious scholar, said if watching adult content or blasphemous material was an issue then mobile phones should be declared un-Islamic before labelling VPNs as such. Senator Allama Nasir Abbas, the chief of Shia organisation Majlis Wahdat Muslimeen (MWM), said the country was being ruled by an "incompetent and corrupt elite" who were not even the true representatives of the people. "They make laws in such a way and are using decrees ... as per their whims," Senator Abbas added. Wahaj Siraj, the CEO of telecom company Nayatel, said technology has always been neutral and only its use or misuse made it 'Halal or Haram'. The issue of VPNs came to light after the Interior Ministry asked the Pakistan Telecom Authority, the electronic media watchdog, to take action against their illegal use as they were being used for terrorism. Nighat Dad, the executive director of the Digital Rights Foundation, said the action to block VPNs was "contradictory" to the rights of privacy granted in the Constitution.

Gold pocket watch from Titanic rescue sells for record price

London (AP): A gold pocket watch given to the ship captain who rescued 700 survivors from the Titanic sold at auction for nearly \$2 million, setting a record for memorabilia from the ship wreck. The 18-carat Tiffany & Co. watch was given by three women survivors to Capt. Arthur Rostron for diverting his passenger ship, the RMS Carpathia, to save them and others after the Titanic struck an iceberg and sank in the north Atlantic on its maiden voyage in 1912. Auctioneers Henry Aldridge and Son, who sold the watch to a private collector in the United States on Saturday for 1.56 million British pounds, said it's

the most paid for a piece of Titanic memorabilia. The price includes taxes and fees paid by the buyer. The watch was given to Rostron by the widow of John Jacob Astor, the richest man to die in the disaster, and the widows of two other wealthy businessmen who went down with the ship. Astor's pocket watch, which was on his body when it was recovered seven days after the ship sank, had previously set the record for the highest price paid for a Titanic keepsake, fetching nearly \$1.5 million (1.17 million pounds) from the same auction house in April. Auctioneer Andrew Aldridge said the fact that Titanic mem-

orabilia has set two records this year demonstrates the enduring fascination with the story and the value of the dwindling supply and high demand for ship artifacts. "Every man, woman and child had a story to tell, and those stories are told over a century later through the memorabilia," he said. Rostron was hailed a hero for his actions the night the Titanic sank and his crew was recognized for their bravery. The Carpathia was sailing from New York to the Mediterranean Sea when a radio operator heard a distress call from the Titanic in the early hours of April 15, 1912 and woke Rostron in his cabin. He turned

his boat around and headed at full steam toward the doomed vessel, navigating through ice bergs to get there. By the time the Carpathia arrived, the Titanic had sunk and 1,500 people perished. But the crew located 20 lifeboats and rescued more than 700 passengers and took them back to New York. Rostron was awarded the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal by President William Howard Taft and was later knighted by King George V. Madeleine Astor, who had been helped into a lifeboat by her husband, presented the watch to Rostron at a luncheon at her mansion on Fifth Avenue in New York.

Japanese troops will train with US, Aus forces as concerns over China grow

Canberra (AP): Japan will send troops for joint training with US Marines and Australian forces in northern Australia, the three defence ministers said on Sunday as they expressed concern about a spate of confrontations with China's increasingly assertive military. Australia's Acting Prime Minister Richard Marles hosted US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and Japanese Defence Minister Nakatani Gen for talks in Darwin. The ministers announced trilateral amphibious training between Australia, Japan and the US Marine rotational force in northern Australia from 2025, beginning with Exercise Talisman Sabre. Australia will also join

Exercise Orient Shield in Japan for the first time next year. A joint statement reiterated "serious concern" about destabilising actions in the East and South China seas including "dangerous conduct" by the Chinese military against Philippine and other vessels from the region. China claims the South China Sea almost in its entirety. The ministers also urged the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. China claims self-ruled Taiwan as its own territory and has stepped up military harassment with frequent drills around the island. Marles, who is also Australia's defence minister, said follow-

ing talks with his Japanese counterpart in September that both nations looked to ways to build greater familiarity between their forces. One of the "obvious opportunities" was for Japan to participate in activities during the US Marine rotation in Australia, he said Sunday. "Having a more forward-leaning opportunity for greater training with Japan and the US together is a really fantastic opportunity," he said. Asked if the increased military cooperation would anger Beijing, Marles said the decision was about building "the best relationships possible with like-minded countries, with our friends and with our allies".

Municipal corporations need to impose adequate user charges to provide better facilities: RBI report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Municipal corporations need to impose adequate user charges for essential services like water supply and sanitation, to boost non-tax revenues and provide quality public services, according to a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) report.

The 'Report on Municipal Finances' delves into the fiscal position of 232 municipal corporations (MCs) from 2019-20 to 2023-24 (Budget Estimates), with a focus on the theme 'Own Sources of Revenue Generation in Municipal Corporations: Opportunities and Challenges'.

"MCs can significantly enhance them (non-tax revenues) by applying appropriate and adequate fees and user charges for essential services such as water supply, sanitation, and waste management while also ensuring seamless availability of high-quality public services," it said. These measures, combined with more transparent and accountable governance practices, can contribute to bolstering the financial health of MCs, setting off a



virtuous cycle of better services for the public, stronger revenues and a continuous upgrade of the urban infrastructure, it said. The major non-tax revenue sources include user charges, trade licensing fees, layout/building approval fees, development charges, betterment charges, sale and hire charges, market fees, slaughterhouse fees, parking fees, birth and death registration fees. Sources of tax revenue, include property tax, vacant land tax, water benefit tax, advertisement tax, sewerage benefit tax, tax on animals, and taxes on carriages and carts.

"Non-tax sources are particularly important in the context of constraints on tax revenues. MCs in India earn 66.5 per cent of non-tax revenue from fees and user charges," the report said. It noted that fees and user charges represent important sources of revenue for all civic bodies, particularly in Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Tripura, where their share in own-source revenue outweighs that of property taxes. This, the report said can be attributed to various factors, including a high degree of urbanisation, tourist destinations and the subsequent expansion in

supplies of essential municipal services such as water supply, waste management and transportation.

The report further said own sources of revenues (tax revenue, non-tax revenue, and other receipts) afford municipalities increased financial autonomy, stability, and enhanced capacity to strategise and execute urban development initiatives more efficiently and effectively.

Municipal corporations need to augment their own revenue sources for greater operational and financial flexibility. "By optimising property and water taxes, increasing non-tax revenues, and adopting transparent governance practices, urban local bodies can improve their finances," it said. Leveraging technologies such as Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping and digital payment systems can enhance property tax collections, it said. Periodic revisions in water and drainage taxes, and fees and user charges, coupled with use of technology for plugging leakages, can also help improve their revenue collections, it added.

Enforce odd-even rule to encourage people to shift to natural gas or EV: IBA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Biogas Association has suggested enforcement of the odd-even rule for four wheelers in Delhi NCR to check air pollution and encourage people to shift to electric vehicles or those based on compressed biogas (CBG) or natural gas.

Under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) 4 (with air quality index of over 450) measures, odd/even rule for four wheelers is imposed.

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has already imposed GRAP 3 measures with the air quality remaining in the 'severe' category.

Taking with PTI in an interaction, Indian Biogas Association (IBA) Chairman Gaurav Kedia said, "We recommend implementing the Odd-Even Rule for Petrol and Diesel Vehicles in the coming months so that a good impact can be seen for the air pollution levels in Delhi, and subsidy on EVs and CNG/CBG vehicles, as this will compel the citizens to shift to greener fuel alternatives. The air pollution situation in Delhi NCR worsens every winter, with the seasonal air quality index consistently remaining above the 300 mark. Delhi due to its the severely polluted AQI has received worldwide attention



as one of the most polluted cities on earth.

Crop residue burning, particularly of paddy straw, in neighbouring states is a major contributor to this scenario, but that's just a small piece of the bigger puzzle.

Kedia suggested that the government must focus on incentive schemes such as reduced charges on electricity bills, PNG connections, and LPG cylinders for houses that effectively segregate organic waste.

It would yield a double dividend: cleaner energy generation from green and leafy biomass collected for biogas plants and a significant reduction in landfill loads, he said.

The upcoming budget must provide substantial amount to fulfill target of segregating and processing at least 85 per cent of Delhi's waste in the next five years, he stated.

Organic waste remains one of the prime unmanaged pollution sources in Delhi,

filling up landfills. These overflowing sites continue to burn, emitting toxic fumes and significant amounts of methane gas, a potent greenhouse gas.

Delhi in 2023-2024 generated about 11,342 tons of waste per day. As per the 2024 annual report on implementation of SWM (solid waste management) rules, 2016, 33.5 per cent of generated MSW (municipal solid waste) goes to landfill but an estimate by the association depicts the number to be around 35 per cent.

Of all the municipal solid wastes produced, around 40-60 per cent is organic in nature. It represents an untapped resource for generating clean energy through biogas production. Kedia stated that there is a sense of urgency that no organic waste finds its way to the landfill sites and rather should be diverted into energy-generating biomethanation plants.

CNG retailers want price hike, government wants to see cost

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

City gas companies like Indraprastha Gas Ltd and Adani Total Gas Ltd are mulling an increase in CNG prices after supplies of cheaper input gas was cut for the second time in a month, but the government officials say the retailers must give a cost breakup to justify the hike.

The government, with effect from November 16, cut supplies of low-priced natural gas coming from old fields to city gas retailers by up to 20 per cent.

This reduction came on the back of a 21 per cent reduction on October 16.

City gas retailers IGL, which retails CNG in national capital and adjoining cities, Mahanagar Gas Ltd which does the same in Mumbai, and Adani Total Gas Ltd which operates in Gujarat and elsewhere, in regulatory filings flagged profitability concerns due to supply cut and hinted at price hike.

Officials in the ministry of petroleum and natural gas however are unimpressed as they feel the retailers operate on "hefty" margins and can easily absorb the additional cost they may have to incur on replacing the lost volumes with slightly higher priced gas from new wells or imported LNG.

"Take for instance IGL. It posted a net profit of Rs 1,748 crore on revenue of close to Rs 16,000 crore in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

That is a margin of 11 per cent. MGL had a profit of about Rs 1,300 crore on a revenue of Rs 7,000 crore. Which retailer earns that kind of margin?" a senior official asked.

Officials said the government is not against companies earning profits but if they want low-priced input (gas from old fields) then they should also declare the cost breakup of the final product (CNG).

"There cannot be a situation where you insist on getting low cost input but will not reveal the buildup to the final product price," another official said.

"The profitability numbers show they have been operating at huge margins. Indian Oil Corporation, which is also a retailer, had its best ever profit of Rs 39,617 crore on a revenue of Rs 8.71 lakh crore, implying a margin of 4.5 per cent."

Natural gas pumped from below the ground and from under the seabed from sites ranging from the Arabian Sea to Bay of Bengal within India is the raw material that is turned into CNG for sale to automobiles and piped cooking gas to households.

Production from legacy fields, called APM gas and whose price is regulated by the government to feed city gas retailers, has been falling by up to 5 per cent annually due to the natural decline that has set in. This has led to supply cuts to city gas retailers, officials said. While the input gas for piped cooking gas that households get is protected, the government has cut supply of raw material for CNG.

Gas from legacy fields used to meet 90 per cent of the demand for CNG in May 2023 and has progressively fallen.

Coal India arm NCL plans to relocate township having 600 MT of mineable coal underneath



PTI ■ SINGRAULI

Coal India arm NCL is planning a huge rehabilitation and resettlement (R&R) project and is working on relocating the residents from the township in Madhya Pradesh's Singrauli, which has 600 million tonnes of mineable coal underneath, company's CMD B Sairam said.

Talking to reporters here, Sairam said Morwa township in Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh, is spread across 927 hectares. The project, which is quite huge, will have its own share of challenges as it will involve relocation of the entire Morwa township of Northern Coalfields Ltd (NCL). "The good thing is that in this acquisition, the people are ready to relocate. So half of the problem is solved because the first resistance comes from the people only," the chairman and managing director (CMD) said. Once people are ready, the only thing to decide is the rates of the compensation and the R&R benefits, he said. For the last six months, NCL has been regularly negotiating with the people on resettlement.

"Based on the combination of past disbursements, the mandatory provisions and the call taken by the people residing in these areas and what is being given by the private commercial coal blocks coming up in the region, we have been able to reach a consensus and all the parameters of compensation and R&R are firmed up," he explained. The CMD said the relocation of the township has to take place as one of its coal mines - Jayant block - is moving closer to this township and within another two years it will reach 500 metres of the residential area, which would

hinder the mining operations. The district administration is helping NCL on this and details of the first phase of R&R needs to be chalked out, he said, adding, "From May, we will start handing out its first compensation cheque." The tenancy land of 572.5 hectares is to be vacated in the first phase, the CMD said. According to the sources, the company is still working out the finer details of the plan that includes the financial implication. The Morwa township R&R project will be huge and is likely to entail an estimated expenditure of more than Rs 20,000 crore. The project will affect 30,000

families and will involve the relocation of 22,000 houses, structures. The total area for which the relocation being planned is 927 hectares, including 205.8 hectares of forest land, 572.5 hectares of tenancy/private land, and 149.3 hectares of government land. The company is planning to ramp up the capacity of Jayant coal mine from 30 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) to 35 MTPA by 2026-27. The company is expecting a big jump in capex target in the coming fiscal year, the CMD said, adding that a chunk of its over Rs 4,000 crore capex will be spent on land compensation.

NCL's capex for the current fiscal year will be in the range of Rs 2,500-2,600 crore. The PSU company produced 136.2 million tonnes of coal in 2023-24. The mini-ratna company under the Ministry of Coal is targeting production of 139 MT coal in the current fiscal year. The company accounts for 14 per cent of the total coal produced in the country, contributing to 10 per cent of the country's total electricity generation. The Singrauli-headquartered company operates through its 10 mechanised opencast mines across Singrauli and Sonbhadra districts of MP and UP, respectively.

Hyundai Motor India bets on CNG vehicles, sees accelerated demand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hyundai Motor India Ltd is betting big on CNG fuel option with sales of models equipped with the technology witnessing increasing demand across rural and urban markets in the country, according to a top company official.



The company, which currently offers CNG option in its three models - Grand i10 NIOS, AURA and EXTER - has seen an increase in contribution of the CNG models to its domestic sales to 11.4 per cent in FY24 from 9.1 per cent in FY22. So far in the April-October period this fiscal, the contribution of CNG models to the company's domestic sales has risen to 12.8 per cent. Its overall vehicle sales across different fuel options stood at 3.54 lakh units in the domestic market during the period. "At present, India already has more than 7,000 CNG stations and aim is to have

approximately 17,500 CNG stations by 2030 which will further fuel the CNG demand," HMIL Whole-time Director and COO Tarun Garg said on the reasons behind the company's bullishness on CNG models. With a view to increase CNG vehicle sales, HMIL introduced the 'Hy-CNG Duo' - with a dual-cylinder system offering ample boot space and higher fuel efficiency - in its EXTER and Grand i10 NIOS models. "The introduction of Hy-CNG Duo is aimed to meet customer demands of providing ample space with high mileage and safety. This has helped us achieve the highest ever CNG penetration of 14.9 per cent

in October 2024. "Company-fitted CNG system with three years warranty assures maximum assurance for customers," he added.

The 'Hy-CNG Duo' is also equipped with an integrated ECU for faster and seamless shifting between petrol and CNG fuel options. In October this year, HMIL had clocked 8,261 units of CNG models in domestic sales with CNG penetration in its compact car Grand i10 NIOS at 17.4 per cent, 39.7 per cent for mini SUV EXTER and 90.6 per cent for compact sedan AURA. HMIL said it has also witnessed the penetration of CNG models grow from 8.8 per cent in FY22 to 10.7 per

Retail tomato prices drop 22.4 per cent on improved supplies: Government

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retail tomato prices declined 22.4 per cent month-on-month on improved supplies across the country, the Consumer Affairs Ministry said on Sunday. The all-India average retail price of tomatoes stood at Rs 52.35 per kg on November 14, down from Rs 67.50 per kg on October 14, according to an official statement.

During the same period, modal wholesale prices at Delhi's Azadpur mandi witnessed a sharper decline of nearly 50 per cent to Rs 2,969 per quintal from Rs 5,883 per quintal, driven by increased arrivals. Similar price corrections were reported from key markets like Pimpalgaon (Maharashtra), Madanapalle (Andhra Pradesh), and Kolar (Karnataka), the ministry said. "Though arrivals have



subsidised at major tomato centres in Madanapalle and Kolar, prices have eased due to seasonal supplies from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat filling supply gaps nationwide," it added. Favourable weather conditions have supported both crop growth and smooth supply chain movement from fields to consumers, the statement noted. The country's tomato production is projected to increase 4 per cent to 213.20 lakh tonne in 2023-24. While tomatoes are grown year-round, production varies

seasonally across regions. The ministry said adverse weather and logistics disruptions significantly impact prices due to the crop's high susceptibility and perishable nature. The price surge during October 2024 was attributed to excessive and prolonged rains in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. October and November are the main sowing periods in major producing states. Regular market availability is maintained due to the crop's short cultivation duration and multiple harvests, the ministry added.

happen after the agreement is signed. They have asked us to visit Mumbai to sign the agreement," they said, expecting the agreement to be signed soon.

"As soon as this happens, we will transfer the domain and this website will come to an end," the message said. Reliance had last week announced completion of the merger of its media assets with the India business of global media giant The Walt Disney, forming a joint venture worth around Rs 70,352 crore (USD 8.5 billion).

The JV will be one of the largest media and entertainment companies in India with a combined revenue of approximately Rs 26,000 crore and will be led by Nita Ambani as its chairperson.

Reliance Group establishes RGCC as part of its VISION 2030



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Reliance Group on Monday has launched the "Reliance Group Corporate Centre" (RGCC) as a part of its VISION 2030: Growth Strategy. The RGCC will serve as a strategic hub, providing guidance to the Group's companies as they pursue new opportunities and technological advancements.

The core team of RGCC will include leaders of the group Sateesh Seth, Punit Garg, and K. Raja Gopal, who will collectively bring management expertise. Both Sateesh Seth and Punit Garg have dedicated more than two decades to the group, serving in various leadership positions. The establishment of RGCC aims to harness the in-house expertise of these seasoned leaders to support the Group's forward-looking growth initiatives and cultivate a new generation of leadership for future projects.

The RGCC will play a pivotal role in mentoring and developing emerging leaders, blending experience with

fresh talent to propel the group towards sustained growth.

A Reliance Group spokesperson said, "We are thrilled to introduce RGCC, a team of seasoned professionals with broad spectrum expertise. This strategic move aims to steer the Group's future growth by tapping into the vast experience of these leaders, will help navigate industry challenges and capitalize on new opportunities, drive innovation, and deliver exceptional value to our customers and stakeholders. We believe RGCC will be instrumental in shaping the next phase of our Group's success."

Dubai-based siblings to transfer jiohotstar.com domain to Reliance free of cost

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Dubai-based siblings Jainam and Jivika, the owners of jiohotstar.com domain, have decided to transfer it to Reliance "free of cost", resting speculations on social media platforms. The story of the internet domain name, which grabbed a lot of attention on social media platforms in the recent past, ended with "seva and kindness", according to the duo.



The unique website ID was said to have been initially registered by a Delhi-based app developer last year amid speculation about the potential merger of Reliance Jio and Disney Hotstar. Last month, the developer came up with the demand for funding his higher studies at the Cambridge

University in return of the domain's ownership transfer, days after Reliance Jio and The Walt Disney formally announced the merger of their media businesses. Later, the Dubai-based siblings purchased jiohotstar.com domain from its registered owner. According to industry observers, the domain was sold to Dubai-based siblings after Reliance declined his offer.

because we believe it could be useful for them. Whether or not they choose to use it is up to them," the message added.

PTI reached out to Reliance for its comment on the development but did not receive any response. In their previous message, the siblings said they had received numerous offers, including some genuine ones offering significant amounts. However, they had said that the domain was not for sale.

While announcing the "journey with jiohotstar.Com is coming to an end", the duo said they are waiting for a draft from the Reliance legal team for the transfer. "The Reliance IP legal team has contacted us. We have told them that the domain transfer will only

India beat Japan 3-0 to top league stage

PTI ■ RAJGIR (BIHAR)

Defending champions India stormed into the semifinals of the Women's Asian Champions Trophy with an unbeaten record, defeating Japan 3-0 here on Sunday. Continuing her stellar form, star striker Deepika netted a quickfire brace from penalty corners in the final quarter to seal the victory, following vice-captain Navneet Kaur's opener in the 37th minute. With this win, India topped the league stage with maximum 15 points from five matches, ahead of Olympic silver medallists China (12 points). India will take on fourth-placed Japan in the semifinal on Tuesday, while China will play third-placed Malaysia in the other last-four game. Deepika, the tournament's leading scorer, now boasts 10 goals, including four field goals, five penalty corners, and one penalty stroke, underscoring her dominance. In the day's other matches, Malaysia beat Thailand 2-0, while China defeated South Korea by an identical margin. The Indians secured their



first scoring chance in the form of back-to-back penalty corners in the eighth minute but Deepika's flick from the second effort was brilliantly saved by Japanese goalkeeper Yu Kudo. India earned another penalty corner in the 13th minute but yet again wasted the chance. The Indians continued to dominate and secured their fourth penalty corner in the 25th minute but once again Kudo rose to the occasion and made three brilliant

saves to deny the hosts. A minute after the change of ends, Kudo again came to Japan's rescue to deny Deepika. India eventually broke the deadlock in the 37th minute through Navneet's brilliant reverse hit to the second post. Deepika's brilliance The Indians continued their domination and earned three back-to-back penalty corners in the 47th minute and star dragflicker Deepika finally found the back of the net with a powerful low dragflick to open her account. A minute later, the Indians secured another set piece and this time too Deepika struck again with a powerful flick into the top right corner, effectively sealing the match. Credit must also go to the Indian defence, led brilliantly by Udit and Sushila Chanu, as they didn't let the Japanese take a single shot at the Indian goal. Skipper Salima Tete, Neha and Sharmila Devi too were brilliant in the midfield, creating numerous chances for the forwardline with their runs and neat dribbling skills.



Swiatek leads Poland comeback over Czechs to set up BJK Cup semi against Paolini's Italy

AP ■ MALAGA (SPAIN)

Iga Swiatek won in singles Poland's 2-1 comeback against the Czech Republic in the Billie Jean King Cup. Poland will meet Italy in the semifinals after Jasmine Paolini likewise won her singles and doubles matches to lead Italy back for a 2-1 win over Japan. Marie Bouzkova beat Magdalena Frech 6-1, 4-6, 6-4 to give the Czech Republic a 1-0 lead on the indoor hard court in Malaga's Palacio del Deportes. The second-ranked Swiatek leveled the score after she held on for a 7-6 (7), 4-6, 7-5 win over Linda Noskova. The five-time Grand Slam winner then went back on the court after a short break to help Katarzyna Kawa beat Katerina Siniakova, the world's top-ranked doubles player, and Bouzkova 6-2, 6-4. "Let's enjoy this one. For sure it was an exhausting day and some really tough matches, but I am really happy we won that last one," Swiatek said. She added that she hadn't played doubles in three years and praised Kawa's well-placed passing shots in the doubles lane as key to victory. Swiatek showed no sign that she was worn down by the back-to-back matches that combined for 3 hours, 50

minutes of playing time. The Polish pair converted all four break chances and hit more winners, 29-18, than the Czechs. Poland is seeking its first title. The Czech Republic is an 11-time champion, second only to the United States' 18 titles. ITALY EYES SHOT AT CONSECUTIVE FINALS The fourth-ranked Paolini, a finalist at Wimbledon and the French Open, defeated Moyuka Uchijima 6-3, 6-4 to level the tie 1-1. She then helped Sara Errani beat Shuko Aoyama and Eri Hozumi 6-3, 6-4 to seal the quarterfinal win. Japan took the early lead when Ena Shibahara defeated Elisabetta Cocciaretto 3-6, 6-4, 6-4. Uchijima stole Paolini's first service game. But that was only a blip in an otherwise dominant showing by the Italian. Paolini broke Uchijima four times and hit 17 forehand winners to secure the straight-set victory. In doubles, the Italians broke the Japanese four times and made just 14 unforced errors to 23 by their rivals. "Japan is a tough cookie, as you say in English," Italy captain Tathiana Garbin said. "They played with a lot of courage so it was fun to watch this kind of level. My players, they played unbelievable doubles, so we made it.

West Indies chase down 219 to beat England by five wickets in 4th T20



AP ■ GROS ISLET (ST. LUCIA)

Shai Hope and Evin Lewis made half centuries in a rapid 136-run opening stand as the West Indies completed a record run chase to beat England by five wickets in the fourth Twenty20 international. Hope made 54 from 24 balls and Lewis made 68 from 31 balls, with seven sixes and four fours, in a partnership which lasted only 9.1 overs but enabled the West Indies to reach a winning target of 219 on Saturday. The West Indies' confident start was shaken when Lewis, Hope and Nicholas Pooran fell to consecutive balls in the 10th over. But captain Roston Chase put the innings back on track with 38 from 23 balls and Sherfane Rutherford competed the chase with successive sixes and an over to spare. There were 32 sixes in the match, 16 from each team. "We had to assess the

conditions. That's one thing we struggled with in the first three games in the power play," Hope said. "We've been losing some early wickets so the main thing was to try and understand what was the best remedy, to understand the conditions and come out of the power play on top." England already had won the five-match series after winning the first three matches by eight wickets, seven wickets and three wickets respectively. Every match in the series and in the previous three-match one-day series has been won by the team winning the toss. After being sent in, Phil Salt and Jacob Bethell who both have deep roots in the Caribbean made swift half centuries as England made 218-5 to equal the highest first innings total at the Darren Sammy Stadium. Bethell who was born and raised in Barbados made an unbeaten 62 from 32 balls

while Salt who was born in Wales but raised in Barbados made 55 from 35 balls at the top of the order. Will Jacks (25), Jos Buttler (38) and Sam Curran (24) also contributed to England's innings of 218-5. The West Indies made a speedy start in pursuit of that total. Hope reached his half century from 23 balls, the West Indies were 69-0 after the power play and their hundred came up in only 7.3 overs. Lewis was more watchful than Hope at first but when he began to hit out it was with enormous power. He reached his half century from 26 balls and the longest of his sixes traveled 105 meters. The century partnership between Hope and Lewis came from only 45 balls and they had looked impregnable until Lewis played an awkward shot to a ball from Rehan Ahmed which he skewed to Dan Mousley. Hope was run out next ball for the second time in consecutive matches and Pooran was bowled first ball as the West Indies slumped to 136-3. Powell restored some of the early momentum with his 38 before falling lbw to John Turner in his T20 debut. The West Indies needed 21 from the last three overs with five wickets in hand, then 15 from two. After edging towards the target in singles, Rutherford finally found the middle and blasted consecutive sixes from Mousley to clinch the win.

McGrath urges Australia to 'go hard' on emotional Kohli

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Pace legend Glenn McGrath feels Australia have the "ammunition" to target an "emotional" Virat Kohli, who will be under pressure if he gets off to a poor start at the five-match Test series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, starting in Perth from November 22. India have won the last four Test series against Australia, including two Down Under. However, they head into the much-anticipated five-Test assignment on the back of a 0-3 series whitewash at the hands of New Zealand at home. "Without a doubt, especially after coming off a 3-0 loss



against New Zealand, you've got plenty of ammunition to back yourself up," Fox Cricket noted McGrath as saying on 'CODE Sports'. "So put the pressure on them and see if they're up for it," he added. Kohli, who has been India's batting mainstay for over a

decade, has struggled with form in Test cricket recently. In the six matches he's played this year, he has averaged just a mere 22.72. With the injured Shubman Gill out of contention from the first Test and skipper Rohit Sharma's participation also in doubt, Kohli will feel the pressure of leading the batting line up. However, the 36-year-old has a penchant of eking out his best in Australia. Kohli has an impressive average of 54.08 in the four Australia tours he has been a part of. And McGrath warned that targeting Kohli aggressively could also lift him, especially if he manages to keep his emotions in check.

Need to be proactive against Ashwin, and not allow him to settle: Smith

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australian batting talisman Steve Smith wants to adopt a proactive approach against Ravichandran Ashwin in the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy to avoid his struggles against the Indian spinner during the 2020-21 series. Ashwin had nicked off Smith thrice during that rubber, and later in 2023 the Indian off-spinner dismissed the Aussie twice as he could only make 22 runs against his old foe. "I don't like getting out to off-spin in Australia. But he's also a very good bowler and he came in with some decent plans. There were a couple of occasions where he got on top of me," Smith told the Sydney Morning Herald. "But then I got on top of him at the SCG when I was a bit more proactive (Smith made 131 and 81 at Sydney). So, that's key for me. Just be proactive against him and not let him settle and bowl the way



he wants to," he added. Ashwin's Test bowling average stands at a modest 42.15 in Australia compared to his home average of 21.57. Smith hoped to land the first blow on the 38-year-old to gain an early upper hand in the five-match series, beginning at Perth from November 22.

The Tamil Nadu man recently said that he had worked out Smith after some initial struggles against him. "I think I've kind of figured out what he does or how he bats. I've had an edge over him. I've had the wood over him," Ashwin had told Channel Seven. But Smith did not read too much into it.

"Ashwin and I have had some good battles over the years. When you have five matches, if someone gets on top of another player, they could have 10 innings against them. "So, you're facing those mental challenges each game, and if it goes one way early, they will feel under pressure against that player. There's nowhere to hide in five games like there are in a two-game series," said the New South Wales man. The 35-year-old, who is 315 shy of 10,000 Test runs, will bat at his favoured No. 4 slot against India after opening the innings for four Tests earlier this year. It was not a successful experiment and Smith hoped to hit the ground running early from a position where he made runs at an average in excess of 60. It always makes your summer better when you start well. It gives you a lot of confidence. It's about not overthinking things. It's playing each ball as it comes and keeping it simple.

US Open runner-up Fritz back in another big final and faces Sinner again for ATP Finals crown

AP ■ TURIN (ITALY)

Taylor Fritz is starting to make reaching big finals a habit. He feels like he belongs among the very best players in tennis, too. The American followed his runner-up finish at the U.S. Open by beating Alexander Zverev 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (3) on Saturday to play for the trophy at the ATP Finals. "I have believed that I belong, that I'm one of the best players," Fritz said. "It's not results-based. It's more I can feel how I'm playing. This week is huge." In Sunday's final, Fritz will face top-ranked Jannik Sinner — the player he lost to in the U.S. Open final. Sinner also beat Fritz in straight sets in the group stage this week. Sinner advanced with a rapid 6-1, 6-2 win over Casper Ruud. Fritz became the first American finalist since James Blake lost the 2006 final to Roger Federer. The last American to win the elite eight-man event was Pete Sampras, who beat

Andre Agassi in 1999. "I trust my game and I trust my level and I don't feel nearly as uncomfortable in these situations anymore because I've been playing the top guys at big events a lot lately," Fritz said. "I'm getting more comfortable in the moment. I'm really, really confident in my game." Fritz upbeat after loss to Sinner. Fritz came away encouraged from his 6-4, 6-4 loss to Sinner on Tuesday. "I felt much more comfortable from the baseline. ... I had chances to break him in both sets," Fritz said. "He had an equal amount of chances, and he took his. He played the big points better than I did. It didn't feel anywhere near as one-sided as the Open." Sinner noted that Fritz "played a great match." "The difference was just a few points. Tomorrow will be very similar. ... But finals are always different than group matches." Fritz trying to match Gauff. Fritz wins the trophy, it will mark an American sweep of



the season-ending events after Coco Gauff won the WTA Finals last week. Fritz's run in New York made him the first American man to reach a Grand Slam singles final in 15 years. He's playing at the ATP Finals for

the second time. On debut two years ago, he beat Rafael Nadal in his opener and made it to the semifinals, losing to Novak Djokovic. "It's awesome to come back and already go a step further," Fritz said. "I'm all

about always trying to do better than the year before." At the start of the week, Fritz told The Associated Press his "career has always been a very steady progression and just improving a little bit each year."

Fritz has Zverev's number. It was Fritz's fourth consecutive victory over Zverev, who replaced Carlos Alcaraz at No. 2 in the rankings this week. "He's an uncomfortable player for me," Zverev said.

"It's no secret." Fritz also beat Zverev at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open, plus the Laver Cup. Fritz will finish year at career high. Fritz was already assured of finishing the year in the top five for the first time and he'll rise to a career-high No. 4 on Monday. Zverev has seen Fritz's improvement up close — especially on one key stroke: "His forehand used to break down quite a lot. ... I feel like the ratio is a lot more towards winners now." It was a matchup of big servers between the 6-foot-5 (1.96-meter) Fritz and the 6-foot-6 (1.98-meter) Zverev, and when Fritz broke Zverev for 4-2 in the first set, it marked the first time that Zverev lost a service game in four matches in Turin. Eventually, though, the match turned into a physical duel from the baseline. Fritz rallied from 0-40 and held his serve for 3-2 in the third after a nine-minute game full of long rallies — winning one such exchange that lasted 30 strokes.

Fritz was then under pressure one service game after another but somehow managed to keep holding. Fritz got ahead early in the tiebreaker and finished Zverev off with an audacious inside-out forehand winner on his first match point. Fritz finished with 15 aces to Zverev's 10 in a match that lasted 2 hours, 20 minutes. "I felt like statistically and shot-wise, my level maybe was even higher than his until the important moments. That's where I kind of blew it," Zverev said. "This one will hurt more than the other few." Doping case hangs over Sinner. Sinner is playing at home for the first time since it was announced before his U.S. Open title that he tested positive in two separate drug tests this year. A decision to clear Sinner of wrongdoing was appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency in September and a final ruling in the case is expected next year. Last year, Sinner lost the final to Djokovic, who withdrew injured this year.

