



# the pioneer

BHUBANESWAR, MONDAY NOVEMBER 4, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4

InSiDE

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



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## Terror targets Srinagar civilians



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

**MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU**

Ahead of the first session of the newly elected legislative Assembly on November 4, one of the highly guarded and busiest streets of Srinagar city near the Tourist Reception Centre (TRC) was hit by a grenade attack in which at least 11 civilians were injured on Sunday. The grenade attack took place less than 24 hours after one foreign terrorist identified as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) Commander Usman Lashkari was eliminated by the joint team of security forces during an eight-hour gunfight in the Khanyar area of Srinagar city on Saturday. After these two back-to-back strikes, the security grid has been

alerted in Srinagar as the newly elected legislators will be attending the five-day-long maiden assembly session of the legislative Assembly. A large number of shoppers were present for the weekly 'Sunday market' at the time of the grenade attack. All the injured were rushed to the nearby Sri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital (SMHS) hospital for treatment. According to initial reports, the attackers missed the target as they intended to hit the security personnel deployed in the area to inflict maximum injuries. According to hospital records civilians between the age group of 16 to 55 years were left injured in the attack. The explosion caused panic in the area and sent shoppers scrambling for cover. The security personnel also laid a tight cordon

and carried out random searches in the area to nab the attackers. The Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha spoke to DGP, Nalin Prabhakar and senior officials of the security agencies on the grenade attack in Srinagar. He directed the security officials for an effective and forceful response to punish the terrorists and their associates. The Lieutenant Governor reaffirmed the government's resolve not to allow terrorist elements to succeed in their nefarious designs. "Terrorists targeting our citizens will have to pay a very heavy price for their actions. You have full freedom to crush terror outfits and leave no stone unturned to complete this mission," the Lieutenant Governor told the senior security officials. The Lieutenant Governor wished speedy recovery of those injured

and directed that district administration should extend all possible assistance. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also reacted to the second incident of terrorist violence in Srinagar. He said the security apparatus must do everything possible to end this spurt of attacks. "The last few days have been dominated by headlines of attacks & encounters in parts of the valley. Today's news of a grenade attack on innocent shoppers at the 'Sunday market' in Srinagar is deeply disturbing. There can be no justification for targeting innocent civilians. The security apparatus must do everything possible to end this spurt of attacks at the earliest so that people can go about their lives without any fear" Omar posted on X (earlier Twitter).



## IT grad arrested for sending death threats to UP CM

**PNS ■ MUMBAI**

The Mumbai police have arrested a 24-year-old woman for allegedly giving a death threat to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, an official said on Sunday. The woman, identified as Fatima Khan, who has done BSc in Information Technology, resided in Ulhasnagar area of neighbouring Thane district of Maharashtra with her family members. Her father is into timber business, the official said. The woman is well qualified but is mentally unstable, the police said. The Mumbai traffic police's WhatsApp number on Saturday received a message from an unknown number threatening that if Adityanath did not resign from the CM's post within 10 days, then he would be killed like NCP leader Baba Siddique, the official said. During the probe, the police found Khan had sent the message, he said. The Mumbai Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) in a combined operation with the Ulhasnagar police traced the woman and apprehended her, the official said. Further investigation was on into the matter, the official added. The police are on alert as Adityanath is likely to come to Maharashtra for campaigning for the November 20 state assembly polls, as per officials. Former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique was shot dead in Mumbai's Bandra area on October 12.



Photo: Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

## Congratulations, Delhi AQI is 500

**RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI**

A thick layer of smog engulfed the National Capital on Sunday, and the Air Quality Index (AQI) continued to deteriorate, crossing the 500 mark, two days after Diwali. The government may soon consider banning BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel four-wheelers, dust suppression measures, and forbid all non-essential construction activities. In areas like Shahdara and Anand Vihar, the AQI remained above 500 after 11.30 am on Sunday. The air pollution level lies in the alarming 'hazardous' category (above AQI 400) in most parts of the capital, with PM2.5 levels over 59.6 times more threatening than the World Health Organisation's (WHO) prescribed limit. An average AQI stood in the "very poor" category at 382 in Delhi. A day before, it had been slightly worse at 339 but did not slip into the 'severe' level as forecast because of favourable atmospheric conditions such as warmer temperatures and strong winds. According to weather analysts, it is likely that wind speed will drop further and, therefore, worsen the pollutants status. Local factors, including construction activities, heavy

## Cracks emerge on Puri 'Meghanada Pachheri'



Repair works soon, says SJTA chief  
**PNS ■ PURI**  
With multiple cracks emerging on the Meghanada Pachheri, the gigantic boundary wall surrounding the

Jagannath Temple in Puri, questions are now being raised over the safety and security of the 12th-century shrine. While wastewater from the Ananda Bazaar is seeping through the cracks, patches of algae have taken over the wall. "The Meghanada Pachheri is

gradually becoming weak due to water leakage and the chances of its collapse cannot be ruled out. No action has been taken to repair it," said Om Prakash Dash, a servitor. Another servitor, Sachidananda Panda said, "Since 2021, water is constantly leaking through the

Meghanada Pachheri, but no action has been taken by the temple administration. The repair and restoration work should be carried out immediately." Sarat Ryaaguru, an intellectual said, "Though opposed, vibrators were used for the construction of the Parikrama Project which has resulted in the cracks on the Meghanada Pachheri. Cracks are also seen on Uttar Dwar and Nata Mandap." Shree Jagannatha Temple Administration (SJTA) Chief Administrator Arabinda Padhee said, "We are also concerned over the present state of the Meghanada Pachheri. ASI and technical teams have inspected the boundary wall and necessary repair and restoration work will be carried out soon."

## Historical humiliation for Team India



**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
The fortress had been breached already. On Sunday, it just crumbled to the ground with the Indian dressing room sitting stone-faced, trying to process a fall so spectacular that nobody saw it coming. For the first time in their Test history, which goes back to 1933, the "Tigers" at home had been whitewashed in a series of three or more games. The humiliation was inflicted by New Zealand, a side that landed here after being thrashed 0-2 by a Sri Lankan team that is in transition. The Black Caps were also without their

runs but it was on a track that looked like a minefield to the entire home line-up except Rishabh Pant (64). On Sunday, all Pant needed or wanted was for someone to hang in there. Nobody seemed capable. From Virat Kohli to skipper Rohit Sharma to Shubman Gill to Sarfaraz Khan, none looked to have learnt their lessons. Five key wickets were lost for a mere 16 runs at the start of an embarrassing collapse with the Jogeshwari's very own Ajaz Patel making them dance to his tunes for a haul of 11 wickets in the match. The left-arm spinner now has a staggering 25 Test wickets at the Wankhede in just two matches, making him the most successful overseas bowler at the venue after the great Ian Botham (22). "Something like this will be a very low point of my career and I take full responsibility for it. With the bat, I was not good enough," a desolate Rohit admitted in the post-match press conference struggling to explain clearly just what has gone so wrong with this team.

**Retired DSP, others attacked by neighbours**

**SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI**  
Two unruly sisters attacked a former Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) of Uttar Pradesh, and his family members with a knife, injured a Delhi Police officer on duty, and dragged a two-wheeler for over half a kilometre with their car, while trying to flee arrest in East Delhi's Vasundhara Enclave area. All hell broke loose in the wee hours of Saturday when the 74-year-old former DSP Ashok Sharma, who is also a cancer patient, asked the two women, namely 21-year-old Charvi Jain and 23-year-old Bhavya Jain to stop honking repeatedly in the society. They both have been arrested.

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# Politics over Mahanadi water row intensifies ‘My aim is to make Balangir No.1 dist’

**BJD, Congress rap BJP govt's alleged inaction**  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The politics over the Mahanadi water-sharing dispute with neighbouring Chhattisgarh has again taken centre stage in Odisha with the Opposition BJD and Congress passing the ball to the BJP's court demanding an early solution to the longstanding issue.

Targeting the newly-formed BJP government in the State, BJD MLA Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo said, "We need action, not word. The Government of India should come up with a strong decision to resolve the issue." "I was in the Parliament when the Mahanadi water-sharing dispute was discussed. The then Minister Nitin Gadkari had refused to accept the proposal of Odisha. We forced him to refer the matter to the tribunal.

In between, seven years have passed, but the tribunal is yet to come up with a solution." Similarly, criticising Chief Minister Mohan Majhi's remark on the dispute, senior Congress leader Narasingha Mishra said, "The statement from the CM is just a mere eyewash and he cannot resolve the dispute." "If the dispute could be resolved through discussion, then it could have been solved since long. They can only come up with such a state-

ment, but when it comes to work they are a big zero. They can do nothing," Mishra raved. The statements from the BJD and the Congress came after CM Majhi said his government is taking up the Mahanadi water-sharing dispute seriously and he has already held discussions with the Chhattisgarh CM twice. No comments from the BJP could be obtained over the statements of BJD and Congress.

**Says Chief Minister Majhi**  
SUDHIR MISHRA ■ BALANGIR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, speaking to mediapersons here on Sunday, said his aim is to make Balangir the number one district in the State. "The earlier government has not given much importance to ensure development of the district. Our government has come to power for



the first time and people have lots of hope from it," said Majhi. "The double-engine government is committed to ensure development. However, I feel that a 'triple-engine government' is functioning here. KV Singh Deo, a six time

MLA, is striving for development of Balangir. Since long, Balangir MP Sangeta Singh Deo has also vision for development and striving for it. Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling is also always trying to ensure development of

## Dhaulti to be further developed: CM



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Dhaulti Hill is not an ordinary hill but holds a glorious past of Odisha's history. It is a symbol of the bravery, courage and strength of the brave children of Kalinga, said Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi inaugurating the 52nd foundation day celebrations of the Dhaulti Shanti Stupa here on Sunday. "Dhaulti is a place of pilgrimage that has been united by the tears and blood of heroic chil-

dren of Odisha, said Majhi. He further said Dhaulti may be an icon of Buddhism, but it has become so integrated with the Odia language, culture and traditions that the people of the State have accepted it as a part of their culture. The Dhulai Shanti Stupa would be further developed and the surrounding area would be extensively improved, he said. The CM said there would be a coordinated plan for development of the State's all heritage sites.

## Students served rice with salt and chili

--Headmaster suspended over MDM irregularity  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The School and Mass Education Department on Sunday suspended the headmaster of a government high school on the charge of bungling Mid-Day Meal (MDM) meant for schoolchildren. The headmaster was identified as Srimanta Kumar Dehury of Jhadeswari Government High School, Tolkan in Jajpur district. Dehury allegedly sold away all the MDM items including eggs and pocketed the money.



Instead of egg and rice, he forced the students to eat rice just with salt and chilli. On most days, he would not give anything to the students and sent them away with Rs 5-10 biscuit packets. The headmaster has also been accused of being involved in several such irregularities and often remaining absent from the school. Neither did

he bother to provide the clothes, bags and other things to the students sanctioned by the government, it was alleged. After repeated complaints by the students and guardians, a probe was launched by the School and Mass Education department. The headmaster was suspended after the probe found irregularities in the implementation of the mid-day meal and other irregularities. Meanwhile, no comments could be obtained from the accused headmaster.

## Mild earthquake tremors felt in BBSR

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Panic gripped the residents of Bhubaneswar as earthquake tremors of mild intensity were felt in the capital city and nearby areas after an earthquake struck the State on Sunday. The tremors were felt for about several seconds. As per the latest reports, there was no report of any damage to life or property. The tremors were felt in several localities in the city in the morning. However, an official confirmation was awaited from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) in connection with the tremors. "I was sleeping when I heard a noise and later experienced mild tremors," said a resident. Another resident also said to have experienced the tremors. "I was out for a morning walk between 7:10 am and 7:15 am when first I heard a sound and experienced some dizziness. It was after some time that I learnt from others that it was an earthquake," said another local resident. However, things are likely to get clear only after the National Centre for Seismology shares updates regarding the intensity and epicenter of the earthquake.

## Annual Research Day & Regional Conclave at AIIMS

We're committed to medical research: Dr Biswas  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The AIIMS Bhubaneswar celebrated its second Annual Research Day, emphasising the pivotal role of research as a cornerstone of its mission. This year, the institution took a significant step forward by hosting its inaugural regional research conclave, uniting various regional institutes to foster collaboration in biomedical research. This initiative reflects AIIMS Bhubaneswar's vision of creating a robust research consortium aimed at enhancing healthcare outcomes in the region. The event was attended by prominent regional research institutes, including IIT Bhubaneswar, NISER, Insti-



tute of Life Sciences, ICMR-RMRC Bhubaneswar, KIIT-TBI Bioincubator, SOA University, SVNIRTA, and Hi-Tech Medical College and Hospital. With an impressive record of securing around Rs 15 crore in research grants from national and international funding agencies and over 1,000 publications in high-impact journals annually, AIIMS Bhubaneswar is committed to advancing medical research, said AIIMS Bhubaneswar Executive Director Dr Ashutosh Biswas. Welcoming the dignitaries and research fellows, Dr Biswas said that a state-of-the-art central research facility has been established at the institute, focusing on modern biotechnology and product development with translational applications. Executive Director of AIIMS Rishikesh, Dr Meenu Singh graced the occasion as chief guest. She emphasized the importance of value-based medicine in conjunction with evidence-based approaches to enhance quality of life and health economics. Dr Singh highlighted the significance of researching traditional concepts, particularly in a State like Odisha, renowned for its rich cultural heritage. Former Director of Communicable Diseases at South East Asia Region (SEAR), WHO, Dr Swarup Sarkar enlightened the

audience on global health concepts. He discussed how global health policies have successfully tackled issues like HIV and tuberculosis, while also stressing the need for implementation science in addressing ongoing health challenges in India. Director of Neurology at the Institute of Neurosciences Kolkata Dr Anirban Biswas stated, research should focus on addressing common problems. In recognition of outstanding research contributions, Dr Sanjeev Kumar Bhoi, Professor and Head of Neurology, received the best research paper award for his pivotal work on Peripheral Neuropathy Leprosy (PNL), shedding light on the often undiagnosed morbidity it causes compared to skin leprosy. Also, various other awards in the field of research were given away to faculty and residents.

## In Narasinghpur Elephant shot with arrow, battling for life



PNS ■ CUTTACK

An elephant has been left battling for its life after it was shot with arrows by miscreants at Raghupani Bandh in Cuttack district's Narasinghpur block. Hit by two arrows, the pachyderm was spotted struggling for life. The matter came to the fore after forest officials during a routine check spotted the animal and informed senior officials. A preliminary probe suggested it to be the handiwork of poachers. The el-

ephant has sustained grievous wounds. On being informed, a team of forest officials from Dhenkanal rushed to the spot and tried to tranquilise the pachyderm. Due to the injuries, the elephant has turned furious and would attack anyone who goes near it. So, the officials are trying to first tranquilise it before providing necessary treatment, sources said. Meanwhile, a team of veterinary doctors and senior officials from the Nandankanan Zoo were on their way to attend the elephant.

# CONTEMPORARIES It's time for understanding 'digital arrests'

In a time when technology has woven itself into the very fabric of modern life, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent address on the perils of the "digital arrest" phenomenon has sent a timely ripple across legal, social and technological domains. As digital landscapes evolve at break-neck speed, so too do the challenges they present, particularly in the context of cyber security and digital freedom. This escalation in digital entrapment, ranging from cyber frauds and hacking to increasingly sophisticated surveillance and cyber bullying, demands a nuanced approach in law and regulation. At stake are not merely our data and online identities, but our fundamental freedoms and societal wellbeing. In the language of reform, therefore, what we need is a robust legislative, regulatory and investigative paradigm to tackle these emerging threats. The term "digital arrest" encapsulates a range of malicious online activities aimed at curbing individual freedom, often through coercive control of one's digital space. For example, imagine a scenario where one's smartphone, a portal



S. JYOTIRANJANA

to the world, becomes a prison, an instrument of manipulation or a tool for extortion. Digital arrests can materialise in various forms -- ransomware that locks access to crucial files until a ransom is paid, spyware that breaches personal communications or even phishing scams that entrap unsuspecting users in web-based fraud. According to recent reports, incidents of cybercrime in India increased by over 11% in the past year alone, underscoring the vulnerability of individuals in an inadequately protected digital domain and according to reports "digital arrest" fraud schemes led Indians to loss approximately Rs 120.3 crore during the first quarter of 2024.

**A vacuum in Indian jurisprudence**  
From a legal perspective, India is still grappling with the nuances of cyber legislation. While the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 remains the country's primary framework for dealing with cyber offences, it has proven inadequate to combat the full spectrum of cyber threats facing modern-day citizens. The IT Act was conceived in an era when cybercrime was in its infancy; today, it appears almost anachronistic in the face of ransomware, deepfakes and complex phishing operations. What's notably absent from our legal architecture is a comprehensive law that explicitly defines, categorises and penalises acts amounting to digital imprisonment. Legal scholars have called for a clear delineation of "digital harassment" and "digital entrapment" along with a framework for digital rights that assures victims both recourse and restitution. The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the US's Computer Fraud and Abuse Act serve as exemplars for countries that have actively

adapted to the realities of cyber threats. India's proposed Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022, though a step in the right direction, lacks adequate provisions for the scope and penalties necessary to curb digital coercion effectively. The consequences of digital arrest extend beyond mere inconvenience; they present real dangers to mental health, financial security, and, by extension, societal well-being. This is not a trifling concern; studies have shown that individuals who fall victim to online harassment, identity theft or extortion often experience severe emotional and psychological distress. Apart from this, the societal costs of unregulated digital spaces are especially pronounced for vulnerable populations, including women, children, and the elderly. Online harassment, particularly targeting young women, has become alarmingly common, with cases of "revenge porn" and "sexortion" emerging as sinister manifestations of digital arrest. For children and teenagers, exposure to cyber-bullying and online grooming through unchecked social media channels has had devastat-

ing impacts, manifesting in isolation, anxiety, and even tragic outcomes. And of course, the elderly, often less tech-savvy, remain a prime target for phishing and financial scams that rob them of their life savings. The technological dimension of digital arrest is as labyrinthine as it is formidable. Cybercriminals are no longer the stereotypical hackers operating out of darkened basements; they are organized, sophisticated, and armed with an arsenal of tools that exploit the latest advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML). Modern cyber threats include ransomware attacks that encrypt a user's data until a ransom is paid, distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks that paralyse online operations, and deepfakes that impersonate individuals, often with the aim of blackmail or extortion. The advent of AI-driven bots, capable of autonomously crafting phishing emails or impersonating human conversation patterns, poses a unique challenge for traditional cyber security measures. Similarly, the rise of the Internet of

Things (IoT) has multiplied the potential points of vulnerability for digital trespassers as unprotected devices often serve as gateways for hackers. Alarmingly, even encrypted platforms, which were once seen as bastions of privacy, are now being infiltrated through spyware tools like Pegasus. Such sophisticated technology calls for an equally advanced, proactive approach in detection, deterrence, and response mechanisms. To meaningfully counter the spectre of digital arrest, India must foster a forward-looking legislative ecosystem that reflects the dynamic and evolving nature of cyber threats. Firstly, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive cyber security law that consolidates, updates and extends the protections afforded by the IT Act. Such legislation should account for contemporary cyber threats, offer robust safeguards for data protection and clearly define offences related to digital entrapment. In conjunction with this, data privacy laws must be enforced to assure users that their personal information will not be accessed, shared or manipulated without

consent. A dedicated cyber protection task force, with jurisdiction to address digital entrapment at both national and regional levels, would further reinforce this legal infrastructure. If India is to emerge as a global digital power, it must also become a model of digital ethics and security. It is imperative, therefore, that we invest not only in our technological prowess but also in the strength and resilience of our legal frameworks, safeguarding the rights and dignity of every citizen in this burgeoning digital age. Let us take this call to action, for it is not merely about preventing cybercrime; it is about preserving our autonomy, our freedom and, indeed, our humanity in the digital sphere. (*The writer is an advocate, Orissa High Court, Additional Central Government Standing Counsel, Central Administrative Tribunal, Cuttack Bench, Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Law and Media Studies, SMC, KIIT DU and Consulting Editor- Legal Affairs & Public Policy, The Pioneer. Views are personal*)

**In Keonjhar dist**

# Women perform puja to end liquor sale in village

**PNS ■ KEONJHAR**

Up in arms against illicit liquor sale, hundreds of women at Podang under Telkoi block of Keonjhar district on Sunday came together and conducted a special puja against alcohol sale and consumption in the village.

Liquor smugglers were made to swear on Bhagavad Gita that they would give up their jobs. Even drunkards and alcohol consumers were made to attend the puja ceremony and vow to never drink again.

The women believed that those violating the puja rules would be cursed by their deity. Later, the women took out a rally and spread words about the 'puja' and its rules in and around the village.

"So many incidents happened here due to liquor sale



and drinking in the village; so, all the mothers of Podang village have come together to perform 'Bhagavad Gita' puja and swear on the holy book that no one will neither sell nor drink liquor in our village. We will also impose a penalty on those who still do not follow the rules," alleged a woman.

"Husbands spend all the money on liquor and do not bring home anything. As a result, our children are not able to afford their studies and we

are not able to run household chores due to lack of money," she added.

Another woman said, "We have eight liquor stores in our village. We get Subhadra money and PDS rice through ration cards. Our husbands do not hesitate taking our Subhadra money and even sell the PDS rice to drink alcohol. This leads to tension in every family. So, all women of our village have come together to bring an end to liquor sales in our village."

**In Bhadrak**

# Women stage unique protest against illegal liquor sale

**PNS ■ BHADRAK**

Strongly opposing illegal sale of liquor, a large number of women staged a unique protest at a village in the Dhamnagar area of Bhadrak district on Sunday. Women members of eight Self-Help Groups (SHGs) staged the protest in Dalanga panchayat.

The protesters stormed the house of a trader who allegedly sells liquor in the area in an illegal manner. The women took out liquor bottles from



the house and destroyed the stock asserting that no illegal sale of alcohol would be allowed in the village.

Claiming that the trader has

been illegally selling liquor for the last over three years, the women said police failed to take any action against the man despite repeated complaints lodged by villagers against him.

Stating that so many unhappy incidents happened due to liquor sale and drinking in the village, the women said they have decided to oppose any illegal sale of liquor. Many people are spending all the money on liquor and neglecting their families, they said.

**In Ganjam**

# NCB arrests wanted ganja smuggler

**PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR**

A team of the Mumbai unit of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) arrested most-wanted ganja mafia Nilu Pradhan from Beguniapada village in Ganjam district on Saturday night.

Pradhan, who hails from Ganjam, was on the most-wanted list of the NCB for his alleged link in ganja smuggling to Mumbai and Gujarat.

Acting on a tipoff, the NCB team with the help of Beguniapada police conducted raids on Beguniapada

village and arrested Pradhan. He was later taken on a transit remand for further investigation.

"Nilu Pradhan was on the wanted list of the NCB. He was arrested by the NCB teams from Mumbai and Bhubaneswar with the help of Beguniapada police yesterday. He is accused of illegal ganja smuggling," said Ganjam Additional SP Ranjit Kumar Prusty.

"Though Pradhan has no warrant against him under our police station, the NCB had it," Prusty added.

## Thousands join Govardhan Puja in B'pur

**PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR**

The Sri Govardhan Puja was celebrated in ISKCON, Brahmapur temple situated in Lanjipalli with great pomp and joy. The programme started with the worship of Go-mata in the early morning. This was followed by nice Bhajan and Kirtan by the devotees.

After that temple president Pancharatna Prabhujii described the beautiful pas-

times of Sri Giriraj Govardhan Ji.

On the occasion, a nicely decorated Sri Govardhan hill was made with many food items which was worshipped by performing Arati and offering delicious 56 types of Bhoga.

More than 7,000 devotees joined and took Mahaprasadam. The programme was conducted peacefully with the help of temple resident devotees and management.

## Elephant calf rescued in Keonjhar

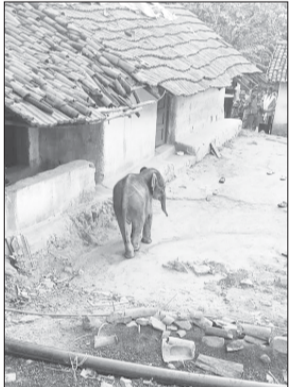
**Herd of jumbos now reluctant to accept it**

**PNS ■ KEONJHAR**

A 3- to 4-year-old male elephant calf was rescued by the Forest personnel from Rengalbeda village near Jagdala dam under Palaspanga section of Sadar range area on Saturday.

The calf had separated from the group and entered the village late Friday night. The calf also barged into the houses of the villagers.

A crowd of people had gathered on Saturday morning to enjoy the movement of the calf in the village. On being informed, Forest sleuths reached the village and rescued the calf. However, later, when they tried to unite the elephant calf with the group of elephants roaming in the forest, neither the herd of elephants nor its mother accepted the calf. DFO Dhanraj



HD informed that the elephant cub was released near the herd of elephants in the forest and its movement was being monitored.

Elephants can smell humans from the elephant's body when they live in a human settlement or touch a human being. So perhaps they were not accepting the calf for the reason. If the herd or its mother will not accept the calf, the forest officials may send the baby elephant to the Nandanakan Zoo like earlier several incidents, said sources.

## Brahmapur City Book Fair kick-starts

**To continue till Nov 10**

**PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR**

The 11th Brahmapur City Book Fair was inaugurated on Friday evening at the Khallikote University playground by Brahmapur MLA K Anil.

The event saw notable attendees, including chief guest and social worker Subash Maharana, who said that "books are true friends of humanity."

Distinguished academic Professor Uttama Jena, speaking as the keynote speaker, highlighted the essential role of books in human society, noting that they guide indi-

viduals towards righteous paths. Book Fair secretary Ajit Sabat also delivered a special address, underscoring the cultural importance of such events.

Among the esteemed guests were Dipti Mita Mahapatra and Prafulla Tripathy, while poet Sushant Dash presided over the function. Additionally, students excelling in the junior-level talent search programme were awarded for their achievements.

The organizing team included Bichitrnananda Bebart, Sunil Pradhan, Nihar Ranjan Dash, Kapil Mahanty, Balmiki Mahapatra, Sudhanshali Mishra, and Satyam Achary. The fair will continue till November 10.

## Kendrapada sub-jail warden hangs self

**Kin allege deceased's ex-girl friend's torture behind suicide**

**RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA**

The Kendrapada Sadar police on Friday night seized the body of Bijay Parida (25) who was warden of the Kendrapada Sub Jail, from the jail barrack.

He was found hanging from a ceiling fan inside a room in the jail barrack, informed Sadar police station IIC Bimal Mallick.

According to ASP Debashis Dhal, Jail superintendent Babuli Barik lodged a complaint in this regard. The police have registered an unnatu-



ral death case and started an investigation.

Police on Saturday sent the body of the deceased for autopsy and later, handed over the body to the family members.

Deceased Parida is survived by his widow and a 3-year-old daughter. Though the reason behind the death is yet to be established, police suspect ex-

tra martial affairs might be the reason behind the suicide of the jail warden.

Notably, Parida, who was a resident of Gurudijhatia village under Athagarh Tehsil in Cuttack district had got the job two years back. On Friday, he completed his duty at 12 noon and came to the barrack. Later, he also communicated with his family members and wife over telephone. But ironically, he committed suicide by hanging.

According to Gouranga Parida, uncle of the deceased, one Rashmi Rekha, daughter of Ramesh Sethy of Kapursingh village, who was the former girl friend of Bijay, had been creating disturbances in his life for the last one and a half years.

She threatened Bijay to expose him concerning their relationship. Even, her father and brother along with the girl had come to Kendrapada and assaulted Bijay by forcibly snatching away his mobile phone.

To put an end to the row between Rashmi Rekha and Bijay, an amicable settlement was made in the presence of both the family members and local gentries. But, the girl used to give mental harassment and torture to Bijay, said Gouranga, adding that she was even blackmailing him for money. ASP Dhal, however, denied commenting on the allegation of Bijay's family members. He said that Bijay died by suicide and the matter was being investigated.

**In Boudh**

# 4 friends injured as car hits roadside tree

**PNS ■ BOUDH**

Four friends were injured when the car by which they were travelling crashed into a roadside tree near the Charichhak Getamunda bridge in Boudh district on Saturday night.

The accident took place when the person driving the car lost control over the wheels while the occupants were on their way to Phulbani from Boudh. It was suspected that he was driving the car under the influence of alcohol.

On being informed, Fire Service personnel rescued the four trapped in the car and rushed them to the District Headquarters Hospital here.

"The Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) received a call on 112 about a car



accident near Charichhak in Boudh district late last night. The ERSS authorities immediately contacted the nearest Fire Service, which reached the spot and rescued the four persons and shifted them to a healthy facility," th Odisha Police posted on X.

One of the injured was later referred to the Burla hospital since his condition was critical.

Police seized the vehicle and initiated an investigation into the incident.

## Rayagada doc among 3 held for theft in hosp

**BADAL TAH ■ RAYAGADA**

Rayagada police have arrested three people, including former medical officer Dr Rohit Kundu of the Urban Health Centre-1 within Rayagada Municipal Council area for theft of computers, hard disk and files in the UHC.

Other arrestees are lab technicians Abinash Sauanta and Debashish Garadia.

Police took the action on the basis of an FIR by incumbent Medical Officer Dr Sangram Kishore Nimal. According to the FIR, a laptop, a CCTV hard disk and some important office registers were missing.

Rayagada Police IIC Kamal Kant Basant Kumar Kahanr reached the spot and investigated the matter. The staff of the health center were brought to the police station for interrogation. The police found out



many important registers and files were thrown in a big hole in the premises of the center.

Suspecting the involvement of the health center staff in the theft case, the police were

questioned by a two-member team of the District Health Department for not coming to the health center regularly and not delivering proper healthcare to the patients. Subsequently, Dr Kundu was transferred from there to the district headquarters hospital (DHH) and Dr Nimal was posted in his place. After taking charge, he reported the police and his higher authorities of theft.

Even though the CDMO had issued show cause notices to Dr Kundu twice, there was no systemic improvement in the health centre. After being reported about the incident of disorder and theft of government files and valuables, district Collector Parul Patwari immediately directed the CDMO to take strict action against the culprits.

## Puri lawyer, son killed in Bihar road mishap

**Wife, daughter critical**

**SAROJ KUMAR MISHRA ■ PURI**

In a horrifying road mishap in Bihar, a lawyer of Puri court and his son died on the spot, while his wife including his daughter and driver of the car succumbed serious injuries. Condition of the wife of the deceased lawyer is stated to be very critical. All the injured are presently undergoing treatment in Medant Hospital near Patna.

Sources informed that the lawyer, identified as Satyanarayan Satapathy (40) of Pathuria Sahi of the city, was returning to Puri from Ayodha after accomplishing his pilgrimage. The car carry-



ing five persons including four of the lawyer family was passing through National Highway -20 under Sohasarai police station limits of Nalanda district when the accident occurred in the dead of the night of Thursday.

The car run by the driver suddenly collided head-on

with a truck coming from the reverse direction. The collision was so fatal that the rear portion of the car was missing from the body. Lawyer and his 14-year son died on the spot. With help of local people in the midnight, the injured were sent to hospital. While the driver is out of danger, the

conditions of wife and the 17-year daughter are still critical, sources close to victim family informed. In their grave situation, the family has sought financial help from governments of Odisha and Bihar and generous people of the state and has issued a mobile no -8917520094 for contact.

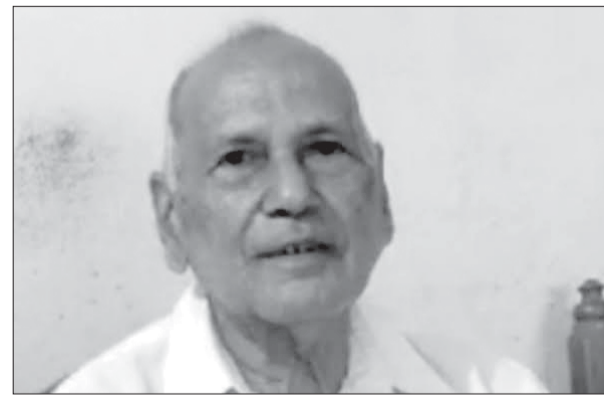
## Kendrapada ex-teacher completes MA at age of 82!

**Says his next mission is to complete PhD**

**PNS ■ KENDRAPADA**

For this octogenarian, learning is a process till last breath. For him age is just a number and learning does not have anything to do with age. The passion and zeal to learn has made him different from others as he has achieved a remarkable feat of completing his Master of Arts (MA) degree successfully in Odia from Sambalpur University at the age of 82 years.

Gopinath Biswal (82), a retired school teacher and resident of Meghapur village, has successfully completed his Master of Arts (MA) degree from Sambalpur University



recently at the ripe age. Biswal is the grandfather of five children. During his 40 years of job as a teacher, he worked in several schools in Sambalpur and Kendrapada districts.

The octogenarian joined as a teacher in Dengasarga Ashram primary school at Sambalpur in 1959 with a monthly salary of only Rs 46

"I am ecstatic as I achieved my dream of completing MA in Odia in such a ripe age. If you have a passion and determination for learning, then no force can stop you from achieving your dream even at the twilight of life," stated Biswal, who won accolades for the feat from everyone.

"My next future planning is I will pursue PhD in Odia," added Biswal.

"We the family members are proud enough as my husband passed Post Graduation at the age of 82. Most of the people at this age generally prefer to spend their times by remaining confined to four walls of the house, but my spouse enjoys studying and did a lot of hard work to complete the MA course," stated Laxmipriya Biswal, wife of Gopinath.

# ED targets cyber fraud in 'digital arrest' scams

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

"Probe found that a huge network of cyber scams in India, involving fake stock market investments and digital arrest schemes executed primarily through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Telegram," said, establish credibility through fake ads and fabricated success stories, ultimately leading victims to invest significant amounts. The ED said some victims of this scam were "manipulated" under the guise of a fake arrest (digital arrest) by the



Customs and the CBI, ultimately making them transfer huge funds to various shell or dummy companies under fake "fund regularisation process." It said 'digital' arrest scams involve fraudsters posing as law enforcement officials, intimidating victims into transferring their savings by fabricating scenarios that suggest illegal involvement of the victim, the federal agency said. The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) issued a public advisory on Sunday asking people to "Beware of Digital Arrests" reminding that "those making video calls are not police, CBI, Customs officials or judges". They are cyber criminals, the organisation that functions under the Union home ministry said. The advisory asked people to not fall for these "tricks" and report such crimes "immediately" by calling the national cybercrime helpline 1930 or logging at the portal

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

sheet on October 29, it said. The ED said fraudsters, in order to perpetrate this fraud, obtained hundreds of SIM cards which were either linked to the bank accounts of shell companies or were utilised to create WhatsApp accounts. "The anonymity afforded by these untraceable SIMs allow scammers to defraud victims with a reduced risk of immediate detection. The scammers created 24 shell companies in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and some other states to facilitate the acquisition and laundering of proceeds from cybercrimes," it said. These shell companies, registered mainly at the addresses of coworking spaces (where no actual business presence exists), have used fake bank statements in filings before Registrar of Companies as proof of commencement of business of these companies. Scammers operated through "mule" accounts to transfer

the funds and the proceeds are ultimately converted into cryptocurrency and transferred abroad, the ED probe found. One of the accused, Charan Raj C, played a "key" role in this scheme by recruiting individuals for directorships and managing bank account openings. Shashi Kumar M assisted in "incorporating" several shell companies which became instrumental in collecting and integrating proceeds of crime into the banking system. Kiran S K, linked to several shell companies as per the ED, had connections with bank accounts of multiple shell entities created by overseas scammers, who submitted fake documents to incorporate these companies. Sachin M, a Director in several firms, "admitted" to assisting overseas scammers in recruiting dummy directors and facilitating bank accounts, being "well aware" of their illegality, according to the agency. Tamilarasan played a "significant" role in facilitating these activities, collaborating with both Indian and overseas scammers and he "assisted" in opening bank accounts for shell companies. Like Cyberforest Technologies Pvt. Ltd., and "knowingly" continued these operations despite of knowledge of their connection to cybercrime, the agency said. The ED said it has "incriminating" evidence like chequebooks and communication records to say that these individuals participated in a syndicate that laundered proceeds from cyber frauds across India.

# Commission's tenure extended to examine SC status for converts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



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

was constituted on October six, 2022, under the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952. The inquiry also covers related concerns regarding social justice, rights, and the possible extension of reserved status to converts from religions not traditionally

included in SC classifications, such as Christianity and Islam. Headed by former Chief Justice of India K G Balakrishnan, the Commission has been engaging with stakeholders, including sociologists, historians, and representatives from affected communities, to better understand the nuances of caste identity in the context of religious conversion, officials said. According to the latest notification, the Commission is now required to submit its report by October 10, 2025.

## PM Modi congratulates Duma Boko as Botswana's President



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

In a social media post, Modi said, "Congratulations @duma\_boko on your election as the President of Botswana. Best wishes for a successful tenure." "Look forward to working closely with you to further strengthen our bilateral ties," he said.



## No forward movement on four names reiterated by Collegium

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

There has been no forward movement on the names reiterated by the Supreme Court Collegium headed by Justice D Y Chandrachud for appointment as high court judges as he demits office as the chief justice of India on November 10. The collegium had in January 2023 reiterated the names of advocates Saurabh Kirpal for elevation as a judge of the Delhi High Court, R John Satyan as judge of the Madras HC, and Amitesh Banerjee and Sakya Sen as judges of the Calcutta High Court. The top court collegium had also reiterated the name of Somasekhar Sundaresan, also an advocate, as judge of the Bombay High Court in January 2023. In November that year, he was elevated as a judge of the Bombay HC. People aware of the procedure to appoint high court and Supreme Court judges said the files relating to Kirpal, Satyan, Banerjee and Sen are still pending with the government. In January 2023, the Supreme Court collegium had for the second time reiterated the names of Banerjee and Sen for appointment as judges of the Calcutta High Court "expeditiously", saying it was not open for the government to repeatedly send back the same proposal. Advocate Banerjee is the son of former apex court judge Justice U C Banerjee, who headed a commission which in 2006 ruled out conspiracy angle in the 2002 Sabaramati Express fire tragedy at Godhra that killed 58 'kar sevaks'. Advocate Sen is the son of Justice Shyamal Sen, who was elevated as a permanent judge of the Calcutta High Court in February 1986 and later became the chief justice of the Allahabad High Court. Justice Sen also served as the Governor of West Bengal from May 1999 to December 1999. Besides reiterating the names of Banerjee and Sen, the three-judge Collegium had also reiterated the names of senior advocate Kirpal as a judge of the Delhi High Court, advocate Sathyan as judge of Madras High Court and advocate Somasekhar Sundaresan as a judge of the Bombay High Court. Justice Sanjiv Khanna will take over as the next CJ on November 11, a day after Justice Chandrachud demits office and will have a tenure of a little over six months. He will retire on May 13, 2025 on attaining the age of 65 years.

## Doctors call for sleep screening to reduce truck accidents

PTI ■ INDORE

A group of doctors has advocated the need for "sleep screening" of truck drivers to bring down road accidents by at least 43 per cent. The risk of road accidents is rising due to lack of sleep among truck drivers, Dr Rajesh Swarnkar, president of South East Asian Academy of Sleep Medicine, told PTI on Sunday. "Keeping this in mind, the regional transport offices (RTOs) must ask truck drivers to fill up a form every two years with their body mass index (BMI) as well as details like whether they like to sleep during the day or whether they snore at night. The analysis of their replies and medical examinations can tell us if truck drivers have sleep apnea or any other related illness," Dr Swarnkar informed. If truck drivers sleep for seven to eight hours in a day. The risk of road accidents can be brought down by 43 per cent, he said. Driver Dharmendra Sharma, who was about to commence a long journey from Transport Nagar here, said he manages to get just two to four hours of sleep per day, which turns him lethargic and also affects his concentration. Several other drivers said traffic jams, queues at toll plazas and the pressure of on-time delivery of goods are also causing sleeplessness. "We can't sleep by the road since we fear someone may steal diesel, spare parts or goods," one of them added. Speaking on the issue, CL Mukati, chairman of National RTO and Traffic Committee of All-India Motor Transport Congress, an umbrella body of truckers, said the idea of sleep screening was a very good one. "The transport department should authorise hospitals to conduct regular health check-ups and sleep screening of truck drivers. If a driver is found to be suffering from any sleep-related disease as per the test, then he should be treated free of cost. If the government wants, our organisation can provide funds for this," Mukati said. Moreover, the working hours of drivers should be fixed and the government should build rest houses for truck drivers every 200 kilometres on the highways, he added.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri is likely to brief the Parliamentary panel on external affairs on Wednesday on the India-Canada ties, which have taken a hit after Canadian officials accused Indian government functionaries of ordering the murder of pro-Khalistani terrorist Harjeet Singh Nijjar. Misri is also likely to brief the parliamentary panel on the recent upswing in India's ties with China following the agreement to resume patrolling at friction points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. India's relationship with Canada has taken a hit after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau linked top Indian officials to the murder of Nijjar, a charge rubbished by New Delhi. Canada's Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister David Morrison had alleged on Tuesday that Home Minister Amit Shah ordered a



campaign of violence, intimidation and intelligence-gathering targeting Sikh separatists inside Canada, a charge dismissed as "absurd and baseless" by India. India has been maintaining that the main issue between the two countries is that of Canada giving space to pro-Khalistan elements operating from Canadian soil with impunity. India had withdrawn its High Commissioner to Canada Sanjay Verma after the security officials there named him as a "person of interest" in the investigation in Nijjar's murder case. India had also expelled six Canadian diplomats, including acting

High Commissioner Stewart Ross Wheeler on October 14. On October 25, Misri had briefed the Parliamentary panel on the Israel-Palestine conflict and asserted that India favoured a two-state solution to the issue. India has supported a negotiated two-state solution, towards establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable state of Palestine within secure and recognised borders, living side by side in peace with Israel. The Parliamentary panel on External Affairs, chaired by former union minister Shashi Tharoor, is examining the demand for grants of the External Affairs Ministry.

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

PTI ■ WAYANAD

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who held a joint meeting with his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra here as part of the campaign for the upcoming Lok Sabha bypoll, on Sunday refrained from criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi and others but spoke more about the family and his sister, who is the party candidate in Wayanad. He said Priyanka, during her speech, had already spoken about PM Modi. "And, anyway, she has already mentioned Mr. Modi and we all bored of him. Then why mention him twice," Rahul Gandhi said during the meeting. Priyanka, who spoke earlier, accused PM Modi of favoring big business interests over the well-being of the people. "In this meeting, I have a choice in front of me to either give a political message or a speech I would give to my family members. I would rather speak to you like I speak to my family. I would like to give a speech more about the candidate herself,"



Rahul Gandhi said addressing the rally. My sister has always been a campaigner. She never stood for election. That should tell you something about her character, he said. Sharing their nostalgic memories of childhood when they competed with each other using the cameras gifted by their father (late Rajiv Gandhi) for capturing the best photograph, he said, "I still don't remember who won the competition.. Ok.. She (Priyanka) is now saying that I won." He said Priyanka had travelled a long distance from

the little girl taking the photographs. "She understands that the beauty is that everyone has millions and millions of labels, every single person is unique, everything is unique someone might see weakness, she'll see strength that is my sister," the Leader of Opposition said. Rahul Gandhi also said that Priyanka can do more roles than him. The by-election for Wayanad LS seat became necessary after Rahul Gandhi, who won the Lok Sabha polls from there and Rae Bareilly constituency, decided to vacate Wayanad.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHUBANESHWAR

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Sunday said his Government is concerned about the Mahanadi water dispute with neighbouring Chhattisgarh. Majhi said he has already held discussions with his Chhattisgarh counterpart Vishnu Deo Sai twice on the Mahanadi water dispute. While replying to a media query in Bolangir, Majhi said the State Government is conscious about the issue and giving it all importance. "Discussion on the Mahanadi issue is going on and I personally held discussions with the Chhattisgarh chief minister twice during courtesy meetings," said Majhi, who is in charge of the Water Resources Department. The CM further said that the state government is also giving emphasis on expediting the proposed barrages, dam projects on Mahanadi river in Odisha. Majhi, who was on a two-day visit to Bolangir district for the first time after becoming the Chief Minister of Odisha, alleged that the previous BJD government had neglected the district even though there



was no dearth of strong political leadership in Bolangir. During the press conference, he said that 83 development projects worth Rs 890 crore have been either inaugurated or foundation stone was laid in Bolangir district on Saturday. The foundation stone of the Upper Lanth irrigation project in Belpara block of the district was laid by the CM on Saturday. The upper Lanth irrigation project is proposed across river Lanth, a tributary of Tel river. The project after completion will provide irrigation to 15,000 acres of land in 25 villages and 38,000 farmers of Belpada will benefit from it, he said. Among the projects inaugurated by Majhi included a Sub-Divisional Hospital (SDH) and a dialysis centre at Patnagarh and Titlagarh.

He also laid the foundation stone of a bypass road for Patnagarh town. Majhi said Bolangir district will be developed as one of the best districts in the state as the BJP government has been taking several initiatives for the development of the district. Deputy Chief Minister K V Singh Deo who hails from Bolangir district will review the projects every month for its timely completion, he said. Odisha alleges that it does not receive sufficient water from the Mahanadi river during non-monsoon months as Chhattisgarh obstructs the flow of the water by constructing barrages upstream. The previous Naveen Patnaik had moved the Supreme Court in this matter in 2016. The Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal was constituted in 2018, following orders of the Supreme Court.



## Goa to showcase regenerative and spiritual tourism at World Travel Mart in London

PTI ■ PANAJI

Goa will participate in the upcoming World Travel Mart in London and highlight regenerative and spiritual tourism in the coastal state and the exposition of the relics of St Francis Xavier, an official said on Sunday. The three-day event from November 5 to 7 will bring together industry leaders from around the globe, offering Goa a prime opportunity to present its distinctive tourism experiences and innovative sustainable travel initiatives on an international platform, a spokesperson from the tourism department said. "The Goa tourism pavilion

will offer a vivid showcase of the state's vibrant festivals, adventure pursuits, heritage traditions, and tranquil beaches that together shape its unique identity as a travel destination," he said. State Tourism Director Suneel Anchipaka said the highlight of this year's participation is the concept of regenerative tourism, a step beyond sustainability that focuses on actively revitalising and enhancing Goa's natural and cultural treasures. "The display will feature initiatives like hinterland tourism, preservation of heritage sites, wellness tourism centred around Ayurveda, and Goa's

emerging prominence as a destination for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) and wedding events," he said. These initiatives aim to benefit local communities and ensure that the environment is preserved for future generations, he said. Anchipaka said the pavilion will also present the Ekadasha Teertha Circuit, a spiritual exploration of the 11 historic temples in Goa. "The exposition of St Francis Xavier will also be one of the highlights. The exposition will be held from November 21 to January 5, 2025, at Old Goa," he said.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RANCHI

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

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

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



would be implemented, it will ensure that tribal rights are not impacted. "The BJP, if voted to power in Jharkhand, will deliberate on the Sarna religious code issue, and take appropriate decisions," he said. Shah said the saffron party, if voted to power, will create five lakh employment opportunities, including 2.87 lakh government jobs, in Jharkhand. The Home Minister said that BJP will bring in a law to take back land from infiltrators in Jharkhand and identify and deport the illegal immigrants. He claimed that 'Mati, Bети, Roti' (land, daughter and food) were under threat from the illegal immigrants and the BJP would provide security to the indigenous people. The local administrations encourage infiltration in West Bengal and

Jharkhand, Shah alleged. "Crimes against women rose by 29 per cent during the five year tenure of corrupt and insensitive Hemant Soren government, while rape cases saw an increase of 42 per cent during the period," Shah alleged. He accused the JMM-led government of patronising infiltrators, while claiming that the tribal population was dwindling in the state and demography was changing fast. Shah promised that the BJP will bring in a stringent law to take back land from infiltrators in Jharkhand as well as to drive them out. He announced 'Operation Suraksha', promising to end human trafficking in Jharkhand by 2027, besides the elimination of Naxalism from the state in the next two years. Shah said voters will have to

choose between the "corrupt JMM government that patronises infiltrators" and the BJP which doesn't allow anyone to cross the border illegally. "Hindus are under attack and appeasement is at its peak. Jharkhand is the most corrupt state in the country," he alleged. There will be CBI and SIT probes into "paper leaks" in competitive exams in Jharkhand and culprits will be put behind the bars, he said. The manifesto provides that Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission-Combined Graduate Level (JSSC-CGL) Competitive Exam will be cancelled and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) will investigate the previous CGL exams and all major paper leak cases. Besides, it promises to make Jharkhand the hub of eco-tourism in the country. "We will set up 10 new medical colleges in the state. We will increase the coverage under Ayushman Bharat Jeevan Dhara Yojana from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh for elderly persons aged over 70 years. We will increase the number of beds in primary health centres and community health centres by 25,000," he

added. Shah promised that the poor in the state will be provided with houses if the BJP comes to power in the Jharkhand. A total of 21 lakh houses will be constructed under PM Awas Yojana, while elderly, widows and persons with disabilities will get Rs 2,500 as monthly pension, he added. Under the Matritva Suraksha Yojana, every pregnant woman will be given six nutrition kits and assistance of Rs 21,000, while free education will be provided from "KG to PG" to girls from poor and backward communities, he said. "Hemant Soren is sitting on the lap of Congress and RJD. He is asking for Rs 1.36 lakh-crore coal dues from the Centre. I want to make it clear that the UPA government gave only Rs 84,000 crore grant-in-aid between 2004 and 2014 whereas Prime Minister Modi gave Rs 3.08 lakh-crore from 2014-2024 in addition to funds for infrastructure and rail development," Shah claimed. He said the BJP government will construct 25,000 km of highways and expand rail network to connect every district headquarters with Ranchi.

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

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

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

The party plans to cultivate a renewed culture of resistance against incidents of Dalit oppression. To facilitate this, Congress is preparing to establish vigilance teams at the village panchayat level, enabling immediate reporting of any incidents of oppression to the state headquarters. The party is actively working to forge alliances among Dalit, backward, and minority communities. Following a modest success in the recent Lok Sabha elections, Congress is now focusing its efforts on the upcoming 2027 assembly elections. Sushil Pasi, the former state president of the Scheduled Castes Department, has been appointed as the national secretary and given the responsibility of co-in-charge for Bihar. After successfully engaging the

Pasi community, the party has devised a strategy to connect with the Harijan community. After deliberations on various candidates, senior party leaders have turned their attention to Tanuj Puniya. His appointment is seen as a way to send a positive message to his community while leveraging his youth appeal to attract Dalit youth from other castes. Furthermore, as an MP, Puniya will be able to raise issues related to Dalit oppression in the Lok Sabha, applying pressure on officials to address these matters. His status as an MP is also expected to enhance his ability to connect with a broader youth audience. This initiative will serve as a litmus test for the Congress party in 2027. After his appointment, Tanuj Puniya expressed his desire for any incidents of Dalit oppression in villages to be reported immediately to the state headquarters. He noted that many incidents are often suppressed locally for various reasons. To combat this, the Scheduled Castes cell plans to set up vigilance teams in every village to monitor and report

incidents of oppression. Depending on the situation, a team from the state headquarters will be dispatched to the site of the incident for an on-ground assessment. The findings will not only be submitted to the government but also made public, which is expected to enhance trust in the party and reduce instances of oppression. Puniya also announced plans to conduct training programs to disseminate the ideas of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, ensuring that young people are aware of their rights and duties as outlined in the Constitution. The newly appointed state president of the Scheduled Castes Department, Tanuj Puniya, brings a wealth of organizational experience. He is the son of PL Puniya, a former Rajya Sabha member who transitioned from the All India Administrative Service to politics. After earning an IIT degree, Tanuj stepped into the political arena to carry forward his father's legacy. Following a setback in the assembly elections, he successfully contested the Lok Sabha elections from Barabanki in 2024.

# Kedarnath temple closes for winters amid Vedic rituals



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ DEHRADUN

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

# BJP unanimously elects Sunil Sharma as leader of legislative party

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

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

The House will meet after a gap of more than six years on Monday, with the last session held in early 2018, a year before the reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories. Stringent security measures have been put in place for the assembly session. 47-year-old Sharma, who won from the Padder Nagseni Assembly constituency in Kishtwar, is set to assume the role of the leader of the opposition for the first time in the legislative assembly.

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi and BJP General Secretary Tarun Chugh were appointed central observers by the BJP's parliamentary board to elect the leader of the legislature party. Interacting with the media persons in Srinagar Sunil Sharma said, the BJP is set to play the role of a constructive opposition in the Assembly. Sharma said he is grateful to the party's central and state leadership for giving him this responsibility. "With the help, experience, and blessings of my MLA colleagues, I will discharge



my duties. Keeping in mind the party policies and aspirations of the people, we will be the voice of the people in the assembly and outside as well," he said. Asked about his priorities in the assembly, Sharma said, "I have just been appointed. The battle will start tomorrow. We have to see where the enemy is hiding and we will attack accordingly." Meanwhile, the party has announced its leader Narinder Singh will be the candidate for the post of deputy speaker in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly. On the other hand, Veteran National Conference leader and seven-time MLA from Charar-e-Sharif Abdul Rahim Rather is likely to become the first speaker of the legislative assembly of the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. According to the provisional calendar for the session issued by the Assembly Secretariat, the House will elect the speaker in the first sitting on Monday.

# BJP's Madhya Pradesh unit chief Vishnu Dutt Sharma's future uncertain

GIRISH SHARMA ■ BHOPAL

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

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

Though the party has provided two-year extensions in certain circumstances. As per the party constitution, a leader can be state president for two consecutive terms, and there are strong possibilities of Sharma being re-elected after he goes through the election process.

However, the fact is that since 2006, the state unit presidents have either been Brahmins or Thakurs. In 2006, the trend started when Satyanarayan Jatia took over as state president for nine months, succeeding Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Since then, those who have remained in this top party position in Madhya Pradesh are Narendra Singh Tomar (two terms), Prabhat Jha, Nandkumar Singh



Chouhan, and Rakesh Singh. Political observers feel that when state assembly or Lok Sabha elections are not near, the party might decide to elect a Dalit leader for the post. Sources claimed that as per the constitution, the state president is elected through an election process, but there have also been instances when the BJP Central Command has replaced old faces with new ones, based on prevailing political circumstances. The process for the organizational election of the Bharatiya Janata Party has commenced, and the entire process is scheduled for completion by the end of December. At present, the process of making active members has

# Two succumb to burns in Kasaragod temple firecracker explosion



PNS ■ KOCHI

Two persons who had suffered more than 40 per cent burns in the firecracker explosion in a temple in Kasaragod district on 29th October succumbed to their injuries on Sunday, according to the district administration. The deceased have been identified as 38-year-old Sandeep, an autorickshaw driver who had suffered 45 per cent burns and Ratheesh, a barber who had suffered more than 60 per cent burns in the firecracker explosion. Ratheesh was on life support system and the end came early Sunday morning. A total of 154 persons were injured in the blast out of which 98 are still undergoing treatment in various hospitals in the districts of Mangalore (Karnataka), Kannur, Kozhikode and Kasaragod. Firecrackers worth Rs 24,000 were stored in a room near the temple where a Theyyam (a traditional ritual common

in the districts of Kannur and Kasaragod) festival was taking place. The mishap occurred when the crackers were burst at a distance of hardly 2 meters from the shed where the explosives were stored. The police team investigating the case said that the crackers were burst in violation of the safety rules and guidelines prescribed by the explosive authorities. The Kasaragod district police have registered a case against the festival committee members under sections 288, 125 (a), 125 (b), 3(5) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, 3(a) and 6 of the Explosive Substances Act which pertain to negligent conduct with respect to explosive substance, act endangering life or personal safety of others, acts performed rashly, or negligently that endanger human life or personal safety and acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention.

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

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid reports about the import of 22 lakh bales of cotton and the consequent concerns about the potential fall in the prices of the domestic cotton, the Maharashtra Congress has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to impose immediate ban on the import of cotton and direct the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) to purchase cotton at the guaranteed price. In a letter written to the Prime Minister in the run-up to the November 20 State Assembly polls, Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole said that despite Maharashtra - which is home to over 40 lakh cotton farmers, having produced substantial cotton this year, the reports of the country importing 22 lakh of cotton had sparked concerns among the cotton farmers about the potential fall in the domestic cotton prices. "This import, combined with 11 lakh unsold bales held by the Cotton Corporation of

India (CCI), threatens to destabilise the cotton market and undermine the livelihood of farmers of Maharashtra," Patole stated. Patole said that currently, the cotton was being sold anywhere from Rs 6,500 and Rs 6,600 per quintal, which is below the Minimum Support Price (MSP), of Rs 7,122 per quintal of cotton. He said that owing to this low market price, farmers had so far chosen not to sell their produce, in the hope of a better price in the near future. "However, the impending import of 22 lakh bales threatens to lower demand for locally produced cotton, suppressing prices further and negating any chance of an increase, the State Congress chief said. "Maharashtra produces approx. 80 lakh bales of cotton every year. A fresh influx of 22 lakh bales, i.e., over one-fourth of the overall cotton produced in our state, will create severe market imbalance and destabilise the cotton economy of

Maharashtra," Patole said. Explaining the gravity of the situation, Patole said that the cotton farmers were already vulnerable, facing challenges from low prices, high input costs due to 12 to 18 percent of GST imposition on agricultural inputs and unseasonal rains. "Maharashtra has faced severe crop damage, with over 19 lakh hectares being damaged due to the retreating monsoon and unseasonal storms. The compensation announced by the Centre remains on paper, while the PM Fasal Bima Yojana only serves to fill the coffers of the insurance companies," he said. The State Congress chief said that in the current precarious situation, "the Centre's failure to curb huge amounts of cotton imports, despite CCI's existing stockpile of 11 lakh unsold bales, shows that the Centre is more concerned about traders' profit margins over the survival of the hardworking farmers of Maharashtra".

# Incidents of rape and murder plague Bengal, five rapes in three days

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal continued to quickly escalate the ladder towards becoming what the Opposition and sociologists called - a "rape capital" of India with sexual offences against women, particularly the minors taking place almost on a daily basis. Even a sustained three-month 'apolitical' movement' bringing life in Kolkata and Siliguri almost to a standstill seemed to have failed to knock sense in the police administration and the criminals, the critics say. "Bengal is fast turning out to be a rape capital of India... the criminals are confident that there is nothing that the police can do to them because the top political leadership is backing them," said Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Manoranjan Byapari. Cut to North 24 Parganas. On Saturday, a man was arrested for raping a nine-year-old girl in Gaighata area of the district. Local BJP MLA Subrata Thakur said, "The family members of the accused along

with the local Trinamool Congress leaders are threatening the victim's family." The local TMC leader Prasenjit Ghosh denied such charges. Shift to North Bengal. Friday's incident at Gaighata took place within 24 hours of another minor girl being raped in a similar manner at Kumargram in Alipurduar district. The girl was abducted and raped in a nearby forest while she was bathing in a river. The culprit was arrested on Saturday, police SP Y Raghuvangshi said. The Kumargram incident followed a rape and murder that took place at Falakata a few miles away in the same district where a toddler was raped and murdered on Thursday by two persons one of who - a 42-year-old man - was lynched by the locals while his accomplice was subsequently arrested, sources said. The local people had been staging a Kolkata-like movement, blocking roads for the past two days in demand of justice for the

victim. Back to South Bengal. A similar incident took place at Domkal in Murshidabad district a middle-aged person was on Saturday arrested on charges of raping a seven-year-old minor girl. Locals said the reportedly to be the grand uncle of the victim lured her with chocolates inside his room and there raped her on Thursday night. A similar report was reported from nearby Burdwan district where a school girl was raped on Saturday sources said. Domkal happened a within hours of a newlywed woman being snatched away from her husband and gangraped in the wee hours of Friday under an overpass at Kalyanai in Nadia district. Four accused, all auto drivers have been arrested in that connection. The successive incidents took place within a few weeks of a rape and murder 10-year-old girl taking place at Mahishmari village in Kultiailoipur district in South 24 Parganas district. The locals went on a rampage soon after the incident torched the local

police station alleging the police refused to act on time when the parents reported the incident. A similar incident took place the next week a few miles away at Gosaba where a 60-year-old man raped a minor and was subsequently arrested while both the incidents. The back-to-back incidents took place last month almost within a week of a many being lynched at Patashpur village in East Midnapore for raping and poisoning to death a housewife, sources said. Alleging police inaction the angry neighbours dragged the alleged culprit out of his house and clubbed him to death, police said. With the frequent incidents of rape - in some places accompanied with murder - taking place in the backdrop of a sustained movement post the rape and murder of a postgraduate lady doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital the sociologists have joined the opposition politicians in condemning the lackadaisical approach of the

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



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**PAPER WITH PASSION**

## Bangladesh protests

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

Tens of thousands of minority Hindus in Bangladesh took to the streets on Friday, demanding immediate protection from ongoing violence and harassment following the recent political upheaval. The protests, primarily held in the southeastern city of Chattogram, saw around 30,000 Hindus gather, raising slogans for justice and security. The demonstrations were heavily guarded by police and military personnel, as Hindu community leaders urged the interim Government to intervene amid rising attacks on their community. The protests follow a series of reported attacks against the Hindu minority, which has been particularly vulnerable since the overthrow of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's secular government in August. After Hasina's departure, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus was appointed to lead an Interim Government, which has faced criticism for its alleged inability to maintain order and protect minority groups. The influential Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council claims that over 2,000 attacks on Hindus have occurred since August, a period marked by escalating violence from hard-line Islamist groups. Hindus represent approximately 8 per cent of Bangladesh's population of nearly 170 million, while the Muslim majority makes up around 91 per cent. Despite being a significant minority, Hindu communities say they are inadequately protected and often targeted amid political and social instability. The unrest has also affected other groups; reports indicate that supporters of Hasina's Awami League party and its ally, the Jatiya Party, have faced violence as well. The recent spike in violence has sparked international concern. United Nations human rights officials, along with



Protesters demand justice for the violence against Hindus in Bangladesh.

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

### PICTALK



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

# America decides: Will Kamala make history

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



KALYANI SHANKAR

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

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

It is no surprise that the campaign has been not only highly negative but also personal, with Trump attacking his rival, hitting her below the belt and calling her "dumb." While the reports claim that the fight is very tight, with Trump leading now and Kamala making up her lead, the suspense will continue for a few more days, even after the election date. The Electoral College is the system that decides presidential elections: A candidate must secure at least 270 votes - allocated by state based on the outcome of their respective vote - to win the White House. Although certification sabotage has not yet resulted in such an extensive delay, many attempts have been made before. County election boards generally have no legal authority to investigate any allegations of fraud or irregularities. Tight races in crucial battleground states in 2020 and an increase in mail-in voting amid the COVID pandemic saw prolonged vote counts. That helped fuel unfounded claims of election malfeasance pushed by Trump and his allies. State election law provides other checks and safeguards through which suspected



irregularities can be adjudicated. These mechanisms are designed to resolve disputes. Extended delays in county-level certification could run against deadlines for certifying statewide results. According to the Associated Press, the winner will likely not be projected for days. However, states and the whole election results are typically "called" long before final votes are counted. In 2020, President Joe Biden won. The result was called for four days after November 3, when Pennsylvania's result was confirmed. The state gave Biden 20 electoral college votes, taking over the 270 required to win. In 2016, Hillary Clinton conceded to Trump the morning after the election. With the presidential contest in the final countdown and Harris and Trump maligning the opponent, the vice president has called Trump dangerous. Harris insists she's doing both - establishing a contrast with Trump and laying out her agenda on the economy, immigration and more. She says "It's either Donald Trump in there, stewing over his enemies list, or me working for you, checking off my to-do list." Trump is relentless in attack-



IT IS NO SURPRISE THAT THE CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN NOT ONLY HIGHLY NEGATIVE BUT ALSO PERSONAL, WITH TRUMP ATTACKING HIS RIVAL, HITTING HER BELOW THE BELT AND CALLING HER "DUMB"

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

According to the latest reports, Harris leads Trump by four points, 51 per cent-47 per cent, in an ABC/Ipsos of likely voters released Sunday. This is up slightly from her 50 per cent-48 per cent edge in early October. Meanwhile, a CBS/YouGov survey out Sunday shows Harris up 50 per cent-49 per cent, a shift from the vice president's 51 per cent-48 per cent lead in mid-October. According to FiveThirtyEight's election forecast, Trump is favoured to win 54 times out of 100, compared to 46 for Harris. As for the campaign spending, Harris routed Trump in fundraising for their official campaigns in September by pulling in \$222 million compared to the Republican's \$63 million. Those numbers are down from the same period in 2020 when Biden raised \$281 million and Trump raised \$81 million.

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

digital advertising and dominated cable and radio advertising, which tracks campaign advertising spending.

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

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

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### TRUMP'S BANGLADESH CONCERN

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

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

Actually, this is not the love of Trump towards Hindus and minorities. This is just a political stunt with a view to lure the Indian population (a significant number in the United States now and very much capable of swinging the outcome of this tightly balanced election of 2024) in the US to vote for him in the Presidential election and nothing else. He is not that generous towards Indians as he is attempting to show. By nature, Trump is a bit of a dictator and is against the people migrating to the United States from various other countries. He terms migrated people as "Garbage". Whatsoever, we should not want to forget that it was the US (read CIA) who purporting the coup along with ISI to destabilise the region. US has always been and will be doing these things in future. Hence, don't take his love for Hindus seriously.

**Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad**

#### ERIGAI'S NATURAL GAME

Madam - Ever had so many Indian chess players shine on international circuit simultaneously like the present bunch of

### Adieu Bibek Debroy!



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

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

**Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur**

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

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

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

**Ganpathi Bhat | Akola**

#### US SANCTIONS ON INDIAN COMPANIES

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

**Anshu Bharti | Begusarai**

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## Art and literature: An imperative than a choice for students

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

Many decades ago, when I opted to take literature in college, at a time when many of my peers chose science, people raised their brows. It was believed to be the choice of the mediocre, a subject that didn't need much of an intellect or dedication. It was where students who didn't secure a seat in prime areas finally settled. Art and literature weren't considered durable then. Neither is it given much weightage now by parents. Creative pursuits are still categorised as hobbies, and they get sidelined as children reach higher grades or enter college. Why? Because art is not sustainable. It is not lucrative. It doesn't build careers as easily as a degree in science, technology or accounting does. There still may be some truth in that contention prompting parents to wean off their children from extracurricular activities as the race to the future heats up. But the role of creative activities in providing our children with a respite from the stress of career-building cannot be undermined. At a time when they are grappling with the chal-



lenges of higher education, what might bring them respite from their anxieties are artistic endeavours. It is often in the lines of a sketch or the verses of a poem that children find a voice beyond words—a silent yet powerful release of their inner thoughts and emotions. In a world that measures success by exams and marks, these activities provide a refuge, where the mind is free to wander, explore, and create without boundaries. Studies have consistently shown that students who engage in painting, writing, music, dance or theatre experience lower stress levels than those who do not. These activities act as a counterbalance to the rigid schedules and deadlines that studies impose, allowing children to unwind and channel their

energies into something entirely their own. One of the often overlooked merits of art and literature is the development of emotional intelligence. When children immerse themselves in stories, they begin to understand complex emotions, both their own and those of others. A novel might teach empathy, while a piece of music might mirror feelings they struggle to articulate. These moments foster self-awareness, which is critical in today's fast-paced world where young people are grappling with social pressures and academic demands. These creative pursuits don't just make children more empathetic; they also teach them to become aware of their inner world—a skill that will serve them well beyond the walls of a classroom. In those moments when they feel overwhelmed, they can turn to the comfort of a favourite book, the joy of drawing, or the calm of journaling. It becomes a personal ritual, a way to recharge and refresh, like finding shelter from the storm within the pages of a story or the hues of a canvas. Extracurricular

activities such as dance, music, fine art and creative writing are not mere pastimes; they are crucibles where life skills are forged. Problem-solving, adaptability, and innovation—all essential skills in adulthood—find their roots in these pursuits. Children learn patience through practice, resilience through failure, and confidence through expression, creating a sturdy foundation that will support them through life's inevitable challenges. Parents and educators must recognise the role these activities play in a child's mental and emotional development. Fostering a balanced approach between academics and extracurricular interests can create resilient individuals who are not only high achievers but also happy, healthy humans. As life's pressures mount, these creative expressions transform into anchors, grounding us in times of stress and rekindling the joy we may have set aside in the haste of growing up.

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



ASHA IYER KUMAR



## FIRST COLUMN

## FINDING STILLNESS AMIDST A FLOOD OF THOUGHTS

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



RAVI VALLURI

Sometime back I had written a piece on "Mind Management" and received certain queries about the generation of multiple thoughts and the acceptance by people that the mind was not at ease. It was frightening and troubling that several people of various age groups were plagued by all kinds of negative thoughts. People were troubled by thoughts arising during the whole day and particularly at night time. Thoughts arising at bedtime reside with us and seep deep into our consciousness and the following morning we are again troubled by those very thoughts and are not like fresh dew on petals. The Ashtavakra Gita says that "all action resides in the mind" and this is further corroborated by modern science. Modern science amplifies that there is no difference in the activity of the mind; whether you slap someone or merely think of slapping someone. It is the brain's limbic system, which is where motor control gets expressed. Just thinking of slapping someone activates all muscles that would be employed to undertake that specific action. On average, we are bombarded by 60 thousand thoughts a day. And we seem to have no control over them. These thoughts arise on account of our memory bank (past impressions and Karma), the company we keep, past and current experiences and also the food that we partake in. According to the Ashtavakra Gita, enlightenment occurs only when we live in our hearts. The heart is synonymous with a point of inflexion where there is no past or future. There is only one present. Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar says that "the present moment is inevitable". And this state is true enlightenment. How does one reach that state of



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

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

The younger monk was greatly troubled by this act of his senior. He kept chiding the senior monk, literally accusing him of what he perceived as an act of sacrilege. The older one just smiled and remarked that he carried the lady across the river and left her there, while the other monk was still carrying the lady in his mind. Practising pranayama, Sudarshan Kriya, yoga, undertaking vigorous exercise, pursuing hobbies, contemplating, praying, observing nature and just being a spectator or a witness will also help a seeker and those with troubled minds to live in the present moment. Confucius says, "Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated."

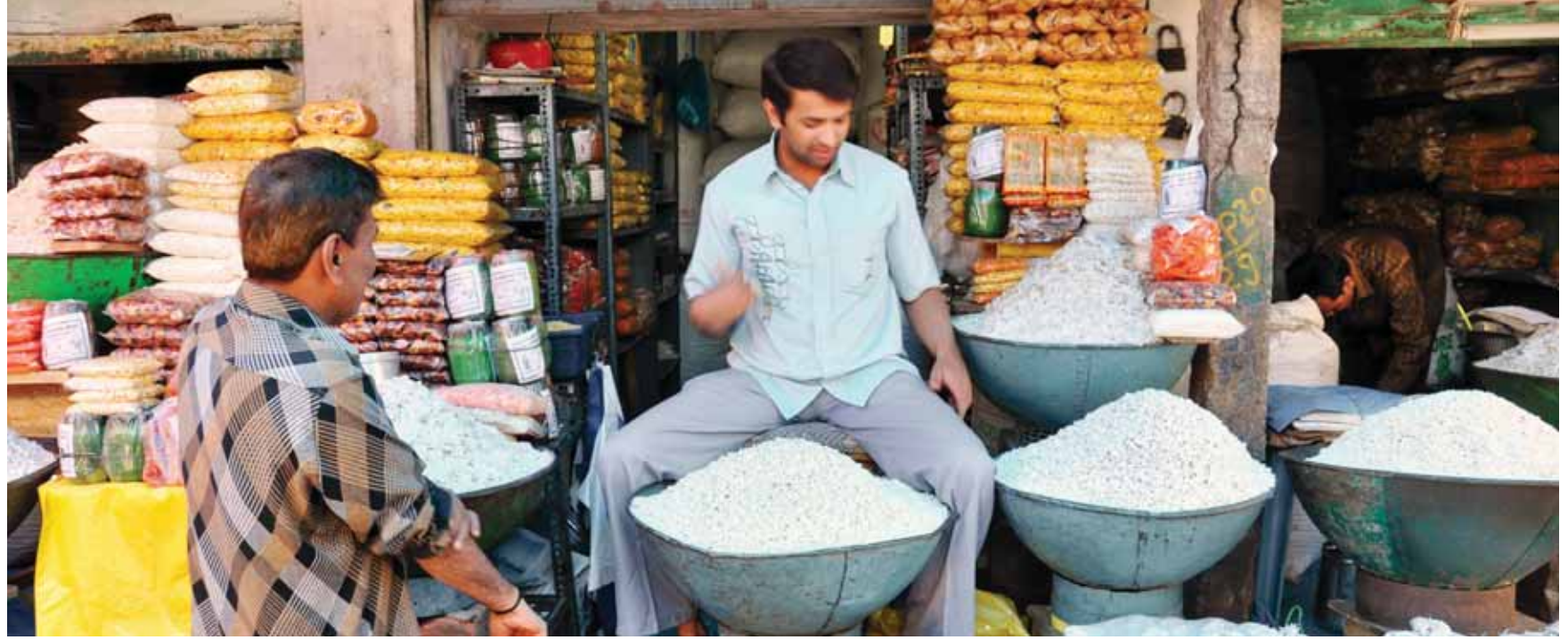
(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

## Food subsidy reforms: Can Govt tackle mounting costs



UTTAM GUPTA

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



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

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

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

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



**IN THE PAST, THANKS TO INADEQUATE BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS, THE GOVERNMENT'S PAYMENTS TO FCI HAD FALLEN SHORT, FORCING THE LATTER TO TAKE RECOURSE TO WORKING CAPITAL FROM BANKS TO SUSTAIN OPERATIONS**

credit limits sanctioned by the banks proved to be inadequate. This prompted the FCI to even borrow funds from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF). The NSSF is a public account (established on April 1, 1999) where all deposits received under National Saving Schemes are credited. All withdrawals by depositors are made out of the accumulations in this Fund. Normally, the government is not expected to use the NSSF to meet its revenue expenditure and expenses on food subsidy fall in this category. Yet, it encouraged the FCI to encroach on the Fund to plug the shortfall in its receipts. When the FCI started taking loans from NSSF in FY 2016-17, the Centre had committed to release the subsidy arrears to enable FCI to pay back the loans in subsequent years. But, that was not to be as subsidy arrears kept mounting, and FCI continued borrowing increasingly from NSSF. At the end of 2018-19, FCI's cumulative borrowing from NSSF was Rs 200,000 crore. This continued into 2019-20 on a much larger scale. In that year's budget, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had kept the BE for food subsidy at Rs 184,000 crore and drastically reduced it to Rs 109,000 crore in the revised estimate (RE) just because she wanted to keep the FD close to the target. Against this, the requirement being Rs 219,000 crore, the shortfall of Rs 110,000 crore was made up by FCI borrowing from NSSF. In the budget for 2020-21, she kept BE at Rs 116,000 crore against the requirement of Rs 137,000 crore. TV Somanathan, the then expenditure secretary, saw nothing wrong in the above practice arguing that borrowings by FCI were against the assets it held in the form of food stocks. The argument was flawed since loans

were taken against subsidy receivable from the Centre. In the case of wheat, for instance, on every kilo sold under the National Food Security (NFSA), the subsidy was Rs 23 (MSP plus HDC of Rs 25 minus Rs 2 being the price paid by the beneficiary). The loan was given against this amount promised by the Centre. This liability couldn't be adjusted against the food stock, which, on giving to the NFSA beneficiary would fetch only Rs 2. The Secretary further argued that keeping these borrowings off the Centre's balance sheet would prevent crowding out, and help the private sector borrow from the market at a lower interest cost. This needed to be weighed against erosion in the credibility of fiscal consolidation, which is inevitable when a strict liability of the Centre is kept off its balance sheet. A wrong can't be justified simply because the honest course of reflecting the liability in the Union budget would lead to problems for private firms. The government recognised the flaw in the above approach even as Sitharaman made a course correction while presenting the budget for FY 2021-22. In the RE for FY 2020-21, she provided for a massive allocation of Rs 529,000 crore. That amount included Rs 462,000 crore towards payment of subsidy to the FCI against a claim of Rs 216,000 crore by the latter. The excess amount was used by the FCI to extinguish all its accumulated liabilities to the NSSF. During 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24, the government stayed on course with allocation for food subsidy at Rs 372,000 crore, Rs 287,000 crore, and Rs 211,394 crore respectively adequate to fully cover the requirement. As for payments to the FCI, during 2021-22, the subsidy received was Rs 208,000 crore against the claim of Rs 207,000

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

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

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

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

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

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



H S CHHABRA

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

functionality. Visibility and precision are paramount in spinal microsurgery. The ability to maintain a clear view of the surgical area with magnification is crucial, as it allows surgeons to operate with accuracy while providing adequate illumination. Traditionally, microscopes have been the gold standard in such complex procedures, offering the depth of field and lighting necessary to navigate intricate anatomical structures. However, the limitations of traditional microscopes—primarily the fixed head position required for prolonged periods—often lead to neck and back strain for surgeons. Unlike traditional microscopes, exoscopes are equipped with high-definition cameras and 3D viewing

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

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



side the operating room, which is particularly valuable in teaching hospitals and cases that require multidisciplinary input. By reducing the physical toll on surgeons and offering digital connectivity, the exoscope is paving the way for better, more collaborative care in spinal surgery. The inclusion of AI in spinal surgery is another game-changer, with the potential to reshape the field by allowing for data-driven insights and

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

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

technology can analyse past surgeries to predict potential complications and suggest the most effective treatment paths, offering a personalised, data-backed approach to surgical care. Furthermore, AI-driven analytics have the potential to predict patient outcomes based on prior cases, guiding surgeons on probable recovery trajectories and aiding patient consultations. ISSICON 2024's workshops reflected this commitment to enabling technologies by providing participants with hands-on experience in emerging techniques, such as robotic and navigation-assisted spine surgery and robotic-assisted rehabilitation. The conference was aligned with the World Health Organisation's Rehabilitation 2030 initiative, reinforcing a

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

(Dr H S Chhabra is president of the Spinal Cord Society, director of Spine & Rehabilitation Services at the Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute, and Chairman of the ISSICON 2024 Organizing Committee; views are personal)

# Khamenei threatens Israel, US with ‘a crushing response’

AP ■ DUBAI

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

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei spoke as Iranian officials are increasingly threatening to launch yet another strike against Israel after its October 26 attack on the Islamic Republic that targeted military bases and other locations and killed at least five people. Any further attacks from either side could engulf the wider Middle East, already teetering over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip and Israel's ground invasion of Lebanon, into a wider regional conflict just ahead of the US presidential election this Tuesday. "The enemies, whether the Zionist regime or the United States of America, will definitely receive a crushing response to what they are doing to Iran and the Iranian nation and to the resistance front," Khamenei said in video released by Iranian state media. The supreme leader did not elaborate on the timing of the threatened attack, nor the scope. The US military operates on bases throughout the Middle East, with some troops now manning a Terminal High

Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, battery in Israel. The USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier likely is in the Arabian Sea, while Pentagon press secretary Maj Gen Pat Ryder said Friday that more destroyers, fighter squadrons, tankers and B-52 long-range bombers would be coming to the region to deter Iran and its militant allies.

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

Iran has launched two major direct attacks on Israel, in April and October. But efforts by Iran to downplay the Israeli attack faltered as satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press showed damage to military bases near Tehran linked to the country's ballistic missile program, as well as at a Revolutionary Guard base used in satellite launches. Iran's allies, called the "Axis of Resistance" by Tehran, also have been severely hurt by ongoing Israeli attacks, partic-



ularly Lebanon's Hezbollah and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Iran long has used those groups as both an asymmetrical way to attack Israel and as a shield against a direct assault. Some analysts believe those groups want Iran to do more to back them militarily. Iran, however, has been dealing with its own problems at home, as its economy struggles under the weight of international sanctions and it has faced years of widespread, multiple protests. After Khamenei's speech, the Iranian rial fell to

691,500 against the dollar, near an all-time low. It had been 32,000 rials to the dollar when Tehran reached its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

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

"The leaders of the Zionist regime should look out from the windows of their bedrooms and protect their criminal pilots within their small territory," he warned. Israeli air force pilots appear to have used air-launched ballistic missiles in the Oct. 26 attack. Khamenei on Saturday met with university students to mark Students Day, which commemorates a Nov. 4, 1978, incident in which Iranian soldiers opened fire on students protesting the rule of the shah at Tehran University. The shooting killed and wounded several students and further escalated the tensions consuming Iran at the time that eventually led to the shah fleeing the country and the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

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

AP ■ CAIRO

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

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

It was not possible to resolve the conflicting accounts. Israeli forces have repeatedly raided hospitals in Gaza over the course of the war, saying Hamas uses them for militant purposes, allegations denied by Palestinian health officials. Lt Col Nadav Shoshani, an Israeli military spokesman, said that "contrary to the claims, an initial review determined that the (Israeli military) did not strike in the area at the specified time." A scaled-down campaign to administer a second

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

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

At least 100,000 people have been forced to evacuate from areas of north Gaza toward Gaza City in the past few weeks, but around 15,000 children under the age of 10 remain in northern towns, including Jabaliya, Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun, which are inaccessible, according to the UN. The final phase of the polio vaccination campaign had aimed to reach

an estimated 119,000 children in the north with a second dose of oral polio vaccine, the agencies said, but "achieving this target is now unlikely due to access constraints."

They say 90 per cent of children in every community must be vaccinated to prevent the spread of the disease. The campaign was launched after the first polio case was reported in Gaza in 25 years — a 10-month-old boy, now paralysed in the leg.

The World Health Organisation said the presence of a paralysis case indicates there could be hundreds more who have been infected but aren't showing symptoms. The war began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. Israel's offensive has killed over 43,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health authorities, who do not say how many were combatants but say more than half were women and children.

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

## Iranian-American held in Iran: US

AP ■ DUBAI

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

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

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

sages suggesting he had returned to Iran despite Radio Farda being viewed by Iran's theocracy as a hostile outlet. "I arrived in Tehran on March 6, 2024. Before that, I had unfinished negotiations with the (Revolutionary Guard's) intelligence department," the message read in part. "Eventually I came back to my country after 13 years without any security guarantee, even a verbal one."

Valizadeh added the name of a man who he claimed belonged to Iran's Intelligence Ministry. The AP could not verify if the person worked for the ministry. Rumors have been circulating for weeks that Valizadeh had been detained. The Human Rights Activists News Agency, which monitors cases in Iran, said that he had been detained on arrival to the country earlier this year, but later released.

He was then rearrested and sent to Evin prison, where he now faces a case in Iran's Revolutionary Court, which routinely holds closed-door hearings in which defendants in face secret evidence, the agency reported. Valizadeh had faced arrest in 2007 as well, it said. The State Department told the AP that it was "aware of reports

that this dual US-Iranian citizen has been arrested in Iran" when asked about Valizadeh. "We are working with our Swiss partners who serve as the protecting power for the United States in Iran to gather more information about this case," the State Department said.

"Iran routinely imprisons US citizens and other countries' citizens unjustly for political purposes. This practice is cruel and contrary to international law." Iran has not acknowledged detaining Valizadeh. Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The Voice of America, another US government-funded media outlet overseen by the Agency for Global Media, first reported the State Department was acknowledging Valizadeh's detention in Iran.

Since the 1979 U.S. Embassy crisis, which saw dozens of hostages released after 444 days in captivity, Iran has used prisoners with Western ties as bargaining chips in negotiations with the world. In September 2023, five Americans detained for years in Iran were freed in exchange for five Iranians in US custody and for USD 6 billion in frozen

Iranian assets to be released by South Korea. Valizadeh is the first American known to be detained by Iran in the time since.

Meanwhile, Iranian state television aired footage Sunday of different cities across the country marking the anniversary of the embassy takeover. Gen Hossein Salami, the head of the Guard, also spoke in Tehran, where he repeated a pledge made the day before by Khamenei. "The resistance front and Iran will equip itself with whatever necessary to confront and defeat the enemy," he said, referring to the militant groups like Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah backed by Tehran.

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

## Millions of Americans seal their choices in early voting

New York (PTI): The 42 Broadway in New York is an important address in this election season in the US. This is the office of the Board of Elections. Michael Ryan, executive director, and his deputy Vincent Ignizio are upbeat about the figures that the early voting has drawn for the city. On the first day, about 140,000 votes were cast in the early voting.

"We don't want to pat ourselves on the back but we are upbeat about this. New York has already created a record in early voting and it is still on," says Ryan. Across the United States, tens of millions of voters have already cast their ballots. According to the data from the University of Florida's Election Lab tracker, more than 68 million Americans have already voted. Across the nation, voters are taking advantage of the flexibility offered by early voting options, whether through mail-in ballots or in-person polling sites.

This trend allows voters to avoid potential issues such as inclement weather, long queues, or unforeseen scheduling conflicts on election day. Ryan feels that several factors played a role in ensuring the positive trend in early voting, at least for New York City (NYC). "In 2020 less than 100 polling stations were set up for early voting. This year the number is almost 50 per cent more than that," says Ryan. An early voting station has been set up at the John Jay College in the Manhattan area of NYC. The station is packed with voters coming in and casting their ballots days ahead of the main election day on November 5. Suzan, the coordinator of the station, feels the early voting process is witnessing a very positive response.

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

AP ■ NEW YORK

Vice President Kamala Harris made a surprise appearance on "Saturday Night Live" in the final days before the election, playing herself as the mirror-image double of Maya Rudolph's version of her in the show's cold open. The first lines the candidate spoke as she sat across from Rudolph, their outfits identical, was drowned out by cheers from the audience.

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

Harris made the surprise trip to New York City with the election looming, briefly stepping away from the battleground states where she's been furiously campaigning in favor of

NBC's iconic sketch comedy show, where she was hoping to generate buzz and appeal to a nationwide audience. Harris came to New York on Air Force Two after an early evening campaign stop Saturday in Charlotte, North Carolina. She was scheduled to head to Detroit, but once in the air, aides said she'd be making an unscheduled stop and the plane landed at LaGuardia Airport.

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

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

Some expected Roan, the 26-year-old singer who has become a major star in recent months, to make a political statement in her first appearance on the show. She has previously been harshly critical of the Democratic party and declined to endorse Harris, though Roan has said several times she plans to vote for her. But she played it straight, or as straight as the wildly theatrical performer gets. She sang her hit "Pink Pony Club," on an all-pink set bathed in pink light. Senator Tim Kaine also made a surprise appearance, in a game-show sketch where the gag was that no one remembered him despite his being Hillary Clinton's running mate in 2016.

## Germany allocates 20 mn euros to Pakistan for forest protection project

Islamabad (PTI): Germany will provide 20 million euros to Pakistan for the second phase of a project aimed at the protection and sustainable management of forests in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to a media report on Sunday. An agreement for financial support for the 'Billion Tree Afforestation Support Project' (BTASP) was signed in Islamabad on Saturday between Pakistan Economic Affairs Secretary Dr Kazim Niaz and Director of German Development Bank KfW, Esther Graevenkötter. The first phase of BTASP is already under implementation in partnership with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Climate Change, Forestry, Environment and Wildlife Department, the Dawn newspaper reported.

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

## Trump to rally backers every day until election in North Carolina

Gastonia (AP): Donald Trump will rally supporters in North Carolina every day until Tuesday's election, a flurry of late activity in the only swing state that he won in both his 2016 and 2020 campaigns. Even as Trump looks to expand the electoral map and project strength with trips to New Mexico and Virginia, two Democratic states not widely viewed as competitive, he is putting considerable time into North Carolina, which last backed a Democrat for president in 2008.

The former president's path to the 270 electoral votes needed to capture the presidency gets significantly more complicated

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

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

among people who live here in the US," he said. "Unfortunately history does repeat itself. Hopefully, the people of our country recognize what happened in the past and we avoid a similar fate in the future," he added. In his campaign speeches, Trump promised a radical shift to tighten Washington's immigration policy and vowed to stage the "largest deportation operation in American history" if he is reelected. The Republican leader has even resolved to end birthright citizenship for the children of immigrants living in the US illegally, triggering concerns among various diaspora communities including from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Makhija also appeared to hold the Republican Party responsi-

## Trump and Harris crisscross key states in last 50 hours

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris and her Republican rival former president Donald Trump are leaving nothing to chance in the last 50 hours before closing of the polls, making a passionate appeal to their countrymen to support and send them to the White House. "We will win," Vice President Harris told thousands of her cheering supporters in Wisconsin urging them it's time to turn a page and bring in a new generation of leadership in America. She was campaigning in Wisconsin and North Carolina

on Saturday. She plans to make closing arguments in Michigan, Georgia and Pennsylvania on Sunday and Monday. Trump, 78, chose Virginia for campaigning on Saturday. Addressing thousands of his supporters in Salem, the former president promised to bring in a new era of peace and prosperity in the country. He continued to charge Harris of being a liberal Left radical. Over the next two days, Trump has a hectic schedule in the battleground states of Michigan, Pennsylvania, Georgia and North Carolina. To win, a candidate needs 272 electoral college votes.

According to respectable

272twin.com, Harris is assured of 226 electoral votes and Trump of 219. While Harris needs 44 additional electoral college votes to reach the magic figure of 272, Trump requires 51. Both the candidates have multiple pathways to victory running through the seven battleground states of Arizona, Nevada, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Georgia. Political pundits believe that Pennsylvania (with 19 electoral college votes) and Michigan (15 electoral college votes) are now the ground zero. Latest polls indicate that it's too close to call in both Michigan and Pennsylvania.

## 'India-US partnership most important globally for future'

PTI ■ PHILADELPHIA

The India-US partnership is the most important engagement globally and the cooperation will flourish further if Kamala Harris becomes the US president as she recognises the significance of the relationship, prominent Indian-origin Democratic leader Neil Makhija has said. In an exclusive interview with PTI, the young leader, considered to be close to Harris, also came down very hard on former president Donald Trump for his immigration policy that has triggered some concerns among immigrant communities in the US, including Indian-Americans. On the India-US partnership, Makhija said it is the most important relationship for the future.

"When you think about the competition the US has been having with China, when you think about the actions that Russia is taking which are at odds with the interests of the US and its allies, India is really the most important country for the US to continue to build the relationship in terms of its sheer size, economic activities," he said. Makhija said it is very important that the next US president understands that India is a very crucial partner for the US in many ways.

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

Makhija called Trump a threat to democracy. "He is engaging in the same kind of behaviour we have seen in some of the darkest moments in world history where leaders have scapegoated those individuals and communities that do not even have the right to vote," he said. Makhija is presently serving as Montgomery County Commissioner and Chair of the Board of Elections. He is the first Indian American Commissioner elected in the history of Pennsylvania and many Democrats believe that the young leader could be in Harris' cabinet if she wins the election.

"You can see that he (Trump) is blaming all of the country's problems on immigrants and it is not real, it is not realistic, it is simply aimed at inflaming tensions and driving divisions



Indian-origin Democratic leader Neil Makhija

ble for not increasing the cap on H1B visas for Indians. "Kamala Harris was the sponsor of a bill to fix that issue of

from our community was here in the US. Who wants to turn back the clock on fundamental rights," he said.

"Their (Trump camp's) belief is that the country is supposed to be a specific demographic region. We think America is an idea, we think America is an idea that anyone can succeed no matter who you are," Makhija said. "This is the decision that we are making which is — do we have a country which is pluralistic, that is welcoming, that is inclusive or do we think it should be exclusive and really meant to serve a particular demography?" he said. "I think Kamala Harris represents the future that is more inclusive, that will be welcoming and lives up to the ideals that our country truly was founded on," Makhija added.









# CELEBRATING LORD DHANWANTRI, THE GOD OF MEDICINE

IMA-AYUS celebrates Dhanwantari Day, honours pioneers in traditional Indian medicine promoting Ayurveda, writes ABHI SINGHAL

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

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

The event was graced by K. K. Sharma, Founder and Managing Director of AIMIL Pharmaceuticals, as the Guest of Honour, bringing his invaluable support for traditional Indian medicine. AIMIL is a science-driven Ayurveda company producing herbal and Ayurvedic healthcare products promoting Ayurveda for 40 years.

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

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

explaining Ayurveda and its impact deeply to the audience. The organisation unveiled its monthly magazine *Souvenir 2024*, with all the yearly events that take place within the organisation.

Students from Ayurvedic & Unani Tibbia College Delhi, School of Unani Medical Education and Research, Jamia Hamdard Delhi, Gaur Brahmin Ayurvedic College Rohtak Haryana, Shri Krishna Ayush

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

## In conversation with Dr Raman Khanna

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

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

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

**Why do you organise this event every year in the field of Ayurveda?**

All the practitioners of Ayurveda worship Bhagwan Dhanwantari because he is considered the god of Ayurveda and the divine physician. In Hindu tradition, Dhanwantari is believed to have emerged from the ocean during the churning of the ocean (Samudra Manthan) carrying the nectar of immortality (amrita) and the knowledge of healing. His association with health and wellness makes him a central figure in Ayurvedic practices, symbolizing the holistic approach to healing and the importance of balance in life. Worshipping Dhanwantari is a way for practitioners to seek blessings for health, knowledge, and the successful practice of Ayurveda.

**How do you think this event inspires medical practitioners and students to pursue Ayurveda?**

Yes, the Celebration of Dhanwantari Diwas serves as a significant source of inspiration for AYUS practitioners and students. It honors Lord Dhanwantari, regarded as the deity of Ayurveda, highlighting the importance of this ancient healing system. This celebration can motivate practitioners and students to deepen their commitment to Ayurveda, emphasizing its potential for enhancing human wellness. It also fosters a sense of community and encourages the exploration of traditional knowledge in contemporary health practices.

**Do you think incorporating Ayurveda in daily wellness can help you?**

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

ways it can support daily wellness:

**Dietary Balance:** Ayurveda suggests foods suited to your dosha to promote digestion and energy. For example, grounding, warming foods are advised for the Vata dosha, while cooling foods benefit the Pitta type.

**Daily Routines:** Ayurveda encourages routines that support natural rhythms, like waking up early, oil pulling, and self-massage (Abhyanga). These can promote better sleep, circulation, and stress management.

**Stress and Mental Health:** Ayurveda includes mindfulness practices like yoga, meditation, and breathing exercises (pranayama) to reduce stress and increase mental clarity.

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

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



## DEBUNKING POPULAR NUTRITION MYTHS



BY DR WAJHA MEHTAB

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

**MYTH 1**

**Carbs Are the Enemy**

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

**MYTH 2**

**Eating Fat Makes You Fat**

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

**MYTH 3**

**A Detox Diet Will Cleanse Your Body**

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

**MYTH 4**

**Gluten-Free Is Always Healthier**

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

**MYTH 5**

**Late-Night Eating Causes Weight Gain**

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

**MYTH 6**

**You Need to Eat Small, Frequent Meals to Boost Metabolism**

**Fact:** The idea that eating every few hours boosts your metabolism is a common misconception. The reality is that the number



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

**MYTH 7**

**You Should Only Eat Egg Whites**

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

**MYTH 8**

**You Need Supplements to Be Healthy**

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

**MYTH 9**

**You Can Spot-Reduce Fat**

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

**CONCLUSION**

**Trust the Science**

It's easy to be swayed by the latest diet trends or celebrity-endorsed health tips, but it's essential to approach nutrition with a critical eye. Rather than falling for myths and misinformation, trust the science and rely on credible sources, like registered dietitians, for guidance. Your health is too important to base on fads—balanced, evidence-based nutrition will always stand the test of time.

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



## SheShield Conclave Concludes



SheShield Conclave, organised by Mediways Health Foundation in association with Inner Wheel District 301, concluded with impact. Held during Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the Conclave underscored an urgent message: breast cancer awareness and early detection are vital to securing a healthier, empowered India.

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

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
The disastrous performance of star batters is certainly a cause of concern for India, admitted Rohit Sharma after a stunning reversal against New Zealand but the skipper promised that the team will fight to deliver something 'very very special' in Australia. New Zealand went strength to strength in the series while hosts India could not bring their floundering campaign back on track and ended up suffering a rare and humiliating 0-3 whitewash. Rohit (91) and Virat Kohli (93) managed less than 200 runs across three Tests, a major reason for India's debacle. "It's a cause of concern without a doubt. If the batters are not performing, that is a cause of concern," Rohit said. "What is done, is done now. As a player, as a captain, as a team, we all have to look forward and see how we can correct what we didn't manage to achieve here. There is a good opportunity for us to go and do



something really, really special in Australia. We will focus on that." India has already been displaced from the top of the World Test Championship table following the embarrassing result at home and it could hasten the impending transition for the Test side but Rohit preferred to look only at the immediate challenge of Australia tour. "I don't think we can look that far ahead. I'm not going to look beyond Australia series. Australia series, for us is now very, very important. We will try and focus on that rather than thinking what happens after. "A lot of our guys have been there before and a lot of the guys haven't been there before, which is why we are trying to go there a little early just to get used to the conditions." Rohit said India will have to draw a lot of confidence from their last two series wins with the team set to

play five Tests Down Under for the first time ever. "Australia is not an easy place to play cricket. But we can take a lot of confidence how we played in the last two series in Australia. In the back of my mind, we have to think like that," said Rohit. Rohit, of late, has adopted an ultra aggressive and risky approach while batting, and it has resulted in him losing his wicket rather quickly. He maintained that he has not lost faith in his defensive skills and his style of batting was more of an evolution process he chose for himself but promised to have a re-look into it. "I haven't defended a lot in this series because I haven't been there to defend. Clearly I have to look at my own game and try and see what best I can do. When I go to bat, I always think how I can put the team in the best situation of the game." "When the openers go in, they set the tone and sometimes you can fall on the other side of it as well. This series, I have fallen on the other side of it. But I don't see that I have lost faith in my defence.

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

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Parthavi Grewal, Vanshika Goswami and Hemant Sangwan punched their way to gold as Indian boxers made a strong impression, clinching a haul of 17 medals at the inaugural U-19 World Championships organised by World Boxing in Colorado, USA. It was the female boxers who stole the show with as many as 10 of them standing on the podium at the age group tournament. While Parthavi notched a dominant 5-0 win over Netherlands' Aaliyah Hoppema in the women's 65kg final Vanshika emerged victorious in the woman's +80kg category against Germany's Victoria Gatt by Referee Stops Contest (RSC) one minute and 37 minutes on Saturday. In the next bout, Hemant clinched India's sole gold medal in the men's category by securing a 4-1 split decision victory over the USA's Rishon Sims in the 90kg category. Nisha (51kg), Supriya Devi Thokchom (54kg) and Kritika Wasan (80kg) lost their respective finals to sign off with silver medals. This significant medal count was highlighted by the



contributions of 11 Khelo India Athletes (KIAs), of which eight are SAI National Centre of Excellence (NCOE) trainees. The medalists also included three NCOE trainees who are non-KIAs, all training out of NCOE Rohtak. Medal-winning Khelo India Athletes: Boys - Sumit, Lakshay Rathi, Krrish Pal (all NCOE Rohtak), Aryan, Rishi Singh. Girls - Krisha Verma (NCOE Aurangabad), Chanchal Chaudhary, Nisha, Vini, Akansha Phalasalwal (all NCOE Rohtak), Supriya Devi. Medal-winning NCOE Athletes: NCOE Rohtak - Parthavi, Vanshika (Gold), Chanchal, Nisha, Vini, Akansha, Kritika (Silver), Krrish Pal, Sumit, Lakshay Rathi (Bronze). NCOE Aurangabad - Krisha Verma (Gold). Overall medal winners: Gold: Krisha Verma (F75kg), Parthavi Grewal (F65kg), Vanshika Goswami (F+80KG), Hemant Sangwan (M90kg). Silver: Nisha (F51kg), Supriya Devi Thokchom (F54kg), Kritika Wasan (F80kg), Chanchal Chaudhary (F48kg), Anjali Singh (F57kg), Vini (F60kg), Akansha Phalasalwal (F70kg), Rahul Kundu (M75kg). Bronze: Rishi Singh (M50kg), Krrish Pal (M55kg), Sumit (M70kg), Aryan (M85kg), Lakshay Rathi (M90+kg).

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

**PTI ■ JAKARTA**  
Indian golfer Rashid Khan, who was tied third at the halfway stage, faltered in the last two rounds with 72-71 and finished tied 25th at the BNI Indonesian Masters here on Sunday. Rashid (67-67-72-71) totalled 11-under as fellow Indian SSP Chawrasia (68) was T-41st at 7-under and the 2023 champion Gaganjeet Bhullar (72) was T-44th. Canadian Richard T. Lee finally ended his long and frustrating seven-year wait for a third victory on the Asian Tour when he recorded a fine four-shot wire-to-wire win. After dozens of opportunities to win again following his success at the 2017 Shinhan Donghae Open he was relieved to prevail at Royale Jakarta Golf Club after firing



a closing two-under-par 70 for a four-round total of 23-under. Chinese Taipei's Chang Weilun and Phachara Khongwatmai from Thailand secured second place, after both carded 64s. Zimbabwean Kieran Vincent finished fourth following a 67. Lee was six in front at the start of day and in cruise control after lying seven ahead at the turn. A one-and-a-half-hour weather delay,

which began when he was on hole 10 failed to unsettle him. However, an unexpected double-bogey on the 16th, where he took two to get out of a greenside bunker and missed a six-foot bogey putt, led to some uncertainty. It meant his lead was cut to four over Chang, who was in the clubhouse, but he steadied the ship with a brave five-foot putt for par on the next hole followed by a par on the last. The victory continued a brilliant run of form as he was tied for second in last week's International Series Thailand, finished joint ninth in the Black Mountain Championship, and came home in 10th at the Yeangder TPC. American John Catlin, who closed with a 69 here and was tied for sixth, leads the rankings.

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

**PTI ■ CHENNAI**  
A total of 31 teams will fight for the top honours at the 14th edition of the Hockey India Senior Men National Championship set to begin here on Monday. The 31 teams were divided into eight pools, and the tournament will conclude on November 16. During the league stage, each team will play against every other side in their pool. The top team from each pool will advance to the quarterfinals to be played on November 13, followed by semifinals on November 15, and the final and 3rd/4th place play-off match on November 16. Pool A features defending champions Hockey Punjab along with Dadra & Nagar Haveli And Daman & Diu Hockey and Chhattisgarh Hockey. Pool B includes Hockey Haryana, Telangana Hockey, Hockey Himachal, and



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

Chandigarh, Hockey Uttarakhand, and Tripura Hockey. In Pool E, Hockey Association of Odisha will compete with Le Puducherry Hockey, Hockey Rajasthan, and Hockey Arunachal,

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

Pool H features Manipur Hockey, Hockey Bengal, Hockey Bihar, and Assam Hockey. The tournament will open with a series of matches, including Uttar Pradesh Hockey vs Kerala Hockey and Hockey Karnataka vs Hockey Uttarakhand, among other exciting fixtures, setting the stage for a thrilling championship. Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey expressed his enthusiasm for the upcoming tournament. "We are delighted to host the 14th Hockey India Senior Men National Championship in Chennai, a city with a rich hockey legacy. This championship provides a platform for showcasing the best talent from across the country and is a key event in developing the future stars of Indian hockey. I wish all the teams the very best as they compete for top honours," Tirkey said.

## Rio Takeda wins Toto Japan Classic after six sudden-death playoff holes for her first LPGA Tour win

**AP ■ SHIGA**  
Rio Takeda of Japan won the LPGA's Toto Japan Classic on Sunday in a playoff that lasted six sudden-death holes, defeating Marina Alex of the United States. It was Takeda's first victory on the LPGA Tour. Takeda had a birdie on the par-5 18th hole, edging Alex with par. The two were tied after 54 holes at 15-under 201. The tournament was restricted to 54 regulation holes after Saturday's third round was washed out by rain. They were also even after the first five playoff holes in the sudden-death format, each with a birdie on the first playoff hole and pars on the next four holes. All of the playoff holes were pars - the 18th hole and the 13th. Alex shot a 6-under 66 in the final round and Takeda shot 67. Haeran Ryu of South Korea was one shot



behind after regulation with a 66. She finished at 14-under 202. Hana Wakimoto of Japan, the leader after the first two rounds, slipped to a 1-over 73 and finished three strokes behind the leaders. She was also seeking

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

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

**PTI ■ DUBAI**  
India lost their top position in the World Test Championship standings, slipping to second place after suffering an embarrassing home series defeat to New Zealand on Sunday. India lost to New Zealand by 25 runs in the third and final Test in Mumbai resulting in a 0-3 whitewash, their first in a home Test series since South Africa's 2-0 win in 1999-2000. This was also for the first time India have been swept 0-3 in a home series. It was India's fifth loss in the ongoing WTC cycle, causing a significant drop in their points percentage (PCT), which fell from 62.82 to 58.33. India thus dropped to the second spot behind reigning champions Australia, who have regained the top spot



with a PCT of 62.50. India are now scheduled to fly Down Under to play the five-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy, which has gained

more significance now as both teams will be vying for the top two spots. India were considered favourites to win a majority

of their remaining matches in their quest for a third consecutive WTC final appearance. However, to qualify for the final without depending on external results, they now must win four of their remaining five games -- a challenging task in Australia. Australia, on the other hand, are in a better position as they need to win four of their remaining seven Tests. New Zealand's historic series sweep in India has also bolstered their WTC final aspirations. They have climbed to the fourth spot with a PCT of 54.55, while Sri Lanka occupy third place with a PCT of 55.56. South Africa, currently fifth with a PCT of 54.17, also remain in contention for a top-two finish and a place in the next year's one-off Test at Lord's.

# Silva scores in stoppage time, Atlanta rallies to beat Messi's Miami 2-1 to even playoff series

**AP ■ ATLANTA**  
Xande Silva scored with about a minute to go in stoppage time shortly after a goal by Lionel Messi was waved off by a clear offside, giving ninth-seeded Atlanta United a 2-1 victory over Inter Miami and evening the best-of-three MLS playoff series at one game apiece. Silva on Saturday blasted a right-footed shot into the top left corner to beat goalkeeper Drake Callender in the 94th minute. The Atlanta player celebrated by ripping off his shirt and dancing in front of the supporters section at Mercedes-Benz Stadium while the announced crowd of 68,455 cheered. Messi had plenty of good scoring chances but only found the back of the net

with the flag raised for offside. Atlanta United took off the other way for Silva's game winner. United rallied from a 1-0 halftime deficit, the result of a huge error by keeper Brad Guzan, to force a decisive game next Saturday in South Florida. Atlanta has a chance to pull off a major upset, having finishing a whopping 34 points behind Messi's star-studded squad, which had the best regular-season record in Major League Soccer. Derrick Williams tied the



game in the 58th minute after a corner kick was turned away by the Herons. Pedro Amador sent a cross back into the box from long range and Williams dove to get a head on it, skipping it past Callender. Guzan's blunder handed Miami the opening goal in the 40th minute. After easily grabbing a cross into the box, Guzan went to boot the ball away - only to stumble and loose control with Miami's Federico Redondo running along beside him. Redondo sent

the free ball to David Martínez, who casually flicked it over four United defenders into the unguarded goal while Guzan looked on helplessly. The 40-year-old keeper claimed he was interfered with by Redondo, but the replay clearly showed Guzan tripped himself up. Messi misfired on at least three shots, going wide a couple of times before blasting one over the net in the 83rd with Miami pressing for the go-ahead goal. He walked away rubbing his

beard, clearly frustrated at his lack of accuracy. In the 89th, United missed a prime chance to grab the lead when Saba Lobjanidze rocketed one off the crossbar. Redondo's Sisz collected the ricochet, but fired it over the net. Silva made sure it didn't matter. Miami won the opening game of the series 2-1 at home. UP NEXT The winner of Game 3 will advance to the conference semifinals, facing the team that emerges from the Orlando-Charlotte series.