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InSiDE
SPORTS
INDIAN WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM RESETS, TARGETS WORLD CUP 2026, OLYMPICS 2028

CANADA ARRESTS NIJJAR ASSOCIATE

Representative Image

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Arshdeep Singh Gill alias Arsh Dalla, who was designated a terrorist by India, is likely to have been arrested in Canada's Ontario province following a shooting incident, sources claimed here on Sunday. The incident occurred on October 28 in Milton.

The Halton Regional Police Service (HRPS) had on October 29 said that it had arrested two men on charges of "discharging firearm with intent" following an investigation after the duo had come to a hospital and one of them was treated for a non-life-threatening gunshot and later discharged. It did not disclose their identity and said both accused "were held in custody pending a bail hearing".

The sources claimed that one of those arrested is believed to be Arsh Dalla, who is associated with the banned Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) and ran terror modules on behalf of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a designated terrorist who was killed in June last year. "The HRPS was contacted by Guelph Police in the early morning hours of October 28, 2024, after two males attended a hospital in Guelph. One of the males was treated and released for a non-life-threatening gunshot wound apparently suffered in Halton region. The other was not injured.

"The HRPS Major Crime Bureau is now investigating and both males have been arrested. A 25-year-old male of Halton Hills and a 28-year-old male of Surrey BC have both been charged with Discharging Firearm with Intent," a Halton police statement said, adding they were actively investigating the incident.

Earlier on Sunday, Punjab Police announced the arrest of two shooters of Arsh Dalla's gang, who were allegedly involved in the murder of a Sikh activist last month, from Kharar in Mohali. Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said the arrest came in a joint operation of the state special operation cell, the Anti-gangster Task Force and Faridkot Police. The two were identified as Anmolpreet Singh alias Vishal, a resident of Bhadorh in Barnala and Navjot Singh alias Neetu, a resident of Nijjar Road in Kharar.

Arsh Dalla, who has been accused of involvement in targeted killings, terror financing and extortion in Punjab, was in January last year designated a terrorist by the Indian government. The Union Home Ministry had said in a notification that he was involved in the cross-border smuggling of drugs and weapons on a large scale. He is an accused in various cases registered and investigated by the National Investigation Agency, including targeted killing, extorting money for terror funding, attempt to murder, disturbing communal harmony and creating terror among the people in Punjab. The central government believes that Gill is involved in terrorism and hence designated as a terrorist under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 by exercising the powers conferred by clause (a) of sub-section (1) of section 35 of the Act, the notification had said.

In September 2024, Dalla publicly claimed responsibility for the murder of Congress leader Baljinder Singh Balli. Balli was shot dead in Moga district of Punjab. Dalla was the acting chief of the Khalistani Tiger Force and was seen as the successor of slain terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Dalla, a wanted person on the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) terrorist list, has been allegedly orchestrating criminal activities in Punjab from his base in Canada for the past three to four years. A native of Moga, Dalla is accused of multiple targeted killings in Punjab.

Security personnel during an encounter with terrorists at Zabarwan forest area on the outskirts of Srinagar, on Sunday PTI

Para commando martyred in counter-terrorist operation

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

An elite para commando of the Indian army was martyred in the counter-terrorist operation launched in the general area of Bhart Ridge, Kishtwar to flush out terrorists behind the killing of two members of the Village Defence Groups (VDG). Three other critically injured soldiers were airlifted from Kishtwar to a military hospital for advanced treatment. The operation was still in progress at the time .

The Army identified the brave heart as Naib Subedar Rakesh Kumar of 2 Para and saluted his supreme sacrifice. The Army's Jammu-based White Knight Corps said in a post on X, "Based on specific intelligence input regarding the presence of terrorists, a joint operation was launched by security forces in general area Bhart Ridge, Kishtwar. This is the same group which had abducted and killed 02 (two) innocent villagers (village defence guards). Contact was established and a firefight ensued."

According to ground reports, the encounter took place a few kilometres from the spot where the bullet-riddled bodies of VDGs Nazir Ahmad and Kuldeep Kumar were found on Friday.

In Kashmir, the residents living in the vicinity of the Zabarwan forest area woke up to the gunshots of heavy firing between a group of terrorists and the security forces. The highly fortified area remained under siege as reinforcements were rushed to plug the escape routes.

According to police, the gunbattle broke out around nine am in the forest area connecting Dachigam and the upper reaches of the Nishat area, a famous tourist destination. This is the third incident of terrorist violence in Srinagar since November 1. The gunfight which started early Sunday morning reportedly stopped in the afternoon. The terrorists are believed to have fled from the dense forest area.

Since November 1, eight terrorists have been eliminated by the security forces in six anti-terrorist operations in different parts of Kashmir valley. A foreign terrorist was killed during an encounter with security forces in the Rajpora area on the outskirts of Sopore in north Kashmir's Baramulla district on Saturday.

A total number of four encounters have been reported in north Kashmir in the last four days which resulted in the killing of five terrorists.

Two foreign terrorists were killed by security forces during an encounter in the Sagipora area of Sopore on Friday while two local terrorists were killed in Shangus, Anantnag and a foreign LeT commander was killed in Srinagar's Khanyar area on November 2.

A foreign terrorist was killed in Bandipora forests earlier this week while another terrorist was killed during an encounter in Lolab forest.

Bangladesh govt wants Interpol support to repatriate Hasina

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh's interim government on Sunday said it will seek Interpol's assistance in repatriating deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina from India, and other "fugitives", to face trial for alleged crimes against humanity. Hasina and her party leaders face accusations of ordering brutal suppression of the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement, resulting in numerous casualties during the July-August protests. The movement later intensified into a large-scale uprising, forcing Hasina to secretly flee to India on August 5.

According to the interim government led by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, at least 753 people were killed and thousands injured during the protests, which it termed crimes against humanity and genocide. Over 60 complaints of crimes against humanity and genocide have been filed against Hasina and her party leaders with the ICT and the prosecution team till mid-October.

"A Red Notice will be issued through Interpol very soon. No matter where in the world these fugitive fascists are hiding, they will be brought back and held accountable in court," Law Affairs adviser Asif Nazrul told reporters here after inspecting the status of renovation at the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), which is housed in the Old High Court building on the Supreme Court premises.

Justice Sanjiv Khanna takes oath as CJI today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

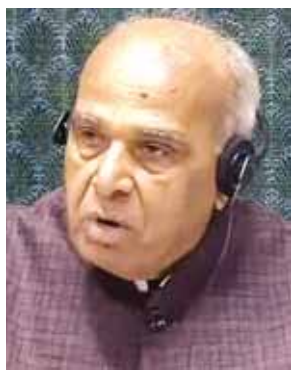
Justice Sanjiv Khanna, who has been part of several landmark Supreme Court judgments such as scrapping the Electoral Bonds scheme, sanctity of EVMs and upholding abrogation of Article 370, will be sworn in as the 51st Chief Justice of India (CJI) on Monday. President Droupadi Murmu will administer the oath of office at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in a ceremony scheduled at 10 am. His term will last until May 13, 2025.

Hailing from an illustrious Delhi-based family, Justice Khanna is the son of former Delhi High Court judge Justice Dev Raj Khanna and the nephew of renowned judge Justice HR Khanna, who was superseded from Chief Justice post during Indira regime and later became Law Minister. Justice HR Khanna, the uncle of Justice Sanjiv Khanna, hit the headlines by resigning in 1976 after he wrote a dissenting verdict in the infamous ADM Jabalpur case during the Emergency.

The majority verdict of a Constitution Bench, upholding the abrogation of fundamental rights during the Emergency, was considered a "black spot" on the judiciary. Justice HR Khanna declared the move unconstitutional and against the rule of law and paid a price as the then Union government superseded him and made Justice MH Beg the next CJI.

Waqf Bill Committee courts controversy again

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The Waqf (Amendment) Bill parliamentary committee of Parliamentarians has now run into another controversy as several Opposition MPs examining the Bill have suggested that the assurance they received after meeting Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has not been met. They accused the panel chairman Jagdambika Pal of going ahead with a tour of states despite his meetings lacking even the quorum.

Jagdambika Pal, chairman of the Joint Committee of Parliament formed to scrutinise the contentious Bill tabled by the government in the last Monsoon Session, rejected Opposition members' contention, asserting that "study tours" of parliamentary panels are an informal exercise and are not bound by formalities like meeting the quorum.

The Pal-led committee is currently on a tour of five states to speak to various stakeholders, though opposition members have boycotted it. The panel chairman told PTI on Sunday that he is confident of meeting the deadline of submitting the Committee's report by the last day of the first week of the Winter Session, which begins on November 25, adding that he has already prepared its 200-250 pages.

Opposition MPs of the committee have, however, joined hands to question his functioning, alleging that Pal, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP, is doing the government's bidding, and they had earlier even threatened to disassociate themselves with its work.

Long beards, orange buildings...

What's happening in govt colleges?

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAIPUR/BENGALURU

While the controversy over students hailing from Jammu and Kashmir sporting a beard, in government-run colleges in Karnataka has been amicably resolved, another issue seems to be brewing in Rajasthan, around the institutions seeking to paint their buildings orange.

The Rajasthan College Education Commissionerate has directed 20 government-run colleges to get the facade of their buildings and entry halls painted orange, under the Kayakalp Scheme. According to the Commissionerate, the move is to ensure a positive environment in the education institutes. The scheme is a national initiative by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to promote cleanliness, hygiene, and infection control in public healthcare facilities in India

The Opposition Congress slammed the move as an attempt to politicise educational institutions. Targeting the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government over the matter, Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) general secretary Swarnim Chaturvedi said that it was an attempt to "politicise" education in colleges. "The BJP government has failed to deliver on promises made to people. The government has nothing to highlight as its achievements and in order to divert attention; it is resorting to such moves," he said.

Rajasthan government Joint Director (Planning), College Education, Vijendra Kumar Sharma issued the order last month regarding the paint of front facade and entry halls of colleges under the scheme. In the first phase, a total of 20 colleges, two colleges in each division level, have to be painted, the order said.

"The colleges are the main centres of higher education. The educational environment and scenario of the college should be such for the students that they feel positive as soon as they enter the college," the order stated.

The joint director further said in the order that in the first phase of the scheme, two government colleges of each division have been included and the front facade and entrance hall of the 20 colleges' buildings should be phase painted with "Asian Paints White Gold 8292 and Asian Paints Orange Crown 7974".

Love Jihad case

Police move court seeking remand of accused

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Commissionerate police have intensified their probe into the 'Love Jihad' case, trying to ascertain whether the accused Md Samir Mansoor has any links with terror outfits.

Commissioner of Police Suresh Dev Datta Singh on Sunday said, "Based on the allegation of online cheating, threatening and blackmailing by a woman, we have launched a probe and arrested one Md Samir Mansoor in connection with the case."

"During investigation, it is found that he might be a resident of Bihar and works in Kashmir. To verify the primary information, the Commissionerate police are in touch with Bihar and Kashmir police. We have prayed the court for his remand," Singh added.

As part of the investigation, the background check of the accused and his involvement in similar digital frauds and crime records in other States would be verified. A woman Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) has been entrusted with the responsibility of carrying out necessary verification, Singh said.

Notably, Samir Mansoor was arrested by police after a woman filed a complaint against him at the Mahila police station in Bhubaneswar accusing that he forced her to undergo religious conversion and marry him.

The man also allegedly threatened the victim to upload video clips of their intimate moments on the internet. Based on the complaint filed by the victim, the police registered a case and nabbed Mansoor while he was trying to leave Odisha by train. Mansoor claimed that he hails from Bihar and is presently staying in Kashmir.

'Offer millet to Goddess Lakshmi'

CM urges people

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Sunday urged the people of the State to offer food prepared from millet before Goddess Lakshmi on the occasion of the upcoming Manabasa Gurubar in the month of Margasir. He said the initiative would go a long way to provide a boost to the use of millet. The CM made the special request to the people while inaugurating a two-day 'International Symposium on Shree Anna and Forgotten Foods' (ISSFF) organised by the State Agriculture Department.

Various kinds of millet and forgotten foods were demonstrated at the symposium.

"Our mothers will observe the first Manabasa Gurubar of Margasir. I request all the mothers and sisters to offer millet before Goddess Lakshmi on the special occasion and serve food prepared from millet to all the members of the family," said Majhi.

Cuttack gang-rape

3 police stations refused to lodge victim's complaint

Alleges Cong MLA; DCP assures probe

PNS ■ CUTTACK

The Congress on Sunday alleged that three police stations in Cuttack city had refused to lodge the complaint of the 19-year-old college student who was gang-raped by her boyfriend and his aides.

Congress' Cuttack-Barabati MLA Sofia Firdous demanded an investigation into the role of police for allegedly making the victim run from one police station to another to lodge the complaint.

The woman went to the Puri Ghat police station, then to the Sadar police station and then to Barang before the FIR was lodged at the Badambadi police station, she claimed.

Police said they have arrested six people, including the woman's boyfriend, for gang-raping her multiple times and videographing the acts.

The girl claimed that she had gone to a cafe with her boyfriend in the Puri Ghat police station area during Dussehra to celebrate her birthday. However, the boyfriend allegedly with the help of the cafe owner filmed on his phone some of their intimate moments there.

With that video, the boyfriend and his friends blackmailed her and raped her multiple times. The complaint was lodged on November 4 and the accused were arrested over the next two days, police said.

Firdous met DGP YB Khurania on Saturday over the incident and submitted a memorandum.

"When the victim went to lodge an FIR against the accused persons, three police stations in Cuttack refused to register it. Therefore, I urged the DGP to investigate why the FIR was not lodged at first," she told reporters.

"The delay is alarming and raises serious concern about the responsiveness of the law enforcement agencies, especially when it comes to addressing the crimes against women," she added.

Firdous claimed that the victim could not be reached at present, expressing concern about her wellbeing and safety.

Stating that such a type of incident had never taken place in Cuttack, which is densely populated, she said, "If such incidents are happening now in this city, then it is a matter of serious concern."

Cuttack DCP Jagmohan Meena said an inquiry would be conducted into the allegations levelled by the MLA.

"We came to know about the allegation that police did not register a case at first from the MLA. Police will certainly inquire into the matter. However, neither the victim nor anyone from her family has made such an allegation. The victim is safe," he said.

ISKCON observes untimely Rath Yatra in US

Sentiments of Jagannath devotees in Odisha hurt

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

Amidst backlash, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) observed the Rath Yatra in Houston, USA. A chariot, resembling the Nandighosha of Lord Jagannath in Puri, was pulled by devotees in huge numbers in the US city.

The event was held a few days after the ISKCON had promised to host a Sankirtan Yatra instead of the untimely Rath Yatra. "Respecting the sentiments of Odia devotees of Lord Jagannath, the Houston Rath Yatra is cancelled," the organisation had stated in a press release.

However, the chariot festival was organised in the name of a 'Festival of Bliss', affecting the beliefs of Lord Jagannath devotees in Odisha.

Commenting on the issue, senior Jagannath servitor Binayak Das Mohapatra said, "Despite repeated objections and backlash, they went ahead with the festival by changing the name to 'Festival of Bliss' and keeping Lord Krishna's photo, instead of Lord Jagannath. This has spread discontent among devotees and servitors who are now planning to boycott and ban their entry into the holy land of Puri."

"Their behaviour will only lead to further violence among religions and beliefs. They have put the lives of ISKCON believers in India at risk. I do not want people of two beliefs to indulge in any kind of violence. We will be forced to take the legal route in this connection," he added.

A Jagannath devotee said, "They have deceived Lord Jagannath and his devotees. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, Rath Yatra was held on the holy date."

Earlier, Puri Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb had voiced strong opposition and urged the ISKCON to reconsider its plan to organise an untimely Rath Yatra.

JPC on Waqf Bill reaches BBSR

Hearing on Monday

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A five-member Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), chaired by Jagatambika Pal, is in Odisha to discuss the Waqf Amendment Bill. Its members include Aparajita Sarangi and Ghulam Nabi. The bill proposes 44 amendments.

The JPC is scheduled to hold a meeting in Bhubaneswar on Monday. Talking to reporters, Aparajita Sarangi said, "At least 38 lakh acres of land is in the possession of Waqf Board. So, it is our duty to correct the governance and the administration and this is a huge step of the Modi government towards it."

A day back, the committee was in Guwahati and held discussions with the State Government representatives, minority commissions, Muslim organisations, local Waqf Boards and other organisations. The hearings were also held in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore.

Highway robbers loot couple at gunpoint

Open fire to terrorise truck drivers

PNS ■ CUTTACK

In yet another case of highway robbery, a group of six miscreants armed with pistols looted a young couple at gunpoint near the Naraj-Bidyadharpur hills in Cuttack district.

The incident occurred at around 10 pm on Saturday when the couple was returning home on a motorbike.

The miscreants intercepted the couple and beat them up when they tried to resist. The woman was robbed of her gold chain even as she screamed for help. On hearing their screams, some truck drivers rushed to the spot to their rescue.

However, the miscreants opened two rounds of fire to scare away the truck drivers before fleeing the spot.

On being informed, police rushed to the spot and launched a manhunt to nab the miscreants.

Worth mentioning, a lawyer and his wife had recently been looted in a similar manner at CDA Sector-11.

Govt to issue new norms to curb industrial pollution

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a bid to curb pollution in the industrial-rich districts across the State, the Odisha Government will issue new guidelines for proper management of fly ash and other waste materials emanating from various industries.

A high-level meeting was held at Sambalpur in this regard under the chairmanship of Revenue Minister Suresh Pujari on Sunday.

MLAs, Collectors and SPs of Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh and Angul and officials of Pollution Control Board and Water Resource Departments took part in the meeting.

It is alleged that water and fly ash emanating from the industries are polluting the Hirakud reservoir, other natural water bodies and air in the region. As a result, the areas have been witnessing several controversies and protests.

"Fly ash, smoke and waste material emanating from various industries are polluting both water bodies and air. The measures to control the pollution need to be renewed," said Pujari.

"There has been no coordination between the Pollution Control Board and Collectors of different districts. It has been decided that a permanent solution will be made over the matter, he added.

In city

Woman dead in mysterious circumstances

Husband detained

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A woman died under mysterious circumstances in Rampur Basti of Unit-4 in Bhubaneswar on Sunday morning. The deceased was identified as Swarnalata Mandal hailing from Boudh district.

Swarnalata's husband Bapi Nayak of Nayagarh had shifted to Rampur Basti here nearly two months ago after marriage. The couple was living in a rented room in the area. They entered into an argument two days ago.

Bapi Nayak claimed that he found his wife hanging when he woke up early on Sunday. However, the body was lying on the ground when police reached the spot.

Though Bapi claimed it to be a suicide case, the exact reason behind Swarnalata's death was still unclear.

A BMC Corporator said, "I reached the spot after getting information about the incident. Only a detailed investigation can throw light on the exact cause of the death."

The Kharavela Nagar police started an investigation and sent the body for postmortem.

In city

Couple hurt as drunk driver rams into road divider

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A speeding Nissan Terrano driven by a drunk driver crashed into a road divider after hitting a traffic post, leaving a couple critically injured at Damana Square in Bhubaneswar late on Saturday night.

Other motorists and pedestrians narrowly escaped. Police said the man was fully drunk while driving his vehicle.

The impact of the collision was so severe that the car skidded after hitting the traffic post and subsequently crashed into the divider. The vehicle has been completely damaged while the accident spot also requires repair.

A couple on a scooty was hit by the car and sustained critical injuries. Passersby came to their rescue and called an ambulance to take them to the Capital Hospital.

The driver tried to speed away at the Damana traffic post by jumping the traffic lights. However, he lost control and hit the traffic police post, later crashing into the divider between the roads.

The identity of the driver was not immediately known. The rising cases of drunk driving in the city have become a matter of serious concern. Locals question why police have stopped the drive against drunken driving.

In city

Burglars loot jewellery, cash from house

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

After a few days' lull, once again the burglars are on the prowl in Bhubaneswar. This time, miscreants looted over 200 grams of gold jewellery and cash from a house at Shri Ganesh Vihar under the Infocity police station on Saturday night.

The burglars gained entry into the house by breaking a window and subsequently looted the valuables from a cupboard.

After the matter came to light on Sunday morning, the Infocity police was informed and a team of cops and a forensic team arrived at the scene for an investigation.

"My wife and I slept around 11 pm last night. When we woke early today, my wife found the bathroom door locked from inside. When I went outside the house to look into the reason why the door was blocked, I found the bathroom window was already open and the loot had already happened," said the victim Bansidhar Gouda.

As per sources, this was the second burglary reported from the area in the past 15 days.

'IREL's tender bid for beach sand mining in Puri illegal'

Undue haste shown in carrying on with project

BIJAY MISHRA ■ BHUBANESWAR

There is widespread resentment among people, as the environmental issues concerning extraction of valuable beach sand atomic minerals in Brahmagiri of Puri district by the IREL have not been addressed.

Allready a tender has been floated by the IREL to work out the project against which a public interest litigation is pending adjudication before the High Court of Orissa. In the meantime, the IREL has evaluated the financial and technical bid of a single bidder named M/s Goquest Solution Private Limited.

"The severe environmental concerns having far-reaching consequences due to the mining have been overlooked by the IREL authorities. There is no response to a petition filed before the High Court of Orissa either. The negligence of the authorities might cost severe environmental damage which shall be irreparable," said Jana Adhikar Parishad president Bijay Parida.

The authorities can not justify their conduct in the name of sustainable development, whereas, such development cannot be at the cost of violation of the laws laid down by the Parliament as well as other instrumentalities, he added.

On July 6, 2024 l, the IREL issued an e-tender seeking experienced contractors for a "Rate Contract Bid for Development and Operation of Mineral Sands Mine" in Brahmagiri for 20 years, with an option for a 5-year extension. The current tender was floated after the earlier tender dated January 1, 2024 was cancelled due to lack of participation. The current tender, however, has been floated in violation of legal and environmental regulations, particularly Sections 5 and 11(B) of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, which require prior environmental clearances from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEF&CC) before initiating any mining-related tenders. Section 5 of the MMDR Act specifically outlines restrictions on granting mining leases without necessary approvals, which IREL did not obtain before issuing this tender. "This raises significant concerns over the legality of the tendering process, as it bypasses vital environmental safeguards essential for mining operations," told Parida.

On 11.09.2024, the High Court issued notice in the PIL and granted time for IREL's counsel, who was on caveat, to file a counter affidavit after seeking proper instruction. However, the IREL has failed to file any counter affidavit in the matter till date. Despite the ongoing PIL and in absence of any counter affidavit, the IREL has advanced with the tender process, wherein, only a single bidder has submitted its bid, raising concerns about the legality and an attempt to render the PIL infructuous.

The 20-25 years project, involving the extraction of valuable beach sand atomic minerals has been criticized for potentially causing irreparable damage to ecologically sensitive zones, including the Chilika lake area and Olive Ridley turtle nesting sites. Activists have raised alarms over the project's lack of proper environmental clearances and violations of existing prevailing mining laws, calling for the tender to be scrapped altogether.

Chilika lake is one of the largest coastal lagoons in the world and a biodiversity hotspot, and the Olive Ridley turtles, which use the beaches near the mining area under the tender for nesting, are key ecological features at risk.

The single-bidder situation, coupled with the unresolved legal and environmental questions further complicate the project's future. IREL's decision to move ahead could be seen as an attempt to push the project forward before the court has had a chance to fully examine the case, raising serious ethical and legal concerns.

Local communities, along with various environmental organisations, have rallied against the project, expressing concerns over its long-term impact on the environment and economy of Puri region. They continue to call for greater transparency, stricter adherence to environmental laws, and a halt on any tender-related activities until the High Court delivers its verdict.

CONTEMPORARIES

Redefining state power over private property

In pursuit of common good

S JYOTIRANJAN

In a jurisprudential pronouncement of profound significance, the Supreme Court has recently elucidated the contours of Article 39(b) of the Constitution, thereby redefining the state's prerogative over private property. This landmark verdict, delivered by a nine-judge Constitution Bench, delineates the parameters within which the state may appropriate privately-held assets under the aegis of "material resources of the community" to subserve the common good.

The Constitutional context

Article 39(b), enshrined within the Directive Principles of State Policy, mandates that the state shall direct its policy towards ensuring that "the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good". Historically, this provision has been invoked to justify state interventions in the redistribution of resources, often encompassing privately owned properties.

The judicial odyssey

The genesis of this judicial examination can be traced to the 1977 verdict in State of Karnataka v. Ranganatha Reddy, wherein Justice VR Krishna Iyer, in a minority opinion, posited that privately owned resources could be subsumed under the ambit of Article 39(b). This interpretation was subsequently endorsed by a five-judge Bench in the 1983 Sanjeev Coke Manufacturing Company v. Bharat Coking Coal Ltd case, thereby broadening the state's latitude in appropriating private assets for purported communal benefit.

However, the recent adjudication by the Supreme Court has recalibrated this expansive interpretation. The majority opinion, authored by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, asserts that not all privately owned properties can be indiscriminately classified as "material resources of the community" under Article 39(b). The court elucidated that only certain categories of private property, contingent upon their nature, significance and impact on public welfare, could potentially fall within this constitutional provision. This nuanced interpretation signifies a departure from erstwhile socialist-leaning exegeses that advocated for extensive state control over private assets.

The case at hand

The immediate impetus for this judicial scrutiny was a protracted legal contestation initiated in 1992 by the Property Owners' Association (POA) of Mumbai. The POA challenged Chapter VIIIA of the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Act (MHADA) of 1976, which empowered the state to acquire privately-owned buildings, or "cessed properties," for restoration purposes. The legislation, amended in 1986, provided a framework for transferring private property to cooperative societies, asserting that this policy aligned with Article 39(b) by serving the broader public welfare. The POA contended that such acquisitions transgressed property rights and argued that Article 39(b) does not encompass privately-owned resources.

The court's deliberations

In its deliberations, the Supreme Court meticulously examined the semantic and contextual purport of Article 39(b). The majority opinion delineated that resources falling under this provision must exhibit specific criteria, such as scarcity, public welfare impact, and the ramifications of their concentration among private entities. This interpretation advocates for a circumspect, context-dependent approach rather than a blanket application, thereby countering earlier judgments that had espoused a more expansive, socialist-oriented perspective.

The court further articulated that the public trust doctrine could serve as a guiding principle in assessing such resources, underscoring that not all privately-owned assets qualify as community resources solely by virtue of their material value. This doctrinal shift underscores a jurisprudential pivot towards a more balanced reconciliation of individual property rights with communal welfare imperatives.

Divergent opinions

The Bench was not unanimous in its conclusions. Justice BV Nagarathna, in a partially concurring opinion, acknowledged that certain private resources, especially those integral to public welfare, could theoretically qualify under Article 39(b). However, she clarified that personal effects and quotidian possessions should be exempt from this categorisation.

Conversely, Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, in a dissenting opinion, contended that excluding privately-owned properties from the purview of Article 39(b) disregards the practical reality that certain private resources might indeed benefit the public if distributed equitably. He argued that any blanket exclusion of private resources within Article 39(b) risks undermining the Directive Principles' broader intent.

Implications and reflections

This seminal verdict carries profound implications for the interplay between private property rights and state intervention in India. By circumscribing the state's authority to appropriate private assets under the rubric of Article 39(b), the Supreme Court has reaffirmed the sanctity of individual property rights while simultaneously acknowledging the state's role in ensuring equitable resource distribution.

The judgment also reflects an evolving judicial philosophy that eschews rigid economic dogmas in favour of a more pragmatic, context-sensitive approach. It underscores the court's recognition of India's transition from a predominantly state-controlled economy to a more market-oriented paradigm, thereby necessitating a recalibration of Constitutional interpretations to align with contemporary socio-economic realities.

The Supreme Court's recent elucidation of Article 39(b) represents a judicious balancing act between the imperatives of individual property rights and the state's mandate to promote the common good. It signifies a jurisprudential maturation that harmonises constitutional principles with the dynamic exigencies of a rapidly evolving polity and economy.

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Ash management crisis threatens industrial future

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha's private thermal power plants in Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, and Sambalpur districts are grappling with a major challenge in ash management, putting the State's industrial ambitions and energy supply at risk. Industry insiders warn that without swift action, some power plants may have to suspend operations.

Currently, private thermal power stations in these industrial hubs generate around 8,000 MW of electricity, supporting both domestic and industrial needs. However, the management of fly ash, a byproduct of thermal power generation, remains a critical issue. Key concerns include ambiguity over which authorities can authoriSe disposal zones for safe ash management.

The State Pollution Control Board has issued guidelines and designated sites such as abandoned mines for safe fly ash disposal. Despite this, implementation has been slow. Tehsildars in these districts have submitted lists of inactive mines to the deputy director of mines. Yet, the Mines Department, which lacks both Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and expertise in ash management, remains unable to grant the necessary permissions. Although the SOPs for ash disposal have been available since 2017 and were reinforced by a 2021 Central Pollution Control Board notification, they are yet to be effectively enforced in Odisha.

A recent meeting chaired by Revenue Minister Suresh Pujari directed the district Collectors to issue these permissions though the Collectors remain uncertain about how to proceed. Plans for a Revenue Divisional Commissioner-level meeting have been postponed twice, further stalling resolution efforts.

Adding to these operational hurdles, misinformation circulating on digital platforms, allegedly by certain "motivated individuals," has fuelled public concerns about the industries' environmental impact. Meanwhile, ash hills around private thermal plants continue to grow, intensifying pressure on the facilities.

Experts caution that if prompt measures are not taken, many thermal stations may be forced to cease operations, impacting both their own production and the wider industrial network in the state, creating potential electricity shortages.

Preparatory meet for Pir Jahaniya Bali Yatra

PNS ■ ASTARANG

Pir Jahania Beach Bali Yatra in Astarang area is a unique festival. This year the famous Bali Yatra will be held on the holy Boitabandan and Kartik Purnima on November 15 and 16.

Astarang Block Aarti Naik of Ashtarang Block Chairman in Chhariyana Panchayat Kalyanmandap premises.

A preparatory meeting was held for the yatra in which BDO Sasmita Behera, Chharyana Sarpanch Kshirod Kandi, Samiti member Bimbadhar Biswal, Nimapada SDPO Pravat Ranjan Mallik, Astaranga police station Sub-Inspector Deepak Singh, officials from Health, Forest, Rural Development, Sanitation and Irrigation departments were present.

Sovna shines at FIDE Chess Championships

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Bringing laurels for the State as well as for the country, Odisha's Sovna Sonali Jena has bagged a bronze medal at the recently-concluded International Amateur Chess Federation (FIDE) World Amateur Chess Championships 2024 held at Rhodes in Greece.

Sovna, a resident of Cuttack, secured six points in nine rounds and stood third in the Women Under (WC) 1700 category. In the nine rounds, Sovna registered a win in five, lost two and managed to draw two rounds taking her point tally to six.

Osadchuk Anastasiia from Ukraine with eight points in nine rounds secured the top spot and clinched gold. Anu Bayal Uchral from Mangolia secured second spot with seven points in the WC 1700 category.

BU Lib & IS Dept holds outreach prog

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

On October 29, the Department of Library and Information Science at Brahmapur University held an outreach programme to Takshashila Residential School, Ankushpur, Brahmapur focusing on inculcating reading habits among students."

Prof KC Das and Subhasmita Acharya shared insights on the value of reading, emphasizing its role in developing knowledge, creativity, and critical thinking.

The session also included presentations by MLIS students on topics, "Inculcating reading habits among students." Akshaya Kumar Nayak and Sourabha Maharana offered practical tips on building reading habits such as setting goals and exploring diverse genres. The programme was well-received, highlighting the department's commitment to promoting reading and knowledge-sharing within the community.

At BU

Plagiarism detection software 'Turnitin' workshop

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The "Turnitin Onsite Workshop on Academic Integrity" was held at the Berhampur University on Tuesday. The event organised under the guidance of BU Vice-Chancellor Professor Geetanjali Das, aimed to promote academic integrity among students, researchers, and faculty members.

The workshop was inaugurated by Head of the Postgraduate Department Professor Sukanta Kumar Tripathy and Registrar of the BU Dr Sachidananda Nayak. They highlighted the importance of using Turnitin plagiarism detection software and other e-resources in maintaining the quality of academic work and preventing plagiarism.

Raghunath Prasad Padhi Library Coordinator Professor Jyoshna Sahu provided insights into the practical applications of Turnitin PDS, shedding light on its various features and benefits in academic writing.

The training session was led by Gautam Raval and Abhishek Ray, Training Specialists from Turnitin India Private Limited. They conducted in-depth sessions on how Turnitin PDS can be effectively used for plagiarism detection and academic integrity, covering various functional aspects of the software.

A large number of students, researchers, faculty members and academic staff participated in the workshop.

In Sambalpur

Man beaten to death in front of family

In retaliation for stabbing relative of accused

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

A youth was thrashed to death by a group of four persons in broad daylight in front of his family in Thelkopada under the Town police station in Sambalpur town on Saturday afternoon.

The deceased was alleged to have attacked a relative of the accused with a sharp knife in the morning.

The deceased, identified as Sony Sandha, was a sweeper at the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH). In the morning, he had an altercation with one Chaman Behera, the brother of one of the accused, while having tea. Sandha attacked him with a knife and fled the scene.

The brother and relatives of injured Chaman were on the lookout for Sandha since morning. When he returned home around 1.30 pm, the four accused thrashed him to the middle of the road with wooden batons and other weapons. All these were happening in front of the deceased's family. Later, when Sandha was rushed to the DHH, doctors declared him dead.

Shivam Sandha, the brother of the deceased, said, "They killed my brother in front of us. As they were angry about the morning incident, we kept quiet for a while. My brother undoubtedly was taking drugs, and as he had injured their brother with a knife, we thought it would be a lesson.

SDPO Tophan Bag said, "A team has been formed to nab the accused people the family has mentioned. We are investigating whether the deceased had any criminal antecedent. We have deployed a platoon of police force in the spot to prevent any further untoward situation."

Birla Tyres workers hold dharna

BJD says their demands justified

UBACHAK MOHANTY ■ BALESWAR

Former workers of Birla Tyres staging a stir pertaining to their long standing unresolved issues, particularly reengagement of workers in the age group above 50, embarked on a dharna in front of the plant gate.

BJD leader and MP candidate of last election Dr Lekhashri Samantsinghar held discussions with the agitators. She said the issue involving the bread and butter of the workers is a sensitive one and must be urgently resolved.

The present management respecting their workmanship should give them employment with a justified salary, said Samatsinghar. "The BJD always stood by the workers and for their cause. The issue is highly sensitive and if required the party (BJD) would raise it on the floor of the Assembly," she asserted.

Notably, the Birla Tyres, a profiting making unit, was closed for several months since April 2021 for financial crunch and following NCLT order, it was acquired jointly by the Dalmia Bharat Refractories Limited (DBRL) and Himadri Specialty Chemical Limited (HSCL).

As per the order of NCLT, Kolkata, a success resolution plan (SRP) was approved. According to the plan, the joint venture company would reengage the previous workers who were with Birla Tyres, besides extend them retirement benefits as per labour laws. However, strong resentment grew among the workers above 50 when the management allegedly adopted a dillydally approach.

Despite efforts of the district administration, including the Labour Department, an amicable solution couldn't be arrived at. As the impasse persisted, the disgruntled workers sat on dharna and remained firm in their demand although leaders of other political parties including Deputy Chief Whip and MLA Remuna Gobinda Das tried to diffuse the tension, said sources.

In Jagatsinghpur

Discrepancies alleged in green awardees choice

KAHNU NANDA ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

The district-level annual green awards 'Prakruti Mitra and Prakruti Bandhu' were bestowed at a function here on Tuesday. Seven organisations and eight individuals were felicitated for their outstanding work in environmental protection and conservation.

Speaking on the occasion, Jagatsinghpur MLA Amarendra Das said it is the responsibility of every individual and citizen to protect nature and underscored the need for large scale plantation to save environmental degradation.

District Education Officer (DEO) Niranjan Behera chaired the meeting and noted environmentalist Dr Jaya Krushna Panigrahi attended as guest in the event.

However, the selection of awardees was resented by many who alleged that there is discrepancy in the selection procedure. Notably, the State Forest and Environment Department has instituted State and district-level environment awards for two categories namely Prakruti Mitra for institutions and organisations and Prakruti Bandhu for individuals for their outstanding environmental works. Prakruti Mitra and Prakruti Bandhu awardees receive a certificate along with cash prizes of Rs 10,000 and Rs 5,000 respectively.

Sources informed that most of the Eco Clubs have received Prakruti Mitra awards and some eco club teachers have also received Prakruti Bandhu awards in the past few years in Jagatsinghpur district.

Sensing the mood of the public, MLA Das asked the district Collector to give detailed reports on the selection process as well as persons and organisations which have been bestowed with Prakruti Mitra and Prakuti Bandhu awards in the last ten years.

Old enmity in Keonjhar

Dumper driver mows down 2 persons

PNS ■ KEONJHAR

A miscreant allegedly mowed down two persons, including a woman, with a dumper at Nadua village under the Ghasipura police station in Keonjhar district on Sunday.

The deceased were identified as Panu Prusty and Sanjulata Palei.

As per reports, accused Bhanja Prusty from the same village mowed down Panu and Sanjulata with a dumper in broad daylight over some past enmity.

Both Panu and Sanjulata were rushed to the nearby hospital by locals. However, doctors declared them brought dead. Tension prevailed in the area following the incident.

Getting information, the Ghasipura police reached the spot and started an investigation into the incident. The accused was detained and his questioning was currently underway.

As per sources, the accused Bhanja Prusty is a driver. He allegedly mowed down the duo in an act of revenge over an old enmity. However, the reason behind the old enmity was yet to be ascertained.

15th eye donation prog by B'pur club

44-yr-old's eye balls collected

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

A resident of Kansari Sahi of Panigrahi Pantho, Aska Road, Brahmapur, Bhagban Sahu (44) died due to heart attack. The family came forward for eye donation with motivation from the Friends Helping Club.

Accordingly, Dr Smriti Ranjan Dhar and Dr Bibebknanda Sahu of Eye Department, MKCG Medical College and Hospital, Brahmapur collected "both the eye balls" of the deceased, who is survived by a single parent and daughter Sunena Sahu and mother Drupadi Sahu and two sisters Narmada Sahu and Rajalaxmi Sahu.

The family members and relatives of the deceased Ganesh Sahu, Rajendra Sahu, Deepak Sahu, Manoranjan Jena and Tutu Sahu among others and members of Friends Helping Club like KPK Subudhi were present at the time of eye donation. This was the 15th eye donation motivation by Friends Helping Club in 2024 and the first one in November.

'We're still standing where we were 39 yrs back'

Phanas Punji's struggle highlights Kalahandi's poverty

AJIT PANDA ■ NUAPADA

Phanas Punji has been informed by the ICDS CDPO that her role as cook at Amalapali village's Anganwadi Centre in Nuapada district ended on October 30 due to her age exceeding 60. This news left her feeling shattered, as the job was not only her primary source of income but also her hope for her grandson's education.

"This means I won't be able to send my grandson to higher secondary school next year," Phanas said. Being a cook at the AWC also brought a sense of purpose and community involvement to Phanas.

Phanas' life story is one marked by poverty and destitution. In the 1980s, her plight came into the national spotlight when she admitted to selling her husband's younger sister to a blind man for Rs 40 and a saree to save her three children from starvation. Her husband had abandoned the family due to mental illness, leaving her in desperation. "I

was blamed for it, but no one understood my compulsion," she said.

Phanas' struggle became emblematic of the crushing poverty in Kalahandi during that time. Her story attracted attention of reporters, government officials, and even then-Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who visited her in person. "I told Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi that I sold my sister-in-law out of poverty. They asked the officials to help me," she said.

The " helps" she got after the visit of the Prime Minister were - a ration card, Rs 10,000 to construct a house under the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), and a job of cook at the Anganwadi Centre, which paid her Rs 200 per month in 1986 and reached to Rs 5,000 at the time of her retirement. Now, with her only source of income reduced to Rs 1,000 from an old age pension, her future looks bleak.

Despite these helps, Phanas' family continued to struggle with poverty. Her son, Jagabandhu, grew up as a bonded laborer, working for years in brick kilns. His wife also accompanied him after marriage even after the birth of their children, while Phanas stayed behind to take care of the children and ensure her grandchildren could attend school when they grew. "We had hoped my mother's earnings would allow my son to pursue higher education," Jagabandhu said, adding, "But that dream was shattered when she was forced to retire."

Last Friday, Phanas met with the CDPO, requesting that Jagabandhu's wife be accomodated in the cook's position. Unfortunately, her request was denied because the minimum qualification for the job is +2, and Jagabandhu's wife is a primary school dropout.

As Phanas reflects on her current situation, she feels that little has changed since the day her life became national news. "After 39 years, we are still standing where we were back then," she lamented, burdened by the unchanging cycle of poverty in her family.

ST panel urges Centre, states to take policy action for LWE-displaced Gottikoya tribals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has asked the Union Home Ministry and Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha to submit a detailed report on the status of the Gottikoya tribals, who were displaced from Chhattisgarh due to Maoist violence and are now reportedly living in neighbouring states in difficult conditions, and are excluded from social security benefits.
The commission has requested the presence of the home ministry's secretary and the chief secretaries of the states concerned at a meeting scheduled on December 9 to discuss the issue, aim recommending a prompt policy decision to provide necessary support to the community.
In a letter sent to the ministry and the states on Friday, the NCST said it had received a petition in March 2022 stating that members of the Gottikoya community, who had relocated from Chhattisgarh to neighbouring states in 2005 to escape "violence between Maoist guerrillas and Indian security forces", have been facing significant challenges in their new locations.
According to tribal rights activists who have repeatedly raised the issue with the NCST and the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs , an estimated 50,000 tribals were displaced from Chhattisgarh due to LWE. They now live in 248 settlements in the forests of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra.
According to some reports, the Telangana government has taken back land from Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in at least 75 settlements, jeopardising their livelihoods and increasing their vulnerability, the NCST said, citing the petition.
Some reports also allege that forest department officials demolished the homes of the IDPs and destroyed their crops.
On November 7, 2022, the Commission issued a notice to the District Magistrate of Bhadradri Kothagudem in Telangana, seeking an action taken report or compliance report on the matter.
In a report submitted on September 9, 2023, the DM denied the allegations against forest officials, arguing that the Gottikoyas were encroaching on forest land, impacting forest resources and causing "irreparable damage to the environment and ecological balance, which could lead to natural calamities".
The magistrate added that since all the Gottikoyas had migrated from Chhattisgarh, they do not qualify as Scheduled Tribes in Telangana and are, therefore, ineligible for forest rights in the state.
The NCST held a meeting with the DM of Bhadradri Kothagudem on September 24 to discuss the matter in detail.
It recommended that the Union Ministry of Home Affairs secretary and the chief secretaries of Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha be requested to attend a session before the commission on December 9 and provide a comprehensive action taken report on the issue.
The director of the Centre for Economic and Social Studies in Telangana, along with representatives from the Forest Department, has also been asked to present a report on surveys conducted in Gottikoya settlements in the state.
In July, the government informed Parliament that tribal families displaced from Chhattisgarh due to LWE were unwilling to return to the state despite the availability of rehabilitation schemes and security measures in place through security camps.
Responding to a question by Congress MP Phulo Devi Netam, Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs ,Durgadas Uikey told the Rajya Sabha that the state government had organised teams to conduct surveys in the adjoining districts of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to identify tribal families displaced from Chhattisgarh due to LWE.

Panchayati Raj Ministry to host webinar on enhancing grassroots Governance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prioritising citizen-centric interventions to ensure effective and efficient delivery of services and enhancing overall governance at the grassroots level will be the focus of a webinar by the Panchayati Raj Ministry here on Monday.
The webinar seeks to emphasise the crucial role that panchayats, as the third tier of local self-government, play in rural governance, particularly in ensuring the timely and effective delivery of essential services to rural citizens.
"Panchayati Raj Institutions, operating at the grassroots level, are at the forefront of governance, ensuring that government schemes, welfare programs, and citizen services reach every corner of rural India.
"These services, ranging from water supply, sanitation, and healthcare, to digital literacy and infrastructure development, are critical in shaping the socio-economic development of rural areas and improving the quality of life for millions of citizens," the ministry said in a statement
Government officials, including chief secretaries and IT secretaries, from all states and Union Territories, deputy commissioners, district magistrates from aspirational districts, and all national e-governance awardees for the years 2022, 2023, and 2024 and their representatives will participate in the seminar.
The webinar will provide a platform for states and Union Territories to discuss their current service delivery models and outline their future plans to make governance more citizen-centric, the statement added.

VP Jagdeep Dhankhar emphasises importance of business and commerce in Society

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said those in commerce and business must not feel "heat of the system" as they are the job and wealth creators and contribute to social harmony, He also said that the principle of "economic nationalism" was more important than fiscal gains of a few individuals. Addressing an event of Maharaja Agrasen Technical Education Society, Dhankhar said he has always advocated that "those in trade, commerce, industry must not feel heat of the system. They must have respect in society".
The Vice President was of the view that this segment was the job and wealth creator and contributes to social harmony.
"They are economy drivers . They have learned the art in this country to give back to the society. By and large they do it," he said while noting that the freedom movement of India is dotted by their contribution. The Vice President also underlined the need to follow the principles of economic nationalism, whereby unnecessary imports can be curbed to save foreign exchange and help local industry flourish. He told the students that they should respect various views and should never ignore the other point-of-view to ensure social harmony. Dhankhar also said that divergent views help in course correction. "Tolerance is a virtue. It is an inalienable facet of social harmony," he said. Lauding the newly-launched internship scheme and National Education Policy (NEP), Dhankhar underlined that NEP evolved after three decades of intense discussions, taking into consideration thousands of inputs.

CM Yogi Adityanath calls SP a haven for criminals

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday accused the Samajwadi Party (SP) of being a gathering place for criminals and mafia figures. Speaking at a rally at Tilak Inter College in Hanumanganj, Phulpur, to support BJP candidate Deepak Patel, Adityanath alleged that prominent mafia figures like Atiq Ahmed, Mukhtar Ansari, and Khan Mubarak were all associated with SP. Referring to past high-profile crimes, he stated, "daylight murders of leaders like Krishnanand Rai and Raju Pal took place during SP's reign."
He added that during previous SP rule, public funds were funneled to the SP family and their allies, turning the state's administrative bodies into a "production house for rioters." He further remarked, "Today's SP has strayed from the values it was originally founded upon. It has become a refuge for mafia and criminals."
Adityanath also questioned the Congress party and the INDIA alliance's stance on Article 370, highlighting a recent Jammu and Kashmir government proposal calling for its reinstatement. He alleged that "Congress and its allies want to reinstate Article 370 to promote terrorism."
Adityanath assured voters that under the Modi administration, the move would never be allowed, and India would continue with "one flag, one Constitution."
Addressing a crowd alongside BJP leaders and local dignitaries like BJP candidate Deepak Patel, MPs Praveen Patel and Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi and Mayor Ganesh Kesari, Adityanath honored Prayagraj's cultural and spiritual heritage, calling it a land blessed by the Ganga. He mentioned the special significance of 2025, when Prayagraj will host the Mahakumbh, an event recently recognised as a cultural heritage by UNESCO, thanks to efforts by PM Modi.
Highlighting a decade of progress, Adityanath credited PM Modi's government for transforming the country's image and destiny. He pointed out that UP has also seen "double-engine government."
"Earlier, UP was known for anarchy and riots; women were unsafe, farmers were ignored, and youth couldn't find jobs," he said. Under SP rule, he claimed, "even government jobs were auctioned off beforehand, and farmers and the poor did not receive necessary benefits."
The Chief Minister also criticised SP for straying from the principles upheld by leaders such as Jayaprakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia, and Janeshwar Mishra, stating, "Today's SP has lost those ideals and has become a haven for criminals and mafia."

India to stress climate finance and protection for vulnerable communities at COP29 in Baku

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As world leaders and climate negotiators converge in Baku for COP29, beginning Monday, India is set to bring renewed focus to the urgent need for climate finance, accountability and protection for vulnerable communities. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not attend the conference, and environment minister Bhupender Yadav may also be absent, with Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Kirti Vardhan Singh leading the 19-member delegation instead.
India's national statement is scheduled for November 18-19. India's key priorities at the conference are likely to focus on ensuring accountability of developed nations on climate finance, strengthening resilience for vulnerable communities, and achieving an equitable energy transition, experts anticipate.
Dr Arunabha Ghosh, CEO of the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), emphasised that COP29 must go beyond promises, pushing developed nations to accelerate their paths to net zero and meet their financial commitments.
"The climate COPs are about raising ambition, enabling action, and, most importantly, holding everyone accountable. While COP28 resulted in many promises, it let developed countries off the hook. COP29 must be about accountability," said Ghosh.
"The largest historical emitters must move faster and raise their ambition.
Climate finance should be consistent, convenient, catalytic, and credible, and COP29 must ensure it delivers real resources and capacity to protect the most vulnerable."
This year's negotiations are anticipated to tackle the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance, a critical benchmark that could reach trillions of dollars annually, a figure many developing nations insist is essential to combat climate change effectively.
Ali Mohamed, Kenya's Climate Change Envoy, reinforced the urgency for a "Finance COP" that prioritises financing without deepening debt burdens for nations already struggling to adapt to climate impacts.
"For Africa, it is important that the final goal agreed in Baku should not worsen our debt situation," Mohamed said. "The Framework on Global Climate Resilience needs to translate into real actions that support agriculture, water, health, biodiversity, infrastructure, and human settlements."
Dr Frances Colan, Senior Director for International Climate Policy at the Center for American Progress, highlighted the conference's importance following the re-election of Donald Trump in the US, who is anticipated to adopt policies favouring oil and gas expansion.
In a departure from past conferences, India will not host a pavilion at COP29.
This absence also comes as India balances its role as a developing nation with rising energy demands and a focus on economic growth, particularly as the world looks to emerging economies for leadership in reducing emissions.
The release of the Global Carbon Budget on November 13 will provide a detailed assessment of current emission trends and the global trajectory toward meeting the Paris Agreement targets. Linda Kalcher, Executive Director of Strategic Perspectives, underscored that the EU must step up its efforts in response to shifting US climate policies.
"The EU is one of the most reliable partners on climate finance for developing countries, but it cannot hide from the moment," Kalcher noted.

Russia's Deputy PM Manturov and EAM Jaishankar to co-chair key commission meeting

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister, Denis Manturov and external affairs minister S Jaishankar will jointly hold on Tuesday a key session of the intergovernmental Russian-Indian commission on trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural "working visit" to India.
As part of the visit, he will take part in the plenary session of the Russian-Indian Business Forum in Mumbai on November 11, the Russian Embassy said in a statement on Sunday.
The event in Mumbai is aimed at expanding cooperation and ties between the entrepreneurs of the two countries, the statement said.
There will be thematic sessions on current areas of interaction, including industrial cooperation, transport and logistics, finance, digital technologies, and interregional ties.
It is being organised by the Business Council for Cooperation with India and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).
On November 12, in New Delhi, First Deputy Prime Minister Manturov jointly with External Affairs Minister Jaishankar will hold the 25th Session of the Intergovernmental Russian-Indian Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation, it said.
As part of his visit, the First Deputy Prime Minister also has a number of bilateral meetings planned, the embassy said in the statement.

Drone seizures along India-Pakistan border double to 200 amid rising security concerns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Drone seizures along the International Border in Punjab have doubled to 200 as Pakistani syndicates continue to push narcotics and weapons to "destabilise" India by inducing drug addiction in the youth and "disintegrating" social harmony, the Border Security force (BSF) said.
With the recovery of four more drones in the last 24 hours, over 200 Pakistan-based rouge drones have been seized along this border, it said in a statement issued on Saturday.
The BSF guards the 2,290 km of this border running on India's western flank, including 553 km of the front along Punjab.
The International Border also runs along Jammu in Jammu and Kashmir (LoC in Kashmir), Rajasthan and Gujarat.
The BSF had seized a total of 107 drones at the Punjab border in 2023.
The BSF said the almost doubled up drones seizure this year is a "significant landmark" and "remarkable milestone" that "reflects the force's enhanced anti-drone strategies and the deployment of advanced technical counter-measures along the border."
BSF troops, as per the force, have implemented "increasingly accurate" anti-drone drills, resulting in a significant setback for Pakistani narcotic syndicates attempting to push in drugs and weapons into the Indian territory with an objective to "destabilise" it by inducing drug addiction in the young generation and "disintegrating" social harmony.
A senior BSF officer told PTI that the more than 200 drones seizure this year includes those unmanned aerial vehicles which were shot down by its troops using rifles, jammed in- flight with the use of anti-drone technology and those that were recovered lying on the fields on the basis of intelligence inputs or information provided by the locals.
Almost all of these drones are Chinese-made and they carry drugs, small arms and ammunition as payload. However, drugs are the highest sent consignment, the officer said.
The drone menace, which started around 2019-20 along this front, is dominant in the border districts of Amritsar and Tarn Taran in Punjab.
BSF officials have said all the drugs coming from across the Pakistan border into Punjab were now coming through the air route via drones as compared to the earlier land route using pipes pushed from the Pakistan border and many times by being flung from over the fence.

Congress claims India faces 'demand crisis' due to income stagnation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Sunday claimed India was facing a "demand crisis" due to sustained and said the 'double engine' of private investment and mass consumption that powered the UPA's decade of sustained GDP growth has been "derailed" in the last ten years of the Modi government.
Congress general secretary in-charge communications, Jairam Ramesh, urged the government to accept what the Congress has been proposing - raising MGNREGA wages to a minimum of Rs 400 per day, guaranteeing MSP and a loan waiver for farmers, and a monthly income support scheme for women - to kickstart income growth in rural India.
He said that with each passing day, the tragedy of India's dying consumption story becomes more evident.
Last week, several CEOs from India Inc raised the alarm over the 'shrinking' middle class and now, new data from NABARD's All India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey (NAFIS) 2021-22 adds to the evidence that India's demand crisis is a result of sustained income stagnation, he said in a statement.
Citing key takeaways from the survey data, Ramesh said the average monthly household income for Indians is Rs 12,698 to Rs 13,661 for agricultural households and Rs 11,438 in non-agricultural households.
"Assuming an average household size of 4.4, the per capita income in rural areas is an estimate Rs 2,886 per month - less than Rs 100 a day. The vast majority of Indians therefore have very little money for discretionary consumption beyond that of basic necessities," Ramesh said, citing the data.
"This is hardly the exception - nearly every piece of evidence points to this same damning conclusion: that the average Indian can buy less today than they could 10 years ago. This is the ultimate root cause for India's consumption slowdown," he claimed.
Citing Labour Bureau's Wage Rate Index data, Ramesh said real wages for labourers stagnated between 2014 and 2023, and in fact declined between 2019 and 2024. Further, he cited the Ministry of Agriculture's Agricultural Statistics data to state that under Dr Manmohan Singh, real wages for agricultural labourers grew at 6.8 per cent each year, he said. "Under Mr Modi, real wages for agricultural labourers declined by 1.3 per cent each year," Ramesh said.
Citing Periodic Labour Force Survey Series data, Ramesh said the average real earnings over time have stagnated between 2017 and 2022 across all employment types - salaried workers, casual workers, and self-employed workers.
He also cited Centre for Labour Research and Action data to claim that real wages of brick kiln workers have stagnated or declined between 2014 and 2022. He added that brick kilns involve intensive labour and are a low-paying work of last resort for India's poorest.
"As the government's own Economic Survey (2024) acknowledged, 'private sector GFCF (Gross Fixed Capital Formation) in machinery and equipment and intellectual property products has grown cumulatively by only 35 per cent in the four years to FY23. This is not a healthy mix. It is about to get worse, with new project announcements by the private sector falling by 21 per cent between FY23 and FY24," he said.
The government must accept this proposal to kickstart income growth in rural India after a decade of stagnation, Ramesh said.
The Congress last week had alleged that deliberate destruction of MSMEs through neglectful policy-making, a blundering demonetisation, a botched-up GST rollout, and the unplanned COVID-19 lockdown is partly responsible for the shift away from labour-intensive growth.

Maharashtra Assembly election: It is all within the family

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Amid parties accusing rivals of promoting dynastic politics, the Maharashtra assembly election scheduled on November 20 will see brothers, cousins and father-children in the fray, with members of the same family taking on each other in some seats.

In one constituency, the battle is between husband and wife, while in another seat has an uncle and nephew pitted against each other.

In the high stakes battle of Pawars, debutant Yugendra Pawar, the candidate of the Nationalist Congress Party (SP) (NCP-SP) led by Sharad Pawar, will take on his uncle and Ajit Pawar, representing the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), in the Baramati seat. Ajit Pawar, the deputy chief minister of the state, has won the Baramati Assembly seat seven times and has also bagged the Baramati Parliamentary seat once.

This is the second time that Baramati, the bastion of Pawars, will see a contest within the family. In the 2024 General Election, Sunetra Pawar, the deputy CM's wife, was defeated by his cousin and NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule in the Baramati Parliamentary seat.

In the neighbouring Karjat-Jamkhed seat, Rohit Pawar, another nephew of the deputy CM is in the fray as the NCP (SP) candidate against Ram Shinde of the BJP. Rohit Pawar is the grand-nephew of Sharad Pawar.

In the Kannad constituency's Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar seat, independent candidate Harshwardhan Jadhav is pitted against his estranged wife and Shiv Sena candidate Sanjana Jadhav, the daughter of BJP leader and former Union minister Raosaheb Danve.

Sanjana Jadhav's brother, Santosh Danve, is contesting from Bhokardan in Jalna as the BJP candidate.

Amit Deshmukh and Dhiraj Deshmukh, Congress candidates and sons of former state chief minister Vilasrao

Deshmukh, are in the poll race from Latur City and the ajoining Latur Rural seats, respectively.

Similarly, Nitesh Rane and Nilesh Rane, sons of BJP MP and former Maharashtra chief minister Narayan Rane, are in the fray from Kudal and Kankavli constituencies as nominees for the Shiv Sena and the BJP, respectively.

In Mumbai, the Thackeray cousins are in the fray from different seats. While sitting Shiv Sena (UBT) sitting MLA, Aaditya Thackeray, is re-contesting from Worli, his maternal cousin Varun Sardesai is contesting from Vandre (Bandra) East Assembly seat on the party's ticket.

Aaditya's cousin, Amit Thackeray, son of Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) head Raj Thackeray, is contesting from neighbouring Mahim seat in Mumbai.

Former Maharashtra minister Ganesh Naik is contesting from Airoli seat as a BJP candidate, while his son Sandeep is in the fray from the neighbouring Belapur constituency as NCP (SP) candidate.

Similarly, Vijaykumar Gavit, Maharashtra minister and his daughter Heena Gavit, a former MP are also in the poll race. While senior Gavit is contesting as the BJP candidate from Nandurbar seat, his daughter is in the fray from neighbouring Akkalkuwa constituency as an independent.

In Islampur, Jayant Patil, NCP (SP) state chief, is in the fray, while his nephew and former Maharashtra minister, Prajakt Tanpure, is contesting from Rahuri on the party's ticket.

NCP minister Chhagan Bhujbal is contesting from Yevala, while his nephew and former MP Sameer Bhujbal is in the fray from Nandgaon seat as an independent.

Ashish Shelar, BJP's Mumbai president, is in the fray from Mumbai's Vandre (Bandra) West, a constituency known to be the home of several Bollywood personalities, while his brother and party candidate Vinod Shelar is contesting from Malad West.

BJP's Santukrao Hambarde is contesting the Nanded Lok Sabha bypoll, while his brother and sitting MLA Mohanrao Hambarde is contesting the Assembly polls from Nanded South Assembly seat as a Congress candidate. The Nanded Lok Sabha byelection, necessitated due to the death of sitting Congress MP Vasantrao Chavan, is also scheduled on November 20.

PM Modi attacks Congress in Gumla

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BOKARO / GUMLA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday attacked the Congress, accusing that its 'shahi parivar' (royal family) is hell bent on breaking the ST-SC-OBC unity to snatch reservations under an evil design. Addressing a Bharatiya Janata Pary (BJP) election rally at Gumla, he accused the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-led coalition of looting the state's resources such as minerals, forest, sand and coal and putting 'Roti-Beti-Mati' (bread, land and daughter) at grave threat. He also accused the ruling dispensation of fuelling illegal immigration.

"The Congress knows that if STs, SCs and OBCs are united, they will pose a threat to the party's existence. This is the reason the shahi parivar is hell bent on break their unity. They want to snatch reservations. The Congress is trying to pit one tribal community against another. Munda against Oraon, Lohra against Kharia, Kharwar against Korwa etc. With an agenda to break the tribal society's strength," he said.

The Congress cannot tolerate tribals in higher posts, which is why it opposes Droupadi Murmu's elevation (to the post of President) and continues to insult her, the PM said, adding former Jharkhand chief minister, Champai Soren, was also insulted. The BJP is committed to restoring tribal pride and Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh will be celebrated for one year from November 15 across the country to honour tribal icon Birsa Munda, he said. Modi also promised that those who looted Jharkhand's resources and played with the future of its youth will be put behind bars. Earlier addressing BJP rally in Bokaro, the PM accused the Congress-JMM coalition ogf dividing OBCs by pitting sub-castes against each other, launching the 'ek rahoge toh safe rahoge' (be united to be safe) slogan.

BJP leader murder: father alleges TMC hand, woman accused held

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A woman has been arrested for her alleged connection with the murder of a local Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader in Usthi village in the Diamond Harbour police district in South 24 Parganas. "We are exploring the angle of the deceased having been involved in a relationship and any quarrel with the arrested person," a senior police officer said.

They added, the accused has confessed to having hit the deceased with sharp weapons resulting in his death.

The corpse of Prithviraj Naskar, a district level BJP leader, was discovered inside the local party office at Usthi on Saturday. His clothes were soaked in blood and the office was locked from outside, the police noted. They had to break open the door to recover his body.

The BJP has accused the Trinamool Congress (TMC) for the murder. In a public statement, the victim's father has alleged that local TMC leaders had threatened his son on several occasions for his political allegiance.

"During the Durga Pujas he had hung placards at various places demanding justice for the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital doctor, who was sexually assaulted and murdered on August 9. TMC leaders threatened him with dire consequences and asked him to take down the placards, which he refused to. His murder is a clear fallout of that controversy," he said and demanded justice for his son.

The BJP claims a breakdown of law and order in Diamond Harbour.

Sukanto Majumdar, state BJP president said, "This is the same area where lakhs of people are not allowed to vote. It is the same area where the police dance to the tune of the local TMC MP (read Abhishek Banerjee), who wins by a margin of 7.5 lakh votes. So you can expect the consequences a person might suffer for raising his or her voice."

BJP dismisses Abhishek Banerjee as senior TMC leaders fuel succession fire

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Bharatiya Janata Pary (BJP) has scoffed at claims made by some senior Trinamool Congress (TMC) leaders projecting Abhishek Banerjee as the next chief minister (CM) of West Bengal "By the time when he comes of age, the TMC will be history and will be cast into the Bay of Bengal by the people of the state," said Sukanto Majumdar, state BJP president. Majumdar said that the TMC would not survive the 2026 Assembly Election.

Everyone has a freedom to make his or her suggestions and think freely. TMC leaders are no exception to this. They may nurture dreams but truth be told, the people of West Bengal have made up their minds and will throw out the TMC in Bay of Bengal in the 2026 elections. There will be no TMC in Bengal," he said.

His statement came amid the ongoing debate in the TMC over who will succeed Mamata Banerjee in the state. The BJP leader's statement also came at a time when number of senior leaders openly backed the candidature of Abhishek Banerjee, the current party general secretary and nephew of the CM.

Supporting Abhishek, Kunal Ghosh, TMC spokesperson said, "Abhishek is not a contender. He is a successor." Ghosh in an online post wrote that Abhishek was his leader and was destined to be the next CM of Bengal. Calling him to be a rising star, who deserved to be nurtured and kept under constant watch, Ghosh wrote, "In the course of time, after Mamata Di, Abhishek will one day become the CM of Bengal," as he was the real "bearer and carrier" of the chief minister's legacy.

Even senior leader such as Saugato Roy, who has criticised by many for being a burden on the party and for

cutting short ambitions of junior leaders, too said, "Abhishek is the best person after Mamata Banerjee and is the future leader of the party."

Both Roy's and Ghosh's remarks comes at the heels of an observation made by Kalyan Banerjee, another senior leader and MP, who sought to put to rest what many a senior leaders have termed an "uncomfortable debate," hinting at the point that Mamata Banerjee not going to quit any time soon.

He hammered home the point citing the example of the newly elected American president Donald Trump. "Age is not a factor. Trump's election has proved that. If at the age of 78 he can get elected then it once again reinforces the point that if a person is capable of working and continues to performs and then age is no bar for him," the MP said.

The present debate not only comes amid continuous churning inside the party for the past several months and the wake of a series of controversies, including the rural housing scam, the cash-for-job scam, RG Kar sexual assault and murder case, etc..

The debate reached a fever pitch some months ago forcing the chief minister put it to rest by the CM. "Both younger and older generation will work together to serve the people. The younger people will respect the elders and the elders will encourage the juniors," she said.

Referring to the issue the Left leadership said that the controversy was being created by the TMC to divert attention from the real issues. "It is their internal matter. Who becomes the leader is their problem. They are making this a public issue in order to arrest the gradual alienation," said Sujan Chakraborty, CPI(M) leader.

Railway employee crushed to death due to negligence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA / NEW DELHI

A lack of coordination between two rail employees during a shunting operation led to one of them getting stuck in the buffers of the engine and a power car, causing his death in the Barauni Junction of Bihar on Saturday.

A joint preliminary investigation report, signed by five rail officials, said the two pointsmen - Amar Kumar and Mohd Suleman - failed to properly coordinate with each other, due to which Suleman gave the wrong signal to the locomotive driver, resulting in the death of 25-year-old Kumar. A pointsman's job is to detach train engines from coaches. A clip of the body stuck between the buffers is being widely circulated on social media. The preliminary report has held Suleman responsible for the incident. However, Suleman has defended himself in his written submission and held the locomotive driver responsible for the accident. According to rail officials, another senior-level inquiry had also been ordered.

Kharge slams PM Modi, BJP's *batenge-katenge* slogan

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Mallikarjun Kharge, president of the Congress pary, tore into Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his as well as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) slogans "batenge toh katenge" and "ek hain toh safe hain" while releasing the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) poll manifesto for the Maharashtra Assembly election. He accused the Prime Minister and his party indulging in divisive politics during the campaign.

"Modi claimed that this red book is an urban Naxal book and it is a piece of Marxist literature. Yet, in 2017, Modi himself presented the same book to then-President Ram Nath Kovind. He even said it had blank pages," Kharge said. Kharge also demanded to know as to what did Yogi Adityanath, chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, and the PM mean when they say "batenge toh katenge" (divided, we die) and 'ek hain toh safe hain' (together we are safe) respectively.

"What do they mean by this? Aap kisko kaatangey (who will you kill)? Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, who sacrificed themselves to keep India united. This slogan is by Yogi Ji. Modi Ji says, 'ek hain toh safe hain'. I do not know which of these slogans will work. The fact remains you belong to the group that killed the very person who gave us independence," Kharge said.

Listing the salient points in the three-party front's poll manifesto, Kharge said that the MVA, if elected to power in Maharashtra, would conduct caste census and increase the ceiling of reservation beyond the current 50 per cent in line with what is prevailing in Tamil Nadu. 'Through this census, we do not intend to divide people, but try to understand the status of various communities and ensure that they receive more benefits," he added.

"Our guarantees will go a long way the uplifting households and every family will get relief of around Rs 3.5 lakh in a year," the Congress president said while releasing the manifesto with alliance partners.

MVA manifesto highlights caste census, loan waivers and jobs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

The Congress-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) has promised to provide a monthly allowance of Rs 3,000 under the Mahakshmi scheme, a monthly stipend of Rs 4,000 to the unemployed, provide six gas cylinders annually at Rs 500 each and launch of free bus service for men in the state.

Apart from conducting caste census and increasing the reservation limit above the cap of 50 per cent, the MVA -- in its manifesto Maharashtranama for the State Assembly election -- has promised to waive farm loan up to Rs 3 lakh and give plus a Rs 50,000 incentive for those who clear their loans on time, Rs 25 lakh health insurance scheme and free medicines to people, open up recruitments for 2, 50,000 vacancies in the state government and create 2.50 lakh new jobs every year for the next five years

The MVA has promised to frame a Nirbhay Maharashtra policy and implement the Shakti Laws for security of women and children, provide two days' menstrual leave, Rs. 1 lakh to each girl upon attaining age of 18 and free cervical cancer vaccines to girls between 9-16 years old.

Apart from the loan waiver, the MVA, if elected to power, has promised to review and enhance schemes for the survivors of lakhs of farmers who have committed suicide in the past few decades, ensure MSP of agro-produce, simplify the crop insurance schemes, launch 'pink' and 'saffron' agriculture revolutions for the benefit of the onion and tomato growers, build permanent roads linking farmlands, among others.

On the health care front, the MVA has promised to increase the scope of the Mahatma Phule Jan Arogya Yojana, implement a 'Right To Health' Policy, form a 'Tribal Health & Nutrition Mission, improve and augment health-care facilities and infrastructure in mofussil or remote areas and build a 100-bed hospital in each taluka of the state.

BJP promises anti-conversion law, increased doles in Maharashtra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday promised to enact an-anti conversion law with stringent provisions in Maharashtra, and also assured a skill census for training as per industry needs as well as free ration to low-income families.

Amit Shah, Union Minister for Home Affairs, unveiled in Mumbai a 25-point 'Sankalp Patra 2024', which promises an increase in government's allowance for women to Rs2,100 per month from Rs1,500 under the Ladki Bahin scheme.

The party, in its manifesto for the November 20 state Assembly election, also promised to create 25 lakh job opportunities and assured a stipend of Rs 10,000 every month to 10 lakh students in the state. The ruling Mahayuti comprises the BJP, Shiv Sena of the Eknath Shinde faction and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) led by Ajit Pawar, the deputy chief minister of the state.

The BJP's manifesto promises an anti-conversion law and provides for stringent action against forced and deceitful conversions. Though the skill census, the ruling party assured to ascertain the needs of the industry and upgrade skill training wherever necessary.

Under the Akshay Anna Yojana, low-income families will be provided free food items every month through the Public Distribution System (PDS), as per the manifesto. The BJP also plans to develop the state into an advanced robotic and Artificial Intelligence (AI) training hub.

It also promises to create 10 lakh new business leaders through the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Akanksha centres in each district. The party promises to create 50 lakh lakpati didis by 2027, for which an industrial cluster of 500 self-help groups will be created and an initial corpus of Rs1,000 crore will be provided.

The manifesto promises to develop Nagpur, Pune, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Nashik and Ahilyanagar as modern aeronautical and space manufacturing centres.

It also promises that the SGST on the purchase of fertilisers will be returned to farmers as grants. The prices of essential commodities will be kept stable, according to the manifesto.

Addressing rallies in Raver assembly constituency in Jalgaon and Malkapur seat in Buldhana, Shah pointed out to a recent memorandum submitted by the Ulema Council to the opposition Congress seeking 10 per cent reservation in jobs and education for the Muslim community.

"Maharashtra Congress has agreed to end reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs and give it to Muslims as demanded by the Ulema Council," Shah said in Buldhana. The demand for 10 per cent quota for the Muslim community would eat into the benefits of Dalits, tribals and Other Backward Classes, since there is a 50 per cent cap on quota and any increase will come at the cost of existing ones, he told the gathering.

"Maha Vikas Aghadi leaders' lust for power has blinded them to long-term consequences of their actions on marginalised communities. The BJP is firmly committed to welfare of all communities but is strictly against any form of reservations for Muslims. As long as there is even one BJP MP or MLA, we will oppose religion-based reservation. This is our commitment," he asserted. Shah said the BJP's vision for the state aligns with the ideals of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Shah also dared Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray to get Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to hail Hindutva ideologue VD Savarkar and Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray. Shah also pointed out that under the Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA dispensation, Maharashtra lost its competitive edge in industrial growth and the state fell to fourth rank,

Shah also said Thackeray was siding with the Congress, whose leaders have insulted Balasaheb Thackeray and Hindutva ideologue Veer Savarkar. After releasing the manifesto for the November 20 Maharashtra assembly polls, Shah also said his party will not allow religion-based reservation in the country. "I want to ask Uddhav Thackeray if he can request Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to say two good words for Veer Savarkar," Shah said.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

A rich legacy

Chief Justice DY Chandrachud's tenure leaves a legacy marked by bold decisions, though not without controversies

As Chief Justice DY Chandrachud's tenure concludes on November 10, his impactful decisions will be closely scrutinised for the lasting mark they have left on India's journey toward progress and development. He became the 50th CJI on November 8, 2022. During his tenure as a judge and as CJI, Chandrachud has been involved in more than 700 judgements including constitution bench judgements, many of which he has authored, dissented and concurred with. His tenure stands as one of the most impactful in recent years, marked by bold judicial reforms, significant rulings, and an enduring commitment to upholding constitutional rights. His time in office was characterised by an effort to reshape the judiciary to make it more accessible, transparent, and technologically adept. However, this legacy was not without its share of controversies, reflecting both the high expectations and challenges that come with the nation's highest judicial role. His approach to jurisprudence was firmly rooted in constitutional principles and a progressive interpretation of the law.

His tenure is defined by landmark rulings that addressed some of India's most pressing social and political issues. The free speech and right to dissent that are fundamental to any democracy were close to his heart. Under his leadership, the apex court repeatedly affirmed the rights of individuals to dissent and question authority, especially in cases where government overreach was alleged. His rulings in cases challenging sedition laws and other colonial-era restrictions reflected a judicial commitment to curbing censorship. Chandrachud introduced significant technological advancements within the judiciary to make it more accessible and efficient. His commitment to digitalisation and virtual court proceedings made it accessible to all. His efforts to streamline case backlogs, prioritise the rights of underprivileged communities and modernise the judicial system have left a lasting impact. He championed judicial independence and frequently emphasised the need for an apolitical judiciary. These reforms have set a foundation for future chief justices to build on. However, Chandrachud faced criticism over his handling of certain high-profile political cases, especially those involving state surveillance and alleged misuse of power. His reluctance to prioritise some of these cases was interpreted by some as an unwillingness to confront the government, casting a shadow on his otherwise steadfast stance on judicial independence. His attempts to bring transparency to the controversial collegium system were met with mixed reactions. Indeed, Chief Justice DY Chandrachud's tenure will be remembered as one marked by significant contributions to the evolution of Indian jurisprudence and judicial processes. DY Chandrachud commitment to rights-based judgements, technological modernisation and accessibility reforms represents his enduring contributions to the judiciary.

PICTALK

People take part in a boating competition, in Nadia PTI

The business of power and the politics of loyalty

SANTHOSH **MATHEW**

As history has shown, when influential businessmen back controversial leaders, the consequences reach far beyond politics—impacting nations and the global landscape

In the world of investment banking, there's an adage: "Insult is an investment." The idea is simple—those who are underestimated and ignored often end up making the most successful moves, purchasing stocks at a lower price before the crowd catches on. In political terms, this strategy mirrors how Donald Trump, after being insulted and sidelined following the 2020 election, has managed to turn his defeat into a powerful comeback.

But Trump's resurgence isn't just a matter of political savvy—it's also about alliances, the kind that transcend national borders and redefine power structures.

One such alliance is his relationship with Vladimir Putin, which, when examined through a historical lens, resembles the complex political alliances of the past. Trump's approach to Putin could be seen as a Trump card of sorts. A new world order under autocratic rule, with Putin at the helm, is a scenario that increasingly seems possible.

Amid these shifting global tides, there's one group that Trump has promised to "save": the Hindus. While India's Prime Minister Modi may claim to be their protector, Trump's Diwali pledge to safeguard Hindus worldwide paints a different picture. For some, this might sound like a lofty promise, but for others, it is seen as a vital lifeline in a world where geopolitical alliances matter more than ever.

Meanwhile, India's relationship with Canada is one of the most sensitive flashpoints in this evolving narrative. Canada, a close ally of the US is already at odds with India over several issues, particularly as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's administration has taken stances seen as anti-India. As Trudeau's policies potentially fuel Sikh extremism, the instability could escalate, further complicating India's geopolitical position. If Sikh militancy gains traction, it may find unexpected allies in the form of Pakistan, as Islamic extremism and Sikh separatism threaten to form a dangerous alliance—a combination that could undermine India's internal security. This scenario isn't entirely unlike the world that Henry Ford once supported, albeit in a different era and context. Ford, the founder of the Ford Motor Company, became infamous for his admiration of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis.

Ford's business interests aligned with the Nazi regime, including lucrative contracts that benefitted Ford's German subsidiary, Ford-Werke. While Ford's connection to Hitler was ideological, it was also financial, a pragmatic alliance that offered both political and economic rewards. Fast forward to today, and we see a striking similarity between Ford's support for Hitler and Musk's endorsement of Trump.

Elon Musk, a tech magnate with enormous influence, has embraced Trump's populist message, praising him for his policies on deregulation and free markets. Musk's relationship with Trump may not be rooted in ideology to the same extent that Ford's was with Hitler, but the political and business calculations are eerily similar. Like Ford, Musk sees in Trump an opportunity to align his business interests with a powerful political figure. Musk's recent purchase of Twitter, his vocal support for Trump, and his willingness to use his platform to reshape public discourse are strategic moves, not just personal convictions.

> AMID THESE SHIFTING GLOBAL TIDES, THERE'S ONE GROUP THAT TRUMP HAS PROMISED TO "SAVE": THE HINDUS. WHILE INDIA'S PRIME MINISTER MODI MAY CLAIM TO BE THEIR PROTECTOR, TRUMP'S DIWALI PLEDGE TO SAFEGUARD HINDUS WORLDWIDE PAINTS A DIFFERENT PICTURE

At the heart of this dynamic is a simple truth: both Ford and Musk, at their respective times, recognised the value of political alignment in securing economic and business power. Ford saw his admiration for Hitler as a path to financial gain in a fractured Europe. Musk, meanwhile, sees his support for Trump as a means to ensure policies favourable to his empire, such as deregulation, low taxes, and the prioritisation of business over social welfare.

Just as Ford's relationship with the Nazi regime was instrumental in expanding his company's reach in Europe, Musk's ties to Trump could bolster his business interests in the current global economy.

Musk's approach to Trump is also a form of personal branding. Both men have cultivated larger-than-life personas, largely through social media, and both understand the power of controversy.

Just as Ford was able to influence public perception through his business prowess and his political affiliations, Musk uses his platform—Twitter, now X—to shape political discourse. Musk's support for Trump also mirrors Ford's early 20th-century nationalist rhetoric. While Ford's nationalism was overtly racial, Musk's alignment with Trump echoes a modern brand of populism, focused on nationalism, "America First" policies, and anti-establishment rhetoric. However, the ultimate question remains: What happens when business and politics intertwine in such a way that it threatens the very fabric of democratic institutions?

Ford's support for Hitler contributed to the global rise of fascism, and Trump's alliances with figures like Putin raised concerns about the future of democracy and global stability. Musk's role in this political theatre could either be a footnote in history or a major chapter in the ongoing struggle between corporate power and political freedom. The rise of populism, the fracturing of traditional alliances, and the unpredictable actions of powerful business figures like Musk and Trump all point to a future where global stability could be at risk.

The future is uncertain, but one thing is clear: as history has shown when powerful businessmen like Ford or Musk align themselves with controversial political figures, the consequences can be far-reaching and transformative. Whether for good or ill, their influence is undeniable, and their alliances, however pragmatic, will shape the world for years to come.

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

Creating a workplace culture that truly supports mental health

ASHA IYER **KUMAR**

In a workplace where mental health is prioritised, employees would feel confident, heard, valued and supported

The theme for Mental Health Day 2024, which was observed on October 10, was "mental health in the workplace". Although a month has passed since then, it is a theme that will remain relevant at all times of the year, given the rising incidents of burnouts and crashes in the professional sphere. The race has never been this fierce to corner the best bargains in life and in the process of touching the finish line first, we are disintegrating as family, workers and society. Our workspaces are turning into ticking time bombs with a multitude of nerves waiting to snap.

The deadlines in front of us are turning into death lines. As someone who has gone through a mental health condition and someone who has been through the trials of having to perform well at work during the ailment, and in the end been let off, I can say this much with certainty: We talk more and walk less. The active discussions that we are having on mental health in offices are not translating into workable actions and responses. Whether we use the word toxic or hostile, or

politics to describe inclement work conditions, there is an amount of disquiet hovering over workstations and cabins. Employees still struggle to define their boundaries and raise concerns without fear of judgment or retaliation.

This lack of open communication creates a festering environment where mental well-being takes a back seat to competition, productivity, and ambition.

To bridge this gap, I believe every organisation needs a Chief Emotional Intelligence Officer —a dedicated professional to prioritise the mental wellness of employees. This individual would serve as an accessible resource for emotional guidance, creating a safe harbour where employees can speak candidly about their mental and emotional challenges without fear of repercussions. Why is this crucial? Because mental health issues in the workplace are seldom isolated incidents—they are deeply intertwined with how individuals interact, collaborate, and handle the pressures of their roles. The CEIO would not only provide direct support but also foster a culture that values empathy, resilience, and open dialogue. They could organise workshops on emotional intelligence, manage peer support networks, and act as a mediator in times of conflict. By equipping employees with emotional tools and safe channels to address their struggles, companies can create a more harmonious and productive environment. A psychologist or therapist in the workspace would be invaluable in addressing the employees issues.

Think about the quiet suffering: employees with anxiety disorders who fear speaking up during meetings, those with depression who find it challenging to meet deadlines or those enduring chronic stress due to workplace politics. When left unaddressed, these issues don't just impact the individual—they disrupt team dynamics, reduce overall productivity, and lead to higher attrition.

By bringing mental health resources in-house, organisations send a powerful message: We care about you as a whole person, not just as a worker. In workplaces that still stigmatise open communication, a CEIO can lead by example, showing that seeking help is a strength, not a weakness. Imagine an office where an employee overwhelmed by stress could have a confidential conversation with a professional trained to listen and offer support. Or where tensions between coworkers could be resolved through mediation rather than letting resentment fester. This isn't just about providing a "quick fix" for mental health—it's about creating a sustainable, nurturing workplace culture. If we genuinely wish to prioritise mental health in the workplace, then it's time to go beyond well-meaning words and take actionable steps.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CHANDRACHUD'S LANDMARK VERDICTS

Madam — Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud, overall, an eminent, very erudite and well-mannered CJI. Even though he was a woke, liberal, let's give him the credit where he truly deserves. He was completely impartial. He was on the bench for the Ram Mandir verdict which ruled unanimously in favour of the temple. He withheld Article 370, he ruled in the favour of government for demonetisation, granted bail to Arnab Goswami, ruled against MVA in Maharashtra, accepted SEBI report on Adani against Hindenburg allegations, approved Central Vista project, upheld government powers pertaining to ED, CBI and PMLA, left same sex marriage decision on parliament or interpretation of Article on private ownership of resources, Assam Citizenship Amendment Act.

Some of the judgements may not align with our preference, but not everything can work in our favour. But my one regret is the Ganapati Aarti he shared with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his house. No doubt Modi Bhakts forgave him for this sole act. Side by side who forget his overlooking Bhima Koregaon undertrials and Umar Khalid's politically motivated jail. Whatsoever, a judge's task is to interpret the law and he did very creditably. Law making is the function of Parliament and not the Supreme Court. We will miss you a lot, your Lordship.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | *Faridabad*

FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENT

Madam— Apropos of the front page news 'Ruckus continues in J and K Assembly' (Nov 8), CM Omar Abdullah should himself evaluate how development and infrastructure have been made priority by the Union Government in comparison to the other states after the abrogation of Article 370 and security preparedness has been enhanced in the state. Jammu & Kashmir has top priority for the country both from a strategic, economic and social perspective. People of the state responded positively to the repeal of Article 370 and have voted for the National Conference for peace, development, jobs, growth and security. They want to get rid of terrorism. The Supreme Court has already upheld the validity of the repeal of Article 370 of the Constitution.

The former CM Farooq Abdullah, Mehbooba Mufti, Ghulam Nabi Azad, and Omar Abdullah should recall the darkest ages of the peak of terrorism and Pak-sponsored separatist activities, stone-pelting, and the most dreaded massacre of Hindus in the 1990s in their tenures. There is enough to believe that Article 370 was subservient to the political ecosystem than the people.

The security of the state and the country rests with the security forces. The Union Government has greater responsibility towards the J and K. CM Omar Abdullah and his government should know the Modi government's zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism as against the reconciliatory approach of the Congress government. While PoK is crying for re-unification with India, the NC government should not pursue retrograde politics.

Vinod Johri | *Delhi*

Stop political blame game

Rape, gangrape and murder are social crimes continuing since the dawn of 'civilisation' all across the world and which seem to have no end, proving that human beings are still left with several miles to go before turning truly humane. So whenever any such crime happens anywhere, the real culprits should be nabbed as early as possible, with the judiciary awarding exemplary punishment to the convicted. And if any influential person or persons are found to be protecting the criminals or diluting their crime, he/she/they must also be handed severe punishment. But character-assassinating the ruling party or government of the region along with the administrative head of the concerned region wherever such an unpardonable offence takes place is nothing but cheap, heartless politics within which the BJP and its leaders have scandalously immersed themselves, revolving around the Kolkata hospital case since early August.

Kajal Chatterjee | *Kolkata*

SAMOSA CONTROVERSY

Madam — It is full of political crises as genteel security staff ate away elitist samosas ordered from a 5-star hotel by the CM of Himachal Pradesh. CID has been called in for investigation as to how these staff could not understand that not all samosas are for everyone. This transgression needs Byomkesh Bakshi, RAW, IB, and CBI to find out how dare some poor guy thought he could get away eating Sukku ke samose. Also, the five-star hotel that supplied those Samose might have to be penalised for not writing a caution note on each samosa by writing, Only for Italians, and those Indians whose income is more than 50 lakh per month, etc.

What Jalebi was to Haryana, Samosas will be to Himachal Pradesh. Also, Maharashtra elections are just 10 days away, and Pappu has not yet talked about the Vada Pav factory. It is concerning for Mahayuti. Congress is a complete mess on edibles.

A Subramaniam Krishnan | *Mumbai*

Send your feedback to:
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FIRST COLUMN

SHARENTING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Only with awareness and proactive choices, parents can create a positive digital experience

SHAINY **SHARMA**

In the digital age, social media has become an integral part of everyday life, allowing people to connect, share, and communicate across vast distances. Of recent, in one of the studies, it was estimated that over 90 per cent of American children have a social media presence by the time they reach age 2. Today, many parents feel a sense of pride in their children's achievements and milestones and want to celebrate these moments with friends and family. They believe that social media offers an easy, instant way to share updates and receive supportive feedback.

This practice of parents sharing photos, videos and details about their children on social media is termed 'Sharenting' and is becoming a buzz in town. This practice may include baby photos, milestones, family activities, humorous incidents and personal achievements. Sharenting often begins as early as pregnancy announcements and continues through the child's growth, school events and sometimes even into adolescence.

Practicing sharing offers numerous ways to bridge physical distance and bring family members into the child's life virtually by creating family bonding for families separated by geography and maintaining close relations with extended family members; building online support communities where sharing can bring camaraderie and guidance from other parents experiencing similar challenges and preserve memories that can later be revisited by both the parents and potentially the children themselves but on the contrary, sharing faces substantial criticism, primarily concerning privacy, consent and ethical issues. Studies suggest that children who discover their lives

have been publicly documented without their consent may experience trust issues with their parents and may feel a loss of control over their personal stories.

As children grow up in a digital world, having a documented online presence from a young age can influence their self-perception, social development and relationships. Being exposed to a wide audience might increase the likelihood that children develop feelings of shame or insecurity about how they are portrayed online.

The word 'Sharenting' is a double-edged sword, offering benefits in the form of connection and memory preservation but carrying significant ethical and privacy implications. It becomes of utmost important for the parents to strike a balance and adopt responsible sharing practices such as seeking consent from their child when possible; avoiding sharing sensitive information such as full name, school, location, etc and periodically reviewing and removing older posts, thereby reducing their child's digital footprint and enabling them to control their online presence as they grow.

Only with awareness and proactive choices, parents can create a positive digital experience for their families while protecting their children's future in an increasingly connected world. Today's generation needs to create a new normal and prioritise a child's right to privacy, informed content as well and digital safety over the 'posting dopamine cycle.' Remember, the digital footprint of the child will last a lifetime, and privacy will give them power. Ultimately, responsible sharing will require mindfulness, ethical consideration, and the willingness to prioritise the child's well-being above the immediate gratification of social media validation.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Nutrient-based subsidy: Support and scrutiny balance

UTTAM **GUPTA**

While companies have the flexibility to set their MRP, these prices remain under close government scrutiny, ensuring affordability without undermining competition

Just around the time when the Rabi Crops season (October 2024 – March 2025) has commenced, there was a shortage of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) in many parts of the country.

DAP is a widely used complex fertiliser that supplies 46 per cent Phosphate or 'P' nutrients besides 18 per cent Nitrogen or 'N' (a ton of DAP contains 180 kg 'N' and 460 kg 'P'). The annual consumption of DAP is around 10 to 11 million tons. Against this, domestic production is less than half at around 4.5 - 4.8 million tonnes. The deficit is made up of imports from countries such as Russia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt and China. According to the Department of Fertilisers (DoF), the requirement of DAP during the current Rabi season is assessed to be 5.5 million tonnes. Out of this, 60 per cent or 3.3 million tonnes was to be imported.

This much material should have been purchased, transported and placed nearer the consumption areas before the commencement of the season. But, that was not to be. According to the Fertiliser Association of India (FAI), during April-September 2024, DAP imports were 1.96 million tons down from 3.45 million tons during the same period in 2023-24. The domestic production of DAP was 2.15 million tons down from 2.31 million tons during the same period last year. So, there was a reduction in supply of around 1.65 million tons compared to last year. This is the prime reason behind the shortage of DAP.

A plausible explanation could be that many countries from where DAP comes are in the middle east and the crisis due to the war involving Israel and others has led to disruption in the normal Red Sea route forcing the re-routing of ships through the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa. That involves much longer distance hence, taking additional time of up to 45 days for the consignment to reach Indian ports. But, it isn't simply a case of delay. It has more to do with policy issues. Under the existing policy, the Union Government asks manufacturers or importers to sell fertilisers to farmers at a low maximum retail price (MRP) unrelated to the cost of production/import and distribution (or cost of supply) which is higher. The excess cost of supply over MRP is reimbursed as a subsidy to the manufacturer/importer.

> THE ANNUAL CONSUMPTION OF DAP IS AROUND 10 TO 11 MILLION TONNES. AGAINST THIS, DOMESTIC PRODUCTION IS LESS THAN HALF AT AROUND 4.5 - 4.8 MILLION TONNES. THE DEFICIT IS MADE UP OF IMPORTS FROM COUNTRIES SUCH AS RUSSIA, MOROCCO, SAUDI ARABIA, JORDAN, EGYPT AND CHINA

In the case of urea, MRP is under 'statutory' control and subsidy varies from unit to unit (importer in case of import) depending on the cost. For non-urea fertilisers (there are 25 grades of such fertilisers including DAP) which are de jure decontrolled, the MRP is 'indirectly' controlled.

The government gives a 'uniform' subsidy on a per-nutrient basis to all manufacturers and importers under the Nutrient Based Scheme (NBS). Although they are free to fix the MRP, this is subject to scrutiny by the authorities. In an office memorandum dated January 17, 2024, the DoF has issued detailed guidelines for the evaluation of the "reasonableness" of the MRPs for all non-urea fertilisers covered under the NBS. To be effective from April 1, 2023, the guidelines prescribe maximum profit margins that will be allowed for fertiliser companies - 8 per cent for importers, 10 per cent for manufacturers and 12 per cent for integrated manufacturers (those producing finished fertilisers as well as intermediates such as phosphoric acid and ammonia).

The admissible profit margins are calculated as a percentage of their "total cost of sales", which covers the cost of production (landed cost in case of import), administrative/selling and distribution overheads, net interest and financing charges. Dealer's margin is allowed to the extent of 2 per cent of the MRP for DAP and muriate of potash (MOP), and 4 per cent for all other fertilisers covered under NBS. Companies earning "unreasonable profit", i.e. over and above the stipulated percentages, in a financial year (April-March) or FY will have to refund the same to the DoF by October 10 of the following FY. If they don't return the money within the said time limit, "an interest @12 per cent per annum is charged on a pro-rata basis on the refund amount from the next day of end of FY (i.e. in case of FY 2023-24, the interest would be charged from April 1, 2024)". The guidelines require fertiliser companies to "self-assess" unreasonable profits, based on the cost auditor's report along with audited cost data approved by their board of directors. This report and data have to be furnished to the DoF by October 10 of the following fiscal year. The DoF will then scrutinise the "reasonability of MRPs", as submitted by the companies, "for each completed previous FY (i.e. for FY 2023-24) by February 28, 2025". Following this scrutiny, the DoF will finalise a report on unreasonable profits earned, if any, to be recovered from the companies.

Such detailed regulations to the point of 'micro-managing' a firm by itself act as a deterrent to smooth and effective conduct of its operations. It is completely out of sync with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphasis on policy reforms and liberalisation. It makes a mockery of the decontrol of all non-urea fertilisers announced way back in 1992 under the economic reforms unleashed by the then government under PV Narasimha Rao. From the perspective of the manufacturer/importer, the 'reasonable' MRP allowed to it by the DoF plus the subsidy also fixed by the government (it is notified twice a year before the commencement of each season Kharif and Rabi) should fully cover the cost of supply. If it doesn't, the manufacturer's/importer's operations will be rendered economically unviable. This is precisely what has happened with importers of DAP during the current year. For the Rabi season, the government has announced a subsidy of Rs 21,911 per ton along with the MRP of Rs 27,000. These two add up to Rs 48,911 per ton. Against this, the current landed cost of DAP in the country is US $ 645 per ton or around Rs 54,000 per ton. Add to this, the cost of movement from the port to the consumption point and distribution cost, and the cost of supply to the farmer would be more than Rs 60,000 per ton.

A firm won't go for such import only to incur a substantial loss of over Rs 10,000 per ton. The crux of the problem is the government doesn't want farmers to pay more. So, it has kept MRP unchanged at the level it was three years ago. At the same time, it is hesitant to increase subsidies as it will upset its fiscal budget. Its subsidy allocation for non-urea fertilisers has gone down from Rs 112,875 crore during 2022-23 to Rs 60,303 crore during2023-24 and further down to Rs 48,894 crore during 2024-25 (it includes Rs 24,474 crore for Rabi season). In the process, it ends up impacting supplies as importers don't find it economical to import. During the previous two years, there wasn't any shortage as during 2022-23, the government was pretty liberal in spending and during 2023-24, the decline in global prices helped. But, during the current FY, none of these reliefs are available. So, there is stress on the supply front. The government can get out of the logjam only when it stops micro-managing the fertiliser business and leaves it to the market forces. As for subsidies, they should be given directly to farmers.

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

Israel, Palestine and a divided Africa: Seeking a path forward

African nations, with their unique histories, alliances and economic interests, find themselves divided over the Israel-Palestine issue

The ongoing conflict in Gaza between Israel and Palestine, which began on October 7, 2023, marks a significant military engagement in the region, being the largest confrontation since the 1973 Yom Kippur War. This conflict has global ramifications, with the African continent likely to feel its effects profoundly. Africa, with its 55 countries and diverse political landscape, is particularly vulnerable to such geopolitical divides.

MANISH **KARMWAR**

Africa's Divided Stance on Israel-Palestine: African countries vary widely in their stance on the Israel-Palestine issue, often shaped by historical, ideological, and economic factors. Pro-Palestinian countries like Algeria, Tunisia, South Africa, Senegal, Mali, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Libya support Palestine, often viewing the Palestinian struggle through the lens of their anti-colonial histories. In contrast, several nations, including Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Morocco, and Chad, have established close relations with Israel, motivated by economic, technological, and security interests. Additionally, neutral countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan maintain diplomatic ties with both Israel and Palestine, typically refraining from favoring one side over the other.

At the continental level, the African Union (AU) has traditionally supported Palestine's statehood and criticised Israeli policies.

A Deeper Look at Africa's Reactions: African responses to the Gaza conflict highlight the continent's fractured stance on foreign policy issues. In South Africa, for instance, public protests have likened the Palestinian struggle to the country's anti-apartheid movement. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has voiced strong support for Palestine, and his government filed a lawsuit against Israel at the International Court of Justice. Algeria's Foreign Minister similarly condemned Israeli actions, citing international law, while Comoros President Azali Assoumani labeled Israeli actions as genocidal.

On the other hand, several sub-Saharan nations, including South Sudan, Cameroon, Togo, and Cape Verde, chose not to support the recent United Nations resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. Even Muslim-majority countries like Morocco, Chad, and Sudan have limited their response to public condemnations without altering diplomatic ties. Malawi and Kenya recently agreed to send laborers to Israel following a halt in work permits for Palestinians,

further signaling the complexities in Africa's stance. Africa and Israel share a complex, long-standing relationship that dates back to before Israel's founding. Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement, expressed support for African liberation, envisioning solidarity between Jews and Africans in their quests for self-determination. This vision gained traction in the 1960s, with Israel maintaining a strong presence in Africa, including 33 embassies across the continent. Israel's model of decolonisation and development attracted the admiration of African leaders who saw parallels in their own struggles for independence.

However, following the 1973 Yom Kippur War, pressure from Arab countries led many African states to sever ties with Israel. This led to a period of estrangement, with African leaders feeling frustrated by unmet promises from Arab allies, particularly in the realm of energy cooperation. Gradually, ties began to thaw, and by the early 21st century, Israel was once again seeking partnerships in Africa, with diplomatic and economic collaborations resuming.

In recent years, Israel's outreach has intensified. In 2016, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited East Africa, and a year later, he addressed the Economic Community of West African States. In 2022, Israel and several African nations agreed to expand cooperation in renewable energy, trade, and technology. Kenya's President William Ruto visited Israel in 2023, further strengthening ties in agriculture, climate change, security, and other sectors.

These relationships are essential for African nations, many of which aim to modernise infrastructure and boost economic growth through partnerships with technologically advanced countries like Israel. Given the historical context and current diplomatic landscape, it appears unlikely that the Gaza conflict will irreparably divide Africa. While opinions on the Israel-Palestine issue are undoubtedly polarized, African nations often prioritise pragmatic interests over ideological alignment. The Gaza conflict may not permanently alter Africa's alliances, but it does highlight the need for more cohesive foreign policy coordination on the continent.

Africa's relationships with Israel have historically ebbed and flowed, often dictated by external pressures and internal priorities rather than a single, unified stance.

(The writer is faculty, department of African Studies faculty of social sciences University of Delhi; views are personal)

Biden invites Trump for meeting at White House on November 13

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Outgoing US President Joe Biden has invited his successor President-elect Donald Trump for a meeting at the White House on November 13, which would formally begin the presidential transition."At President Biden's invitation, President Biden and President-elect Trump will meet in the Oval Office on Wednesday at 11:00 am," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement. The meeting between the outgoing president and the incoming one is ceremonial and is seeped into decades old tradition. It is generally held in the Oval Office during which the outgoing president gives the president-elect a briefing about the key agenda of the country.The president-elect is also given a tour of the White House. It involves a meeting between the First Lady and the incoming First Lady. This is only the second time in American history that a president is re-elected after a gap of four years. In this case, President-elect Donald Trump, who was the 45th president of the United States for four years beginning January 20, 2017, and First Lady Melania Trump are familiar with the workings of the White House and a presidential administration.

The customary meeting between the outgoing and incoming president, which signifies a peaceful transfer of power, was paused in 2020 when Trump had not conceded the election. He also did not attend the swearing-in ceremony of President Joe Biden. A similar meeting between outgoing Vice President Kamala Harris and her successor J D Vance is also being scheduled.

TRUMP RULES OUT POMPEO, HALEY IN HIS ADMINISTRATION

President-elect Donald Trump ruled out two of his previous Cabinet members — former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and former envoy to the United Nations Nikki Haley – to be part of his upcoming administration.

Trump, 78, was elected as the 47th president of the United States. He defeated Vice President Kamala Harris, 60, in the elections held on November 5. In the first term, Trump served as the 45th president from January 20, 2017, to January 20, 2021.

"I will not be inviting former Ambassador Nikki Haley, or former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, to join the Trump Administration, which is currently in formation," Trump said in a post on Truth Social. Pompeo served as the CIA Director and Secretary of State in his first term, while Haley served as his ambassador to the United Nations in the first two years of his presidency. Both his cabinet-ranking officials later entered the presidential race against him in the Republican primaries.

While Pompeo dropped from the race early, Haley was the last challenger against Trump till February this year. Later on, the two endorsed his campaign. Haley announced her support for Trump during the Republican National Convention in Wisconsin in July this year.

However, in his post, Trump thanked his two former Cabinet officials for their service. "I very much enjoyed and appreciated working with them previously, and would like to thank them for their service to our Country. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!" Trump said.

'Iranian charged for assassination plot tasked with targeting Israelis in SL'

Washington (PTI) An Iranian national charged by the FBI for plotting assassination on president-elect Donald Trump was tasked by the Iranians to target Israeli tourists in Sri Lanka, the Department of Justice has alleged. Farhad Shakeri, 51, of Iran was charged Friday in a criminal complaint in connection with their alleged involvement in a plot to murder a Trump. Shakeri is an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) asset, remains at large and is believed to reside in Tehran, Iran.

"He was also tasked with targeting Israeli tourists in Sri Lanka," the Department of Justice said. According to documents filed in a federal court, Shakeri was asked by IRGC to target Israeli tourists in Sri Lanka and to plan a mass shooting event in October 2024. On or about October 23, 2024, the governments of the United States and Israel publicly warned travellers about threats of an attack targeting tourist locations in the Arugam Bay area, and, on or about the following day, Sri Lankan authorities reported having arrested three individuals in connection with the threat. On October 28, after the public travel warnings issued by the governments of the United States and Israel and after CC-2's arrest by Sri Lankan authorities-Shaker advised the FBI that he had previously tasked CC-2 with surveilling the Israeli consulate in Sri Lanka, the Department of Justice said. Shaker stated that he and CC-2 had served time in prison together. Shaker informed the FBI that he had provided this surveillance to IRGC Official-I. According to Shaker, after being provided surveillance on the Israeli consulate, IRGC Official I asked him to identify another target.

After this Shaker then instructed CC-2 to surveil a tourist location in Arugam Bay frequented by Israeli tourists. IRGC Official-I instructed Shaker to orchestrate a mass shooting at the Arugam Bay location. They planned that CC-2 would supply AK-47s and other weapons for the attack, federal prosecutors said.

SFJ Canada coordinator held in temple violence case

Ottawa (PTI): Canadian police have arrested a 35-year-old Brampton resident on charges of assault with a weapon during a violent demonstration at a Hindu temple in the city, authorities said.

On November 3, a protest occurred at the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton and unverified videos circulating on social media appeared to show demonstrators holding banners in support of Khalistan. The videos showed fist fights and people striking each other with poles on what appears to be the grounds surrounding the temple.

The Peel Regional Police responded to the altercation during the demonstration at the Mandir. As tensions between opposing sides increased, the demonstrations became physical and assaultive, a statement said on Saturday.

Police began investigating several offences that occurred during the demonstration, many of which were captured on video; including individuals using flags and sticks to assault people, it said.

Investigators from the 21 Division Criminal Investigations Bureau and Strategic Investigation Team (SIT) have arrested and charged Inderjeet Gosal of Brampton, the Peel Police statement said.

Gosal, is Sikhs for Justice coordinator for Canada, Toronto Star reported.

The US-based SFJ is banned in India.

On November 8, 2024, he was arrested and charged with assault with a weapon. He was released on conditions and is to appear at the Ontario Court of Justice in Brampton at a later date, it said.

17 killed in Israeli strike on northern Gaza

PTI ■ DEIR AL-BALAH

An Israeli strike early Sunday on a home sheltering displaced people in the northern Gaza Strip killed at least 17 people, according to the director of a nearby hospital that received the bodies.Dr Fadel Naim, director of the Al-Ahly Hospital in Gaza City, said the dead include nine women, and that the toll was likely to rise as rescue efforts continue. He said they were killed in a strike on a home in the urban refugee camp of Jabaliya, where Israel has been carrying out an offensive for over a month. The military said it targeted a site where militants were operating, without providing evidence. It said the details of the strike are under review.Separately, Lebanon's Health Ministry says an Israeli airstrike on Sunday killed at least 20 people in the village of Aalmat — north of Beirut and far from the areas in the south and east where the Hezbollah militant group has a major presence. Israeli forces have encircled and largely isolated Jabaliya and the nearby towns of Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun for the past month, allowing in only a trickle of humanitarian aid. Hundreds of people have been killed since the offensive began on Oct 6, and tens of thousands of people have fled to nearby Gaza City.

On Friday, experts from a panel that monitors food security said famine is imminent in the north or may already be happening. The growing desperation comes as the deadline approaches for an ultimatum the Biden administration gave Israel to raise the level of humanitarian assistance allowed into Gaza or risk possible restrictions on US military funding.

The northern third of Gaza, including Gaza City, was the first target of Israel's ground invasion and has suffered the heaviest destruction of the 13-month-old war, which was triggered by Hamas' attack into southern Israel. As in other areas of Gaza, Israel has sent forces back in after repeated operations, saying Hamas has regrouped.

The military says it only targets militants, whom it accuses of hiding among civilians in homes and shelters. Israeli strikes often kill women and children.The war began when Hamas-led militants blew holes in the border fence and stormed into southern Israel on Oct 7, 2023. They killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250. Some 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, about a third of whom are believed to be dead.Israel's offensive has killed over 43,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities who do not distinguish between civilians and militants in their count but say over half the fatalities were women and children.Israeli bombardment and ground invasions have left vast areas of Gaza in ruins and displaced around 90% of the population of 2.3 million people, often multiple times. Hundreds of thousands of people are living in crowded tent camps with few if any public services and no idea of when they might return to their homes or rebuild.Cease-fire talks mediated by the United States, Qatar and Egypt have repeatedly stalled since the start of the year. Qatar, which has served as a key mediator with Hamas, said over the weekend that it had suspended its efforts and would only resume them when "the parties show their willingness and seriousness to end the brutal war and the ongoing suffering of civilians".

ISRAELI AIRSTRIKE KILLS 20 PEOPLE IN NORTHERN LEBANON

Lebanon's Health Ministry says an Israeli airstrike has killed at least 20 people.

It says the strike on Sunday occurred in the village of Aalmat, north of Beirut and far from the areas in the south and east of the country where the Hezbollah militant group has a major presence.

Qatar suspends mediation between Gaza and Israel

AP ■ DEIR AL-BALAH

Qatar has suspended its key mediation efforts between Hamas and Israel, it said Saturday, after growing frustration with the lack of progress on a cease-fire deal for Gaza.

It wasn't immediately clear whether the remaining Hamas leadership hosted by Qatar must leave, or where it would go. Hamas has good relations with Iran and Turkiye, and some of its leaders are now in Lebanon.

However, Qatar is highly likely to return to mediation efforts if both sides show "serious political willingness" to reach a deal, according to an official with Egypt, the other key mediator. Qatar told Israel and Hamas it can't continue to mediate "as long as there is a refusal to negotiate a deal in good faith" and "as a consequence, the Hamas political office no longer serves its purpose" in Qatar, a diplomatic source briefed on the matter said. Qatar told Hamas it will have to leave if it isn't ready to engage in serious negotiations, the source said.

In Washington, a US official said the Biden administration informed Qatar two weeks ago that the Hamas office's continued operation in Doha was no longer useful and the Hamas delegation should be expelled. A senior US official said that after Hamas rejected the last proposal for a cease-fire, Qatar accepted the advice and informed the Hamas delegation of the decision 10 days ago.

A senior Hamas official said they were aware of Qatar's decision to suspend mediation efforts, "but no one told us to leave." Hamas has repeatedly called for an end to the war and a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza as a condition for any cease-fire deal. Israel seeks the return of all hostages taken in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel and insists on a presence in Gaza. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue. The Israeli prime minister's office had no comment. Late Saturday, the state-run Qatar News Agency published comments attributed to Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari, a Foreign Ministry spokesman, confirming that Doha informed parties in the talks 10 days ago that it "would stall its efforts to mediate between Hamas and Israel if an agreement was not reached in that round."

"Qatar will resume those efforts with its partners when the parties show their willingness and seriousness to end the brutal war and the ongoing suffering of civilians," the report said. There continued to be no end in sight to the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza and the Israel-Hezbollah war in Lebanon, where Israel's military said it struck command centers and other militant infrastructure in Beirut's southern suburbs and elsewhere. An Israeli airstrike on the southern port city of Tyre late Friday killed at least seven, officials and a resident said.

Hezbollah "should continue (the fight) and we will continue to back them up even if we lose our families, our homes, and end up in the dirt," said one Beirut resident, Mohammed Mekdad, as people searched the smoking rubble. In Gaza, Israeli strikes killed at least 16 people on Saturday, Palestinian medical officials said, while Israel announced the first delivery of humanitarian aid in weeks to the territory's hungry, devastated north.

Trump urges supporters to donate to Dems

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

President-elect Donald Trump urged his supporters to donate to Democrats to help them overcome the "financial strain" in the aftermath of the general elections. In a social media post, Trump expressed his surprise that the Democrats didn't have lots of dollars left over. "Now they are being squeezed by vendors and others," he said after reports emerged that the Harris Campaign is USD 20 million in debt.

"Kamala Harris's campaign ended with at least USD 20 million in debt, per two sources familiar. Harris raised over USD 1 billion and had USD 118 million in the bank as of Oct 16," said Christopher Cadelago, the California bureau chief of Politico.

"I am very surprised that the Democrats, who fought a hard and valiant fight in the 2020 Presidential Election, raising a record amount of money, didn't have lots of dollars left over. Now they are being squeezed by vendors and others," he said. "Whatever we can do to help them during this difficult period, I would strongly recommend we, as a Party and for the sake of desperately needed UNITY, do. We have a lot of money left over in that our biggest asset in the campaign was "Earned Media," and that doesn't cost very much. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!" Trump said.

Vice President Kamala Harris, 60, was the Democratic Party's presidential nominee for the elections held on November 5. Harris, who lost to Trump, shattered all fund-raising records. According to figures available from the Federal Election Commission, the Harris campaign and its Super PACS raised USD 2.3 billion and spent USD 1.9 billion. On the other hand, the Trump campaign raised over USD 1.8 billion and spent USD 1.6 billion. "Despite raising and spending over USD 1 billion in fundraising, Kamala Harris' 2014 election bid failed to resonate with the voters who mattered most. The heavy reliance on celebrity endorsements, star-studded concerts, and backing from elite political figures couldn't bridge the growing gap between the party and middle-class Americans struggling with rising costs for groceries, rent, and healthcare," Ajay Jain Bhutoria, a major fundraiser for the Harris Campaign told PTI in an interview.

"While the Democrats garnered support from wealthy donors and Hollywood, they lost the backing of key voter groups," he said.Moreover, Harris' campaign also saw significant shifts among key ethnic communities. Indian Americans, Asian Americans, and Muslim and Arab Americans, particularly in battleground states like Pennsylvania, and Michigan, became more disillusioned with the direction of the party," he said. "Indian American communities, who had previously been strong supporters of the Democrats, expressed growing concerns about issues like immigration reform, job opportunities, US India relationship, attack on Hindu Temples, attack on Hindus in Bangladesh and Canada and rising living costs," Bhutoria said.

"In Michigan, home to significant Arab American and Muslim populations, many voters felt their concerns were sidelined in favour of more nationalized political debates. As a result, these communities increasingly moved toward Trump, feeling that their issues were better addressed by his platform," he said.

"The 2024 election highlighted the deep disconnection between elite fundraising and the concerns of everyday Americans, especially on critical issues like the economy, immigration, rising crime, and costly foreign wars. The results are a stark reminder that flashy campaigns and big-money donors aren't enough when the needs of working-class families are left behind," Bhutoria said. Indian American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal said the Democrats were not able to clearly state to enough voters how our party would materially improve their lives. "There are many theories out there, and we need to take time to really learn from this, but one thing is clear: Democrats were not able to clearly state to enough voters how our party would materially improve their lives," she said in a social media post on Saturday.

British Hindus object to non-veg, alcohol served at Downing Street Diwali reception

London (PTI): Some British Hindus have taken to social media to voice their objections over a lack of proper consultation ahead of a Diwali reception hosted by Prime Minister Keir Stramer at 10 Downing Street in London, where reportedly non-vegetarian snacks and alcohol were included on the menu.

While community organisation Insight UK questioned the "appalling lack of understanding" of the spiritual aspect of the Hindu festival, others pointed out that greater dialogue is required ahead of such religious events. "Diwali is not just a time for festivity, but also holds a deeply religious meaning. The sacred festival emphasises purity and devotion and hence traditionally involves vegetarian meals and strict avoidance of alcohol," Insight UK stated in a post on X. "The choice of menu at the Diwali celebration hosted by the PM himself displays an appalling lack of understanding or respect for the religious traditions associated with the festival of Diwali. It also raises the pertinent question of whether Hindu community organisations and religious leaders were consulted for greater cultural sensitivity and inclusivity," it said. The group urged "greater consideration" at future celebrations intended to promote multiculturalism and inclusivity, mindful of the "cultural and religious practices of the communities they seek to honour".

Man accused of stabbing at least 5 people in Seattle ordered held on $2M bail

AP ■ SEATTLE

A 37-year-old man who police say stabbed five people in Seattle in broad daylight Friday and possibly four others the day before made his first court appearance Saturday where a judge ordered him held on $2 million bail.

"People who live in and travel to the Chinatown-International District deserve to feel safe and be safe," said King County Prosecuting Attorney Leesa Manion after the judge found probable cause to hold him on five counts of first-degree assault. In setting the high bail amount, the judge noted that the man had a warrant out for his arrest. He also has nine felony convictions in Washington state that include four car thefts, possession of stolen property, robbery and attempted burglary, according to the probable cause report.

The case is still under investigation and has not been referred to the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office for a charging decision, spokesperson Casey McNerthney said Saturday. They expect to receive the case by Thursday, he said.

Messages sent to the King County Department of Public Defense seeking comment were not immediately returned Saturday afternoon. Four of the five victims were taken to Harborview Medical Center on Friday. One man who was in critical condition was upgraded to serious, while two others remain in serious condition in the Intensive Care Unit, Susan Gregg, spokesperson for the hospital, said Saturday. Another male patient was in satisfactory condition, she said.

Police said they recovered two knives soiled with what appeared to be blood in the parking lot where the man was arrested. A third knife was lodged in a victim's back when he was taken to the hospital, court records said.

Seattle police said they believe the man was also involved in at least four other stabbings in the same area on Thursday. He fit the descriptions of the suspect and the attacks were also random, like Friday's assaults. Police continue to investigate the case and more charges may be added, they said.

The Thursday stabbings in Chinatown started when a 52-year-old woman was found with multiple stab wounds, police said. On Thursday afternoon, a 32-year-old man was found after being stabbed multiple times and at about 8 p.m., a 37-year-old man was stabbed multiple times in the back, police said.

Soldier with Yemen's exiled govt kills 2 Saudi troops, hurts another

PTI ■ DUBAI

A soldier for Yemen's exiled government opened fire on Saudi troops as they exercised in eastern Yemen, killing two of them and wounding another in a rare insider attack during the kingdom's nearly decadelong war there, officials said Saturday.

The assault in eastern Hadramawt province comes as a yearslong cease-fire between Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Houthi rebels largely has held despite the militants' ongoing attacks against shipping in the Red Sea corridor. While the Houthis did not claim the attack, at least one Houthi official praised it as being "the beginning and an indication of a harsh future awaiting the invaders."

Meanwhile, US warplanes carried out new strikes targeting Houthi positions that lasted into early Sunday morning, the American military said. The strikes come after the militants likely shot down yet-another American reconnaissance drone over the country.

The attack on the Saudi troops took place Friday night in Seiyun, a city some 500 kilometers (310 miles) east of Sanaa. As troops worked out at a Saudi-led base there, the soldier opened fire, killing an officer and a noncommissioned officer, the state-run Saudi Press Agency said, citing a military statement.

"The Joint Forces Command underscores that this Lone Wolf' cowardly attack does not represent the honorable members of the Yemeni Ministry of Defense," the statement added. The dead and the other wounded Saudi solider have been brought back to the kingdom, it added.

Aidarous al-Zubaidi, the leader of Yemen's successionist Southern Transitional Council, identified the soldier who carried out the attack as belonging to the First Military Region, which is based out of Seiyun.

Police in the area published pictures of the soldier, saying there was a 30-million-Yemeni-rial reward for information leading to the soldier's arrest. That's worth around $15,000 on the black market.

Authorities offered no motive for the attack. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, the militant group's Yemen branch, long has operated around Hadramawt. However, the group did not immediately claim the attack. A recent United Nations expert report has said that the al-Qaida group and the Houthis have begun to "coordinate operations directly with each other."

The Houthis meanwhile did not claim the attack either. However, Houthi official Hamid Rizq praised the attack in a message on the social platform X, claiming it came from "the feeling of oppression" over Saudi troops being stationed in the area.

"The heroic operation is the beginning and an indication of a harsh future awaiting the invaders," Rizq wrote. Yemen has been mired in a decadelong war since the Houthis swept into Sanaa from their northern strongholds in September 2014. A Saudi-led coalition entered the war on behalf of Yemen's exiled government in 2015. The war further internationalized, with Iran backing the Houthis with weapons and support that cemented the conflict into a yearslong stalemate. The war has killed more than 150,000 people, including fighters and civilians, and created one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters, killing tens of thousands more. A cease-fire that expired in October 2022 largely has held in the time since, however, even as the Houthis have seized on the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip and Israel's invasion of Lebanon.

On Saturday night, Houthi-run media reported U.S. airstrikes targeting areas around Sanaa. The airstrikes continued into Sunday morning and also included sites in Amran province just outside of the capital, the Houthis said. The rebels offered no immediate damage assessment from the strikes.

The US military later told The Associated Press on Sunday it conducted airstrikes "on numerous Iran-backed Houthi weapons storage facilities within Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen."

Resignation of Valencia leader demanded for bungling flood response

AP ■ VALENCIA

Tens of thousands of Spaniards marched in the eastern city of Valencia on Saturday to demand the resignation of the regional president in charge of the emergency response to last week's catastrophic floods that left more than 200 dead and others missing. A group of protestors clashed with riot police in front of Valencia's city hall, where the protestors started their march to the seat of the regional government. Police used batons to beat them back. Regional leader Carlos Mazón is under immense pressure after his administration failed to issue flood alerts to citizens' cell phones until hours after the flooding started on the night of October 29.

Many marchers held up home-made signs or chanted "Mazón Resign!" Others carried signs with messages like "You Killed Us!" Upon arrival at the regional government seat, some protesters slung mud on the building and left handprints of the muck on its facade.

Earlier on Saturday, Mazón told regional broadcaster À Punt that "there will be time to hold officials accountable," but that now "is time to keep cleaning our streets, helping people and rebuilding." He said that he "respected" the march. Mazón, of the conservative Popular Party, is also being criticized for what people perceive as the slow and chaotic response to the natural disaster. Thousands of volunteers were the first boots on the ground in many of the hardest-hit areas on Valencia's southern outskirts. It took days for officials to mobilize the thousands of police reinforcements and soldiers that the regional government asked central authorities to send in.

In Spain, regional governments are charged with handling civil protection and can ask the national government in Madrid, led by the Socialists, for extra resources. Mazón has defended his handling of the crisis saying that its magnitude was unforeseeable and that his administration didn't receive sufficient warnings from central authorities. But Spain's weather agency issued a red alert, the highest level of warning, for bad weather as early as 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday morning as the disaster loomed. Some communities were flooded by 6 p.m. It took until after 8 p.m. for Mazón's administration to send out alerts to people's cellphones. Mazón was with Spain's royals and Socialist prime minister when they were pelted with mud by enraged residents during their first visit to a devastated area last weekend.

Russian forces encircle Kurakhove, civilians stay in front-line city

AP ■ KURAKHOVE

Set on Ukraine's eastern front, Kurakhove is surrounded on three sides, with Russian forces just under 2 miles from the devastated city centre.

Yet between 700 and 1,000 local residents remain, most of them living in the basements of apartment buildings, without running water, heating or electricity. The only place to charge phones is in the basement of the building now housing the city administration. The exact number of people is impossible to determine because, since mid-October, no humanitarian volunteers have come to Kurakhove.

Under attack from artillery, multiple rocket launchers, aerial bombs and drones, Kurakhove has become the new Bakhmut, as Russia continues its drive westward to capture all of the Donbas region. On Friday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called the situation in Kurakhove, as well as the key city of Pokrovsk, "the most challenging." The hospital, schools, kindergartens, water treatment plant, refugee centre, post office, technical school and cultural centre have all been destroyed. Smoke hangs in the air as bombed-out apartment buildings burn against a backdrop of artillery fire and drones.

Artillerymen of the 33rd Brigade say they are firing around 50 shells per day on the Kurakhove front, indicating critical activity in the Russian army's offensive operations and the brigade's desperate attempts to stop Russian forces from encircling the city.

Local authorities remain in the city, as well as representatives of the police and local Territorial Defence Forces.

For Artem Shchus, head of police in Kurakhove, there is little hope of defending the city if it becomes surrounded.

"I don't think it is possible, considering the reality of modern war and modern technologies. In that case, the logistics could be performed only by drones," he says. Shchus calls the road to Kurakhove, which is lined with burned-out civilian vehicles, the "road of death," due to persistent Russian drone attacks. Five civilians have been killed while trying to leave. No supplies would enter the city without the "White Angels" evacuation group, made up of local police officers and volunteers. They provide first aid to the wounded and remove the bodies of those killed in shelling, all while operating the city's only functioning food store. The White Angels bring in vital supplies in an armoured vehicle kitted out with electronic warfare equipment - the only way to enter the city, and still a journey fraught with risk.

"Without REB (jammers) it is just a lottery. With it, you might still have a chance to survive," Shchus says.

The only way to escape the city is to travel with the White Angels. Each day, they risk their lives to evacuate between six and 12 people from different parts of the city and surrounding villages.

Although children are meant to have been evacuated, parents often hide them, both from the bombs and from law enforcement officers. Among the White Angels' key missions is to find children and persuade their parents to evacuate.

When this mission is successful and children are removed from the basements, many are shocked by the state of the destroyed city, suggesting that they have been hiding underground for quite some time.

After dressing the children in bulletproof vests and helmets, the White Angels take them to the nearby city of Kostyantynopil, from where other volunteers transport them to refugee registration points in the regional centers of Dnipro or Zaporizhzhia. "We evacuate people every day without stopping. We just dropped people off in Kostyantynopil, and we still have addresses to go through today," Shchus explains.

Asked about adapting to work in such challenging and dangerous conditions, the police chief worries about the impact on his team."I think everyone has already adapted. I wouldn't even call it adaptation.' It's more like an unhealthy state of mind. I don't know how this will influence them socially in the future," he says. "These people are living in inhumane conditions, and they're surviving on adrenaline. The war is their life. These are hard conditions to work in, but everyone is working."

A central streets covered in debris from destroyed residential buildings after Russian bombing in Kurakhove, Donetsk region, Ukraine. AP/PTI

China delimits contested SCS shoal in dispute with Philippines

AP ■ BEIJING

China has published baselines for a contested shoal in the South China Sea it had seized from the Philippines, a move that's likely to increase tensions over overlapping territorial claims.

The Foreign Ministry on Sunday posted online geographic coordinates for the baselines around Scarborough Shoal. A nation's territorial waters and exclusive economic zone are typically defined as the distance from the baselines.

Both China and the Philippines claim Scarborough Shoal and other outcroppings in the South China Sea. China seized the shoal, which lies west of the main Philippine island of Luzon, in 2012 and has since restricted access to Filipino fishermen there. A 2016 ruling by an international arbitration court found that most Chinese claims in the South China Sea were invalid but Beijing refuses to abide by it.

Ships from China and the Philippines have collided several times as part of increased confrontations, and the Chinese coast guard has blasted Philippine vessels with water cannons.

China's move came two days after Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed two laws demarcating the government's claims in the disputed waters.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry statement said that the delimiting of the baselines was in accordance with a U.N. agreement and Chinese law.

"This is a natural step by the Chinese government to lawfully strengthen marine management and is consistent with international law and common practices," it said.

The statement added that one of the laws signed by Marcos, the Philippine Maritime Zones Act, violates China's sovereignty in the South China Sea.

"China firmly opposes it and will continue to do everything necessary in accordance with law to firmly defend its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests," the Foreign Ministry said. China stakes claim to almost the entirety of the South China Sea. It has a series of disputes with several Southeast Asian nations including the Philippines and Vietnam over territory in the waters, which are part of a key shipping route in Asia.

China to display new fighter jet, drone ship at its airshow

Beijing (PTI): The Chinese military will unveil some of its latest warplanes, including a new fighter jet and a large drone ship known as the "Killer Whale", at its upcoming annual air show in Zhuhai city. The 15th Airshow of China is to be held in Zhuhai at South China's Guangdong province from November 12 to 17. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) every year displays its capabilities at the air show. The PLA Navy will display J-15T jet designed to be operated from the 3rd aircraft carrier, the Fujian, which is equipped with an electromagnetic catapult unlike the other two carriers, Liaoning and Shandong, which are fitted with ski-jump take-off ramps. The design of the J-15T is based on the baseline type of the J-15 and was modified to allow it to be launched by an aircraft carrier's catapult system, official media here reported. Wang Yanan, chief editor of Aerospace Knowledge magazine told the state-run China Daily that the J-15T can also be deployed on Liaoning and Shandong, both of which have a ski jump method for launching fixed-wing aircraft. The navy also unveiled a large drone ship known as the "Killer Whale" to be displayed at the air show. The trimaran is capable of "operating on open sea for a long time", according to Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post. It said the "Killer Whale" has a dual diesel and electric propulsion system, which allows it to reach a maximum speed of more than 40 knots (74km/h) with a range of more than 4,000 nautical miles (7,400km). The Post described the vessel as an "all-round warrior" that can carry a range of weapons – including rockets, anti-ship missiles and ship-to-air missiles – and is equipped with a take-off and landing pad for helicopters at the rear.

UN nuclear head to visit Iran for talks on country's nuclear programme

AP ■ VIENNA

The head of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog said Sunday he will travel to Iran in the coming days to hold talks regarding the country's nuclear program. The visit comes amid wider tensions gripping the Mideast over the Israel-Hamas war and uncertainty over how U.S. President-elect Donald Trump will approach Iran after his inauguration in January.

Specifically, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mariano Grossi, will have high level meetings with the Iranian government and will hold technical discussions on all aspects related to the joint statement agreed with Iran in March 2023.

It is intended as a path forward for cooperation between the IAEA and Iran on how to expand inspections of the Islamic Republic's rapidly advancing atomic program.

The 2023 statement included a pledge by Iran to resolve issues around sites where inspectors have questions about possible undeclared nuclear activity, and to allow the IAEA to "implement further appropriate verification and monitoring activities."

The meetings in Tehran will build on Grossi's discussions with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in September, a statement by the IAEA said.

"It is essential that we make substantive progress in the implementation of the joint statement agreed with Iran in March 2023," Grossi said. "My visit to Tehran will be very important in that regard."

Iran is rapidly advancing its atomic program and continues to increase its stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels in defiance of international demands, according to recent reports by the IAEA.

Grossi, has warned that Tehran has enough uranium enriched to near-weapons-grade levels to make "several" nuclear bombs if it chose to do so. He has acknowledged the U.N. agency cannot guarantee that none of Iran's centrifuges may have been peeled away for clandestine enrichment.

Iran's 2015 landmark nuclear deal with world powers had put limits on its nuclear program — which the West fears could be used for making nuclear weapons although Tehran insists is only for peaceful purposes — while lifting punitive economic sanctions imposed on Iran. But the deal collapsed after the Trump administration in 2018 pulled the United States out of the agreement, leading Iran to abandon all limits the deal had put on its program and enrich uranium to up to 60% purity.

Taliban to attend UN climate conference for first time

Kabul (AP): The Taliban will attend a U.N. climate conference for the first time since their takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, the country's national environment agency said Sunday.

The conference, known as COP29, begins Monday in Azerbaijan and is one of the most important multilateral talks to include the Taliban, who do not have official recognition as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan.

The National Environmental Protection Agency posted on social media platform X that a technical delegation had gone to Baku to participate.

Matiul Haq Khalis, the agency's head, said the delegation would use the conference to strengthen cooperation with the international community on environmental protection and climate change, share Afghanistan's needs regarding access to existing financial mechanisms related to climate change, and discuss adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Experts told The Associated Press that climate change has led to numerous and negative impacts on Afghanistan, creating serious challenges because of the country's geographical location and weak climate policies.

" Climate change has resulted in higher temperatures, which reduce water sources and cause droughts, significantly affecting agricultural activities," said Hayatullah Mashwani, professor of environmental science at Kabul University. "The reduction in water availability and frequent droughts pose severe threats to agriculture, leading to food insecurity and challenges to livelihoods."

In August, the international aid agency Save the Children published a report saying that Afghanistan is the sixth most vulnerable country to the impacts of climate change and that 25 of its 34 provinces face severe or catastrophic drought conditions, affecting more than half the population.

Report: IMF to assess Pak's external financing needs during performance review discussions

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The IMF's unscheduled performance review discussions in Pakistan next week will primarily focus on the materialisation of new foreign loans to the country to fill nearly USD 2.5 billion in external financing gap for this fiscal year, according to a media report.

The International Monetary Fund will assess Pakistan's external financing needs during these discussions, as some planned loans have not yet been secured, according to government sources.

According to The Express Tribune newspaper, led by Nathan Porter, the IMF Mission Chief, the talks will formally begin on Tuesday, with an opening session also planned with Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb.

The mission's arrival in Pakistan is unscheduled, as the first formal review for the release of the second USD 1.1 billion tranche is slated for March 2025.

Pakistan faces delays in obtaining loans from bilateral creditors, complicating efforts to bridge its external financing gap. The Washington-based global lender previously estimated a total USD 5 billion external financing gap for the 2024-2027 period, of which USD 2.5 billion is estimated for this fiscal year.

However, Pakistani authorities claim that the gap will be smaller than projected five months ago, due to improved performance of the external sector.

Pakistan's exports and foreign remittances have been performing better, reducing pressure on the external account. Nevertheless, loans are still needed to repay existing debts, primarily owed to Western financial institutions.

After the IMF approved the USD 7 billion package for Pakistan in September, the country had anticipated raising USD 3.2 billion against the USD 2.5 billion in debt needs. This included a USD 1.2 billion Saudi oil facility.

Five months into the fiscal year, no agreement has been reached on the Saudi oil facility, sources indicate.

Each month of delay reduces the available funds by USD 100 million within the fiscal year. Pakistani authorities remain hopeful of persuading Riyadh to extend the facility. Finance Ministry Spokesperson Qumar Abbasi did not respond to inquiries about the USD 1.2 billion Saudi oil facility's status.

Pakistan is also pursuing a USD 1 billion loan from Dubai Islamic Bank. Additionally, Pakistan has requested China to reschedule USD 3.4 billion in debt extended by China's Export-Import (Exim) Bank. Of this, roughly USD 750 million is due in the current fiscal year; the rescheduling is factored into the external financing calculations, sources said.

Due to its weakened financial position and certain implicit restrictions under the IMF agreement, Pakistan lacks the flexibility to repay Chinese debt.Out of the total USD 6.5 billion Chinese commercial debt, about USD 3.9 billion is due this fiscal year. The government has managed to roll over a USD 200 million debt that matured in September, but the next USD 1 billion is due in March 2025, with no progress on securing another rollover, according to sources.The government's USD 3.2 billion plan also included Pakistan's most expensive loan in history, a USD 600 million facility from Standard Chartered Bank. However, following an article in The Express Tribune, the finance minister indicated that this facility would not be utilised, and the IMF distanced itself from this loan arrangement.The IMF's unexpected visit comes just six weeks after the loan's approval and four months before the planned review, to assess performance on July-September targets and progress in the second quarter from October-December 2024.Official figures indicate a tax collection shortfall of Rs190 billion over the past four months, with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) collecting Rs3.440 trillion against a target of Rs3.632 trillion, despite record-high taxes this year.Sources say the IMF intends to scrutinise Pakistan's macroeconomic framework projections closely, according to the paper.

Students foil Awami League rally

PTI ■ DHAKA

Members of an influential Bangladeshi students' group that played a key role in toppling Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government prevented Awami League supporters from staging a planned rally here on Sunday, chasing and assaulting the party activists.

The development came a day after the interim government-led by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus on Saturday said it will not permit Hasina's party to hold the planned rally.

Eyewitnesses said activists of Anti-Discrimination Student Movement and several other political groups assembled at Noor Hossain Chattar, or Zero Point, near the Awami League's central office.

The Awami league's rally was set to be the party's first such demonstration since the ouster of the Hasina government on August 5.

Despite a visible police presence, demonstrators reportedly assaulted at least seven people believed to be Awami League activists. Police attempted to calm the situation and detained some alleged supporters of the ousted regime, the eyewitnesses said.

Television footage showed members of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement rallying at the scene with chants against "fascist Hasina" and her party, demanding their trial for alleged mass killings.

The counter-protest at the Zero Point caused significant traffic disruptions in the area. Chief Adviser Yunus' press secretary Shafiqul Alam in a Facebook post on Saturday said that the interim government won't tolerate any violence or any attempt to break the law and order situation in the country. "The Awami League in its current form is a fascist party. There is no way this fascist party will be allowed to hold protests in Bangladesh," he said.

Alam further cautioned that "anyone who would try to hold rally, gathering and processions by taking orders from the mass murderer and dictator Sheikh Hasina will face full force of the law enforcing agencies".

The protest venue, Shaheed Noor Hossain Chattar, holds historical significance, as it was where Awami League youth leader Noor Hossain was killed on November 10, 1987 during a demonstration against the autocratic rule of the then military dictator General HM Ershad.

Hyderabadi woman loco pilot to ply Riyadh Metro

Riyadh (PTI): Hyderabad's Indira Eegalapati is among the few women loco pilots associated with the Riyadh Metro, currently running trial trains and raring to go as the rapid transit system nears completion."It is really a proud moment for me to be a part of this world-class and prestigious project, especially being an expatriate," 33-year-old Eegalapati, who has been employed as a train pilot and station operations master for five years, said.She was working with the Hyderabad Metro when she came to know about the openings here and applied.Eegalapati and two others from India joined in 2019 but soon Covid struck and they had to undergo the initial training virtually.Currently, trial runs are going on and according to reports, the Riyadh Metro service is likely to become operational from early 2025."It has been a really good experience so far. The people of Saudi Arabia are very friendly and have a great culture. I can't imagine that I have already completed five years here," Eegalapati, one of the first women recruits, told PTI.She also said she has never faced any challenge as a woman.

"We have equal opportunities here and there is no gender bias," she asserted.Eegalapati hails from Dhullipalla in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh but settled in Hyderabad in 2006.

Her father was a mechanic but never compromised in the education of his three children."I come from a lower middle-class family and education was a nightmare. But our father ensured that we get our education. Being a girl, marriage was an important thing to our families but for our father, education came first," she said.Eegalapati completed her engineering, her elder sister is a teacher and youngest is working with Hyderabad Metro as a train pilot.Her husband also works here in the maintenance department of the Metro.Eegalapati was also sent to Doha during the 2022 Football World Cup for crowd management support.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby informed to the Public at large that my clients Sh. Hari Prasad Shukla S/o Late Data Ram and Smt. Usha Devi W/o Hari Prasad Shukla both R/o F-3/798, Gali No. 12, Sangam Vihar Deoli, Pushpa Bhawan, South Delhi, Pin-110062 severed all relation with their daughter namely Miss. Rinki Shukla due to her bad habits. My clients have disowned and debarred their daughter from all movable and immovable properties. Anybody dealing with Rinki Shukla will do so at his/her/their own risk and responsibilities and My clients shall not be responsible for any act, deed or dealing done by Rinki Shukla.

NEERAJ KARGETI (Advocate) Block N-8(A), Ground Floor Jangpura Extension New Delhi-110014, Mob No: +91-8750119197

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

It is for general information that I, Sukhwinder Kaur W/o Jitendra Singh, C/o C-32 /6 /232, Guru Nanak Pura, Laxmi Nagar Delhi-110092, declare that name of mine in my Adhar Card No 9822-1859-9007 have been wrongly written as Sukhvinder Kaur. The actual name of mine and its spellings are as Sukhwinder Kaur respectively, which may be amended accordingly. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection.

PD(896)A

I, krishan R/o H No 9340, Katra Ganga Bishan Gaushala Marg, Kishan Ganj, North Delhi-110006 declare that I am changing the name of my minor daughter from Kirti to KANAK for all future purposes.

PD(897)C

I, Manik Rao, Father of No.15787872P Hav (GNR) Mukande Tanaji, R/o H.No. 7-255, Vill+Post Echoda, Subhash Nagar, Dist Adilabad, Telangana-504307, have changed my name from Manik Rao to Mukande Manik Rao, vide affidavit dated 09/11/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(898)C

I, Mukande Ranjana, Mother of No.15787872P Hav (GNR) Mukande Tanaji, R/o H.No. 7-255, Vill+Post Echoda, Subhash Nagar, Dist Adilabad, Telangana-504307, have changed my name from Mukande Ranjana to Mukande Ranjana Bai, vide affidavit dated 09/11/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(899)C

I, Kanchan Pandit Shinde W/o No.14684353W HMT Chavan Subhash Dinkar, R/o Chavanwadi Teh Phaltan, Dist Satara, Maharashtra- 415521, have changed my name from Kanchan Pandit Shinde to Kanchan Subhash Chavan, vide affidavit dated 09/11/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(900)C

I, Rupanjali W/o No. 14643551M NB/Tech Comn. Sunil Kumar Gautam, R/o Vill/Post Padari, Via Chak Ghat, Teh Teonthar, Dist Rewa, M.P.-486226, have changed my name from Rupanjali to Rupanjali Gautam, vide affidavit dated 09/11/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(901)C

I, No. 14684353W HMT Chavan Subhash Dinkar, R/o Chavanwadi Teh Phaltan, Dist Satara, Maharashtra- 415521, have changed my daughter's name from Aditi Chavan to Aditi Subhash Chavan, vide affidavit dated 09/11/2024 before Notary Public Delhi

PD(902)C

Air India stands alone, five Indian full service carriers exited in 17 years

PTI ■ MUMBAI/ NEW DELHI

When Vistara folds up into the Air India Group on Monday, the number of full service carriers in the fast-growing Indian aviation space will come down to just one from five in a span of over 17 years.

Also, the merger that will see Vistara's 49 per cent owner Singapore Airlines holding 25.1 per cent stake in Air India post the merger will mark the sunset of another Indian airline jointly owned by an overseas carrier after the liberalisation of foreign direct investment norms.

In 2012, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh-led UPA government allowed foreign airlines to buy up to 49 per cent in a domestic carrier, which later resulted in the now defunct Jet Airways securing 24 per cent stake from Gulf carrier Etihad besides the birth of AirAsia India and Vistara.

Vistara is also the only full-service carrier to start operations in the last 10 years. Since the merger of full-service carrier (FSC) Indian Airlines with Air India in 2007, at least five FSCs dotted the Indian skies.

As years passed by, Kingfisher and Air Sahara faded away while Vistara took flight in January 2015. Kingfisher went belly up in 2012 while Air Sahara, which was acquired by Jet Airways and renamed as JetLite, sank with Jet Airways in 2019.

FSC Jet Airways that flew for 25 years before getting grounded in April 2019 due to financial turbulence is set to be liquidated.

From November 12, the enlarged Air India will remain the country's lone full-service player.

Coming to Indian carriers with foreign ownership, the first was Jet Airways where Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways snapped up 24 per cent stake.

Then came AirAsia India, 49 per cent owned by Malaysia's AirAsia and the rest was with Tatas followed by Vistara where Singapore Airlines holds 49 per cent stake and 51 per cent is with Tata Group.

With rising air traffic and changing travel patterns, many no-frills airlines are dominating the skies worldwide and India's dominant carrier is IndiGo.

According to a senior airline official, the line differentiating a full service and a low-cost carrier is somewhat blurred.

For instance, some of the budget airlines also offer business class seats.

Among others, FSCs strive to provide more comfort to passengers during travel and the services, including meals, are included in the ticket price.

Also, they mostly operate different types of aircraft and broadly, these airlines focus more on overall network profitability.

In the case of low-cost carriers route-specific profitability, ancillary revenues and mostly single type of planes are among the key elements that help in ensuring cost-effective operations.

SEBI considers broadening unpublished price-sensitive information scope

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To enhance transparency in market disclosures, SEBI is looking to broaden the scope of Unpublished Price Sensitive Information (UPSI) by including proposed fundraising activities, restructuring plans, and one-time bank settlements.

In its consultation paper, SEBI has proposed that only agreements, including shareholder, joint venture and family settlement, that affect the management and control of the firm and are known to the firm should be considered price-sensitive and included in the illustrative list of events under the definition of UPSI.

Additionally, key developments in corporate insolvency proceedings, such as initiation or approval of resolution plans by the tribunal, should be disclosed as potentially price-sensitive.

If a forensic audit is launched or concluded for issues like fund misappropriation or financial misstatements, it should be disclosed as price-sensitive.

The proposed changes to SEBI's definition of UPSI are aimed at increasing regulatory clarity and consistency.

In the constitution paper, SEBI suggested including fundraising proposed to be undertaken in the definition of UPSI.

Currently, the decision concerning fundraising proposed to be undertaken is not included in the definition at present.

The regulator has proposed the inclusion of restructuring plans, one-time bank settlements and other significant financial restructurings as UPSI.

SEBI has also proposed that actions by regulatory or judicial bodies against a company or its key personnel if involving significant enforcement, fines, penalties, or other sanctions, should be considered price-sensitive and classified as UPSI.

Among others, the regulator suggested that outcomes of major litigations or disputes that could affect a company's operations or finances, along with any major contracts or orders awarded to the company (or significant amendments or terminations) outside regular business activities, should be disclosed as UPSI due to their potential impact on financial performance.

Further, the granting, withdrawal, or suspension of essential licenses or approvals should be disclosed, as such events could significantly affect company operations.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has sought public comments on the proposals by November 30.

India, a promising market for Sony's gaming business, says India MD Nayyar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is emerging as a "good opportunity market" in the gaming business for the consumer electronic major Sony, its India Managing Director Sunil Nayyar said.

The company has reported "phenomenal growth" in the gaming business in FY24, with the robust performance of PlayStation 5 and its software peripherals.

Sony India's PlayStation dominates the console operating gaming system market here with around 95 per cent market share and has almost doubled its revenue in FY 2023-24 from the segment. However, now, it expects a moderation in the growth rates because of the high base, Nayyar said.

"Now, the base is very high because we almost achieved the double business last year. So this year, we intend to have modest growth, but we are developing the gaming business market in the country, including software development and peripherals etc," the Sony India MD told PTI.

Sony India last week filed its annual returns to report over 50.1 per cent growth from its 'other business' segment at Rs 1,363.54 crore, which houses its gaming and B2B business.

"This is largely led by the gaming business. It gave us a phenomenal growth. There is no doubt about it.

PlayStation 5 and our software peripherals, everything did very well.

"So, India is now becoming a very good opportunity market for gaming for Sony... We have 95 per cent in the market today as far as PS5 is concerned. We have a very strong brand here for the gaming business," Nayyar said.

Sony India's revenue from Consumer Audio and Visuals segment increased 15.7 per cent to Rs 6,300.20 crore in FY 2023-24 against Rs 5,445.73 crore a year ago. Its overall profit rose 22.18 per cent to Rs 167 crore, while revenue from operations surged 20.6 per cent to Rs 7,663.74 crore.

Nayyar said the over 20 per cent growth in the topline is because of the strategy of premiumisation on which it has been working for the last few years in all product zones, including TV and audio products.

"This is the primary cause because of the sales growth because our average sales price has gone up," he said, adding that "now, we do not rely on selling entry-level or price point models".

Now, in India, everything is being upgraded in the market from content on OTT platforms to everything in the market, he said.

"This is our ongoing journey for selling premium products in the country. So, this strategy, you can say philosophy, is working well for Sony.

We have upgraded, and evolved the customer into the premium segments, especially in our television lineup, home theatres and cameras," said Nayyar.

Sony India, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Japan's tech major Sony Corporation, expects to surpass its historic Rs 11,000 crore revenue, which it recorded in FY15, in the coming years.

On Sony India's ongoing business in the current fiscal, Nayyar said all the categories are showing very positive momentum, especially television, sound bars, and home theatres.

Fraud detection system saves ₹2,500 Crore in public assets: Jyotiraditya Scindia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The technical system deployed by the government is blocking 1.35 crore fraud calls daily and has helped save people's assets worth Rs 2,500 crore till date, Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia said.

The minister, in an interview with PTI, said most of the spam calls originate from servers outside the country, and the systems have been able to block the majority of such fraudulent calls.

"In terms of the number of marketing calls you get in your phone, the number of fraud calls that come in, we have put in place a full system to be able to tackle that. Our DoT fraud detection network has saved close to about Rs 2,500 crore of people's assets today, as we speak, through Sanchar Sathi and Chakshu," Scindia said.

The systems have led to the disconnection of close to about 2.9 lakh phones and blocked close to about 1.8 million headers that were used for sending out messages, he added.

"Along with that, (there) was another vicarious method through which people would use servers outside India, which would masquerade themselves as a +91 number (Indian number). We have put into place software that stops these calls that are blocking an average of 1.35 crore such calls per day," the minister said.

The government has put in new software where it is integrating law enforcement agencies as well as banks, he said, adding that "520 agencies have been onboarded".

While charting out his priorities, Scindia said that rolling out of Atmanirbhar (self-reliant) BSNL 5G by May and 4G for all under the saturation scheme by April is among his top priorities, along with notifying all rules left under the Telecommunications Act 2023 by December. He said that a plan to roll out 1 lakh base stations for BSNL 4G is underway, of which roll out of which 50,000 towers have been completed.

"By April-May next year, we will roll out 1 lakh BTSs, which means we will have our own domestic publicly-owned company rolling out 4G. The move from 4G to 5G then, is only tweaking the core a little bit, as well as adding an additional BTS. By April-May next year, hopefully, some sites will become 5G enabled as well, within the BSNL system. So, that's the alacrity with which we are working. That's my first priority," Scindia said.

The minister said his second priority is to ensure 4G saturation across the country.

"We have close to about 37,000 villages that are left with connectivity on 4G in the country. A lot of them are in very distant areas. We are looking at making sure that we have 100 per cent saturation on 4G by March-April, next year," he said.

Scindia said that out of about 27,000 BTS required, 10,000 have already been installed.

The 4G saturation will provide coverage to roughly 1.6 crore population.

The minister also said that after assuming office, he issued notification of the Telecom Act, passed in Parliament last November, and now he has to mandatorily issue all rules by December.

"The first thing I did when I assumed office was I issued the notification of the Telecom Act. Why is that important? That's important because the minute you do that, then your 180-day counter starts, and within six months, mandatorily, you have to issue all the rules. So by the end of December, the total of those 31 rules, we have done almost about 14 or 15, and the balance we hope to have done by the end of December," he added.

India's coal import rises eight per cent in April to September

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's coal import rose by 7.8 per cent to 140.60 million tonne (MT) in the April-September period of the ongoing financial year.

The country's coal import was 130.34 MT in the year-ago period, according to data compiled by B2B e-commerce company mjunction services ltd.

Overall, coal import demand is likely to remain modest due to the healthy stock position and high volumes being offered through spot e-auctions in the domestic market, mjunction MD and CEO Vinaya Varma said.

Coal import in September dropped by 10.09 per cent to 19.42 MT from 21.60 MT in the corresponding month of previous fiscal.

Of the total imports in September, non-coking coal volume was 13.24 MT, against 14.88 MT in the year-ago month.

Coking coal import stood at 3.39 MT, against 4.59 MT a year ago.

During the April-September period, non-coking coal import was at 91.92 MT, higher than 83.45 MT imported during the same period last year.

Coking coal import was at 28.18 MT as against 29.44 MT.

"There was a slight increase in non-coking coal import in September (over previous month), ahead of the festive season.

However, coking coal imports fell, in line with the softness in steel demand and prices," Varma said.

The country's domestic coal production rose 6 per cent to 453 MT in the April-September period of FY25, over 428 MT in the year-ago period.

Coal minister G Kishan Reddy had recently said Coal India's priorities should be to ramp up production of coal and scale up supplies to reduce imports. Coal India Ltd accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal output.

Russian oil reaches Europe via India, making India biggest exporter of fuel to Europe: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's export of fuels like diesel to the European Union jumped 58 per cent in the first three quarters of 2024, with a bulk of them likely coming from refining discounted Russian oil, according to a monthly tracker report.

The EU/G7 countries in December 2022 introduced a price cap and an embargo on the imports of Russian crude oil in a bid to cripple Kremlin's revenue and create a vacuum in its funding for the invasion of Ukraine.

However, a lack of a policy on refined oil produced from Russian crude meant that countries not imposing sanctions could import large volumes of Russian crude, refine them into oil products and legally export them to the price-cap coalition countries.

India has become the second biggest buyer of Russian crude oil since the invasion, with purchases rising from less than one per cent of the total oil imported in the pre-Ukraine war period to almost 40 per cent of the country's total oil purchases.

The rise was primarily because Russian crude oil was available at a discount to other internationally traded oil due to the price cap and the European nations shunning purchases from Moscow. Fuel exports were, however, at full price.

"Capitalising on the refining loophole, India has now become the biggest exporter of oil products to the EU. In the first three quarters of 2024, exports to the EU from the Jamnagar, Vadinar (in Gujarat) and new Mangalore refinery - which are increasingly reliant on Russian crude - saw a 58 per cent year-on-year rise further," the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) said its latest report.

Europe typically imported an average of 1,54,000 barrels per day (bpd) of diesel and jet fuel from India before Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This has almost doubled.

While CREA did not give an absolute number for imports, the European think tank had in a previous report stated that Euro 8.5 billion of price cap coalition countries' imports of oil products in 13 months to December 2023 were made from Russian crude.

These imports in 13 months were equivalent to 68 per cent of the EU's annual commitment to aid Ukraine between 2024 and 2027.

"In the 13 months since the oil price cap took effect (in December 2022), over one-third of India's exports of oil products to sanctioning countries was derived from Russian crude (EUR 6.16 billion or USD 6.65 billion)," the Finland-based CREA had said in the previous report.

While there are no restrictions or sanctions on buying/using Russian crude oil and exporting fuels like diesel derived from it, the Group of Seven (G7) rich nations, the European Union and Australia - called the price cap coalition countries - first set a crude price cap of USD 60 per barrel starting December 5, 2022, and later on products like diesel to keep the market supplied while limiting Moscow's revenue.

CREA in the latest report said India, the world's third largest oil-consuming and importing nation, in October bought Euro 2 billion worth of crude oil from Russia, down from Euro 2.4 billion in the previous month.

"China has bought 47 per cent of Russia's crude exports (in October), followed by India (37 per cent), the EU (6 per cent), and Turkey (6 per cent)," it said.

"India was the second-largest buyer of Russian fossil fuels in October, contributing 19 per cent (EUR 2.6 billion) to Russia's monthly export earnings from its top five importers. An estimated 77 per cent of India's imports (valued at EUR 2 billion) comprised crude oil."

Mcap of 6 of top-10 most-valued firms erodes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of six of the top-10 most-valued firms eroded Rs 1,55,721.12 crore last week, with Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest laggard, in line with an overall weak trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark declined 237.8 points, or 0.29 per cent.

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

The valuation of Reliance Industries fell Rs 74,563.37 crore to Rs 17,37,556.68 crore.

Bharti Airtel's valuation dropped Rs 26,274.75 crore to Rs 8,94,024.60 crore.

The market valuation of ICICI Bank slumped Rs 22,254.79 crore to Rs 8,88,432.06 crore and that of ITC tanked Rs 15,449.47 crore to Rs 5,98,213.49 crore.

LIC's market capitalisation (mcap) declined Rs 9,930.25 crore to Rs 5,78,579.16 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever went lower Rs 7,248.49 crore to Rs 5,89,160.01 crore.

However, the valuation of TCS jumped Rs 57,744.68 crore to Rs 14,99,697.28 crore.

The mcap of Infosys soared Rs 28,838.95 crore to Rs 7,60,281.13 crore and that of State Bank of India climbed Rs 19,812.65 crore to Rs 7,52,568.58 crore.

HDFC Bank added Rs 14,678.09 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 13,40,754.74 crore.

Reliance Industries remained the country's most-valued firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, ITC, Hindustan Unilever, and LIC.

Exploration, monetisation of natural gas will benefit Northeast: Indian Gas Exchange Official

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Exploration and monetisation of natural gas deposits in the northeastern region can help cut down its import, while also boosting the local economy and providing more trade opportunities, a top official of the Indian Gas Exchange (IGX) said.

Rajesh K Mediratta, Managing Director and CEO of IGX, the country's first automated national level gas exchange, maintained that the region can supply the surplus gas not only to other parts of the country, but also to neighbouring Bangladesh and earn significant revenue.

"The Northeast has tremendous potential in the production of natural gas.

As the Northeast Gas Grid is likely to become operational by 2026, the deposit of 6 million MMSCMD of natural gas can be monetised by the existing producers," Mediratta said.

"This will add to the country's energy security as IGX will help gas producers sell the surplus gas to the other regions," he said, while speaking at a seminar on 'Gas Market Development for North East' here on Friday.

Highlighting the potential of natural gas from the Northeast in support to India's energy security, the official said, "India is currently importing about 50 per cent of its consumption, around 100 MMSCMD to meet the total demand of 200 MMSCMD.

With the effective gas pipelines in the region, the existing petroleum companies can unearth 6 MMSCMD."

This will save approximately Rs 14,000 crores, apart from allowing backward linkages in the local economy with job and trade opportunities, he maintained.

"The access to gas network also opens up doors to newer industries such as ceramic and glass which run exclusively on natural gas. Given the natural resources, these industries are expected to thrive in the region," Mediratta added. The rejuvenated gas distribution network with the Northeast Gas Grid will also improve supply to tea estates, allowing them to switch back to natural gas from the traditional energy sources like coal, he claimed.

He also highlighted that natural gas is a cheaper and cleaner option as compared to LPG, which makes case for households to switch to gas.

On the market potential for export of natural gas from the region, Mediratta said, "Bangladesh has tremendous market potential as the country has been using natural gas. The natural gas producers can definitely look at this scope with potential," he added.

MEDITATION
THE PATH TO BETTER SLEEP AND DAILY WELLNESS

Practicing meditation not only improves health but also life as a whole, leading to a balanced and fulfilling life, writes **P N ARORA**

In today's fast-paced world, many people struggle with stress, anxiety, and sleep disturbances. As a result, meditation has gained popularity as a powerful tool for improving the quality of life. Not only does meditation help in calming the mind, but it also promotes better sleep.

Meditation is a practice that encourages focused attention and mindfulness, leading to a deep state of relaxation. Practising regularly can significantly lower cortisol levels, our body's primary stress hormone. High cortisol levels are often associated with sleep problems. With mindful eating, regular exercise, and meditation, one may find it easier to fall asleep.

Research indicates that meditation can improve sleep quality. A study found that meditation can reduce insomnia symptoms and improve sleep quality in older adults. By cultivating awareness of thoughts and emotions, meditation allows individuals to manage racing thoughts that often disrupt sleep.

Many meditation practices help significantly improve the quality of sleep. One of these techniques involves focusing on the present and letting go of the intruding thoughts by allowing one to focus on the sensations of breathing. Further, guided imagery helps by equipping the practitioners with the ability to visualise soothing scenes, often guided through a meditation guide, which helps soothe the mind and prepare it for rest. The body scan technique also helps by checking different parts of the body to identify stress and release tension. This helps facilitate both physical relaxation and mental calmness. Lastly, loving-kindness meditation cultivates feelings of love and compassion, improving emotional well-being and reducing stress, making it easier to drift into a peaceful slumber. Together, these techniques offer powerful tools for anyone seeking to improve their sleep through mindful practices.

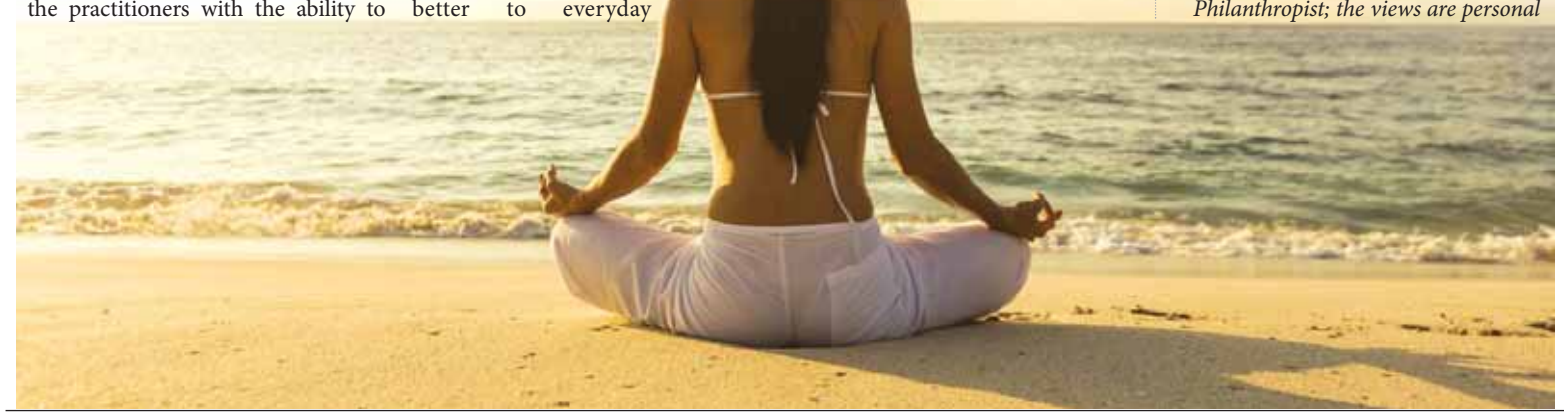
Meditation has a host of benefits far beyond just sleep improvement. It decreases stress and anxiety because it gives one the feeling of calmness within, reducing anxiety levels and building the strength to stand up again after every fall that comes with life's obstacles. Additionally, mindfulness practices improve concentration and attention significantly, which positively relates to improved cognitive functions and productivity at work throughout the day. This sensitivity increases emotional balance and propels the practice of awareness toward self-consciousness. It also makes one respond much better to everyday situations through conscious thinking.

MEDITATION IS A PRACTICE THAT ENCOURAGES FOCUSED ATTENTION AND MINDFULNESS, LEADING TO A DEEP STATE OF RELAXATION. PRACTISING REGULARLY CAN SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER CORTISOL LEVELS, OUR BODY'S PRIMARY STRESS HORMONE

The impact of meditation on relationships is that it makes it possible to have a compassionate understanding towards others; many even describe that the relationships they maintain with other people become far more profound and richer after meditation practice begins. It is also reported on the physical level by linking the reduction in stress levels with many kinds of health improvements, including lowering blood pressure, better function of the immune systems, and even lowering chronic pain to attain good physical health. Adding meditation into activities would surely bring some much-needed transformation from mental to even physiological status.

Meditation is a great tool to sleep better and have more holistic wellness. By reducing stress levels, meditation creates a peaceful mental condition that allows for rejuvenation and improves the everyday flow of life, in which people can navigate through the tasks of their day more smoothly and peacefully. Not just that; practising this ancient practice not only improves health but also life as a whole, leading to a better-balanced and fulfilling life.

The author is the MD of Yashoda Super Speciality Hospitals, Ghaziabad, healthcare provider and Philanthropist; the views are personal



INDULGE IN GUILT FREE SWEET TREATS

TEAM VIVA

The intake of sweets in the festive season and even after is inevitable. However, for those with diabetes or managing their diabetes, it can feel like a challenge. But here's the good news: you don't have to give up dessert. It's about making mindful choices—picking better options and exploring new diabetes-friendly ingredients. By doing so, you keep your blood sugar levels in check and discover a world of healthier, delicious cuisines to enjoy.

MANAGING DIABETES

It's not just sugar intake that impacts your blood sugar levels. It's important to manage your overall carbohydrate intake as well. Carbohydrates, including sugars, complex carbs, and fiber can significantly affect blood sugar levels. Desserts often contain high levels of simple sugars such as dextrose, fructose, and glucose, which can cause blood sugar spikes. However, there's more to consider than just avoiding sugar.

EAT YOUR WAY TO BETTER HEALTH

Understanding *glycaemic index* (GI) of foods helps with your food choices. The GI index is a scoring system for foods that tells you how much a food will spike your sugar level. So, the lower the GI index, the healthier the food. Examples of foods with a high GI index that you should eat occasionally and in moderation are simple carbs like ice creams, chocolates, refined flours, sweets etc. These major sources of glucose can do the most harm to your sugar balance.

"Managing diabetes isn't about depriving yourself—it's about making smart, informed choices," said *Dr Irfan Shaikh*, Associate Medical Director, Abbott's Nutrition business. He further added that the key to managing blood sugar is finding the right nutrient balance that lowers the glycemic index (GI) of your meals. By thoughtfully combining ingredients in the right proportions, you can control the GI of your meals and manage your glucose levels more effectively.

It's good to include plenty of high fibre (bajra, jowar and ragi), whole-wheat bread, fruits, vegetables and whole legumes (daals). These are must-haves for diabetics, as they balance out your simple carbohydrate intake and help you maintain a normal blood sugar level.

Dr Rajeev Bansal, MD Medicine, Consultant & director East Delhi cardiac & diabetes centre, Krishna Nagar opines, "Good nutrition is significant to managing diabetes. Diabetes-specific nutrition (DSN) helps regulate blood sugar and provides essential nutrients at times, lacking in daily meals. Incorporating specialised nutrition drinks can fill critical gaps, ensuring sustained energy and better post-meal glucose control, allowing you to enjoy the festivities without worrying about blood sugar spikes."

SATISFY YOUR SWEET TOOTH SMARTLY

Diabetes-Specific Nutrition offers a way for diabetics to enjoy sweets without the guilt. DSN products are formulated to be low in glycemic impact, making them ideal for replacing high-carb, sugar-laden desserts. Here are some tips for incorporating DSN and other diabetes-friendly ingredients into your festive treats:

DSN shakes: Instead of sugary milkshakes or smoothies, use a DSN shake mix as a base and blend in diabetes-friendly fruits like berries or figs

Sugar substitutes: Swap out refined sugar for alternatives like jaggery or dates based sweeteners in moderate amounts

Homemade sweets: When making traditional sweets, replace high-carb ingredients with DSN powder or low-GI flours such as almond or oat flour

Low-GI foods: Replace high-GI foods like basmati rice with brown rice and swap out regular wheat chapati for options like ragi, bajra or jowar bhakri to keep your meals diabetes-friendly

DIABETES-FRIENDLY DESSERT

Transforming popular festive desserts into diabetes-friendly versions is easier than you think. By incorporating Diabetes-Specific Nutrition (DSN) products, and low-glycemic ingredients, you can keep the festive spirit alive without affecting your blood sugar control:

Gajar Halwa: Gently simmer grated carrots in milk infused with fragrant cardamom and roasted almonds. Cook until the liquid evaporates, leaving behind a rich, creamy mixture. Garnish with a final sprinkling of toasted almonds for that perfect nutty crunch

Shir Sewain: Toast golden semiya in ghee, then simmer in milk and khoya until it thickens. Add a touch of saffron for color and flavor, and top with nuts for the perfect festive indulgence

Moong Dal Paysam: Slow-cook moong dal and rice together to create a creamy base. Enhance with ghee for richness, and finish with a generous mix of toasted nuts and warm milk for a comforting and nutrient-packed treat

Nuts Shrikhand: Transform thickened curd into a cooling treat by mixing in cardamom and a medley of almonds and pistachios. Serve chilled for a nutty, refreshing delight

Enjoying sweets that make you happy doesn't have to come at the cost of your health.

By making mindful choices, managing your carbohydrate intake, and incorporating Diabetes-Specific Nutrition, you can indulge in sweet treats without guilt.

YOGA FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

As individuals age, reduced flexibility impacts daily life. So, while introducing yoga to seniors, it's essential to select gentle postures

BY JYOTI SINGH

Aging gracefully is a common aspiration, and yoga offers senior citizens a holistic approach to wellness that supports both physical and mental health. Here are some insights on how yoga can profoundly benefit older adults. With gentle, adaptable practices, *yoga* is an ideal exercise form for seniors, focusing on mobility, flexibility, strength, and mental tranquility.

ESSENTIALITY FOR SENIORS

As individuals age, natural changes like reduced flexibility, weaker muscles, and increased risk of chronic ailments can impact daily living. Yoga provides an effective way to address these age-related challenges. For seniors, yoga offers a well-rounded path to stay active and maintain mobility.

Physical and Mental Benefits: Yoga helps maintain flexibility, strength, and balance, which are crucial for older adults. Practicing yoga supports joint health and relieves stiffness. With regular practice, seniors can improve balance and coordination, significantly lowering their fall risk. Additionally, yoga's controlled breathing and stretching exercises benefit cardiovascular health, helping reduce blood pressure and manage cholesterol levels.

Mental Well-being: Yoga is a powerful stress reliever, fostering emotional balance and mental clarity. Many seniors face feelings of loneliness or anxiety, particularly those living independently. Mindfulness and breathing exercises in yoga calm the mind, helping manage stress. The deep breathing in yoga stimulates the nervous system, promoting relaxation and enhancing mood.

POSES FOR SENIORS

When introducing yoga to seniors, it's essential to select gentle, accessible postures. Some beginner-friendly poses that the seniors can safely practice at home to enhance flexibility, strength, and balance.

TADASANA (MOUNTAIN POSE)

This foundational standing posture helps improve balance and posture.

Seniors can stand with feet together, stretching arms upward, taking slow, deep breaths. *Tadasana* strengthens leg muscles and increases core engagement, supporting stability.

VRIKSHASANA (TREE POSE)

A great pose for balance, *Vrikshasana* improves leg strength and stability. By placing one foot on the opposite thigh and balancing with arms lifted, seniors can focus on coordination. Practicing near a wall can offer additional support.

ANULOM VILOM (ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING)

Anulom Vilom is a simple yet powerful breathing exercise that promotes mental clarity and emotional stability. Seniors can sit comfortably, close one nostril with a finger, inhale through the open nostril, and then alternate. *Anulom Vilom* helps balance the mind, reduces stress, and improves lung function making it especially beneficial for seniors seeking calm and focus.

BHUJANGASANA (COBRA POSE)

Ideal for spinal flexibility and relieving back tension, *Bhujangasana* involves lying on the stomach and gently lifting the chest. This pose opens the chest and improves breathing, supporting respiratory health.

SHAVASANA (CORPSE POSE)

A restorative pose, *Shavasana* allows for deep relaxation and mindfulness. Seniors lie flat on their back with arms at their sides, focusing on breathing deeply. Ending each session with *Shavasana* is recommended to bring a sense of calm.

In conclusion, yoga offers a gentle yet powerful approach to support seniors in maintaining a healthy, balanced lifestyle.

With expert guidance from practitioners, older adults can experience the transformative benefits of yoga, embracing it as a tool for both strength and serenity.

The author is the, Founder and CEO of Sparsh Yog; the views are personal

Indian women's hockey team resets, targets World Cup 2026, Olympics 2028

PTI ■ RAJGIR (BIHAR)

Indian women's hockey team has overcome recent setbacks and is set to start a new journey with World Cup and Olympics in mind, chief coach Harendra Singh asserted on Sunday, saying that the performance in Asian Champions Trophy will serve as base for future.

The Indian women's team has endured a very rough and long patch since its historic fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Games. It could not qualify for the Paris Olympics and lost 13 of the 16 FIH Pro League matches.

Coach Harendra said his team has worked hard to shrug off the lean run and is preparing for a good show at the 2026 World Cup in Netherlands and the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"This tournament is a base for our future planning. ACT as on our calendar, what we want to achieve in terms of results. It will be start of journey for mission 2026 World Cup and 2028 Olympics," Harendra said ahead of India's ACT tournament-opener against Malaysia on Monday.

"We have overcome all the setbacks, worked on our mistakes. Everyone realised their role and know their role and understands that. ACT is one of the biggest platforms for the girls to showcase their skill and excel and show that the team is on the right path."

Harendra reiterated that fitness is an area which impacted the women's team adversely.

"Whatever has happened in the Pro League is a past, we can't keep crying on that. Yes, we know we lost 13 games but there are reasons behind. The reasons are not technical, but tactical, it's about fitness and that's why I took them to Indian Naval Academy.

"I am looking at the results, I am looking at the progress they are making day after day," he said.

Harendra said together with fitness, mental aspect of the game is also very important.

"Modern hockey doesn't compromise on fitness, if you slightly stray you are going to pay the price. Once you are fit you are mentally strong because you know if you lose the ball you know you have the gas to regain the ball," he said.

"I am not willing to look at the past, that is history for me. Always live in the present and the present is that we have Asian Champions Trophy to defend which can get the entire country out of that setback."

"Deepika and Manisha Chauhan I am working their dragflicks and I am confident about them. I am confident they will deliver."

The coach said he his pinning his eyes on young dragflickers Deepika and Manisha Chauhan to deliver the goods in the tournament.

"Deepika and Manisha Chauhan, I am working their dragflicks and I am confident about them. I am confident they will deliver," Hraendra said.

India captain Salima Tete said Olympic silver medallist China is the biggest threat in their title defence.

"China is the biggest threat for us but we are not underestimating any side. Every team can upset another on the given day," she said.

Salima said leading the side at such a young age of 22 is definitely a challenge but she is up for it.

"It's a challenge for me and I accept that, very few people get that honour. But my focus is on my own performance which will definitely motivate others," she said.

Palak-Amit pair strikes air pistol mixed team gold in World University Championship

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The air pistol mixed team of Palak Gulia and Amit Sharma struck gold with a commanding performance against their compatriots as India won five medals, including three silver, on day 2 of the World University Shooting Championship here on Sunday.

The duo of Palak and Amit defeated the pair of Sainyam and Samrat Rana 16-12 as India grabbed the top-two podium spots in the event at the Karni Singh Range. The Hungarian pair of Sara Rahel Fabian and Redecsi Mate took the bronze defeating Chinese-Taipei 16-12.

Earlier, in the qualification round, Sainyam (289) and Samrat (290) had emerged toppers with an aggregate score of 579, while Palak (285) and Amit (293) were placed second with a combined score of 578.

In women's trap, Neeru and Kirti Gupta clinched silver and bronze respectively shooting 43 and 32 respectively in the final. The Czech Republic's Zina Hrdlickova won the gold with a score of 45.

Kirti had earlier topped the qualification round with a superb 118 out of 125, while Neeru entered the six-shooter final with a score of 115.

Olympian and winner of three gold medals at the 2021 World University Games in China, Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar added another silver to India's tally in 50m rifle 3-positions with a score of 458.2 in the final.

Czech Republic's Jiri Privratsky secured the gold medal with a score of 462.9.

Aishwary, who could not make an impact at the Paris Olympics, earlier shot a superb 592 in the qualification to be placed third going into the eight-shooter final.

As many as 220 shooters from across 23 countries are competing in the championship. The event is being hosted by Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies.

McSweeney to open, Inglis also handed maiden Test call up for BGT opener

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Uncapped Nathan McSweeney won the race to open the batting alongside Usman Khawaja in the first Test against India while Australia also handed a maiden Test call up to Josh Inglis on Sunday.

These two are the new faces in an otherwise expected 13-member squad announced by Cricket Australia just for the series opener starting in Perth on November 22.

The South Australian had emerged as a strong contender for the opener's spot, earning backing from the likes of David Warner and Ricky Ponting. He has been picked ahead of specialist openers Marcus Harris, Cameron Bancroft and Sam Konstas for the spot.

"We are just really thrilled with Nathan's game. I think over the last 12 to 15 months, we have seen a player whose growth is on a great trajectory," Chairman of selectors George Bailey said.

"He is a very organised, composed player at the crease and he's got a game that will really suit Test cricket. He can probably speak more to that but I don't think it's a huge adjustment to go from three to opening," Bailey said.

"I think in the 15 or so games that he's been batting three for South Australia, he's been in before the 10th over about 20 times, so he's had plenty of experience. And as I said, his game and the way he plays, I don't think the adjustment will be too much."

The 25-year-old has been rewarded for his consistent performances in the Sheffield Shield over the past couple of years, as well as his role as captain and batter during the recently concluded A tour matches against India.

"Nathan has displayed the attributes we believe will equip him well for Test cricket along with a strong recent record in domestic cricket."

"His performances for South Australia and Australia A weighed in his favour and supports our view he is ready for the opportunity at Test level." Inglis, whose family emigrated to Perth from Leeds at the age of 14, has been named as backup keeper to Alex Carrey.

The in-form wicketkeeper batter, who is leading Australia for the first time in the third ODI against Pakistan, has also been rewarded for a fine domestic season that included two hundreds in the Sheffield Shield."Similarly, Josh has been in great touch in the Sheffield Shield competition and deserves his place in his first Test squad," Bailey added.

The pace unit will be led by skipper Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood and Scot Boland takes up the reserve quick's spot, while Nathan Lyon is the lone specialist spin option.

Australia squad for 1st Test: Pat Cummins (capt), Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Marsh, Nathan McSweeney, Steven Smith, and Mitchell Starc.

ANOTHER BAD INJURY

A tearful Ilias Akhomach also had to be taken off on a stretcher after he hurt his right leg following his opening goal in Villarreal's 3-0 win over Alaves.

Villarreal, which is in the northern part of the Valencia region, honored the flood victims by having players from both teams wear T-shirts saying "Stay Strong Valencia" before kickoff.

Former top polo player HS Sodhi dies

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leading former Indian polo player and Arjuna Awardee Harinder Singh Sodhi, who during his peak achieved a handicap of plus-five, has died due to age-related illnesses.

He was 86 and is survived by his wife and two daughters.

Popular in polo circles as 'Billy' Sodhi, he died here late on Saturday.

Sodhi played polo alongside the likes of Hanut Singh, Sawai Man Singh (Maharaja of Jaipur) and later with his son Bhawani Singh.

His younger brother, renowned polo player Ravinder Singh Sodhi, is also an Arjuna Award recipient.

Harinder was the manager of the Indian equestrian team during the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

Coco Gauff wins WTA Finals for the first time by rallying to beat Zheng Qinwen

AP ■ RIYADH

Coco Gauff won the WTA Finals for the first time by rallying to beat Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (2) in the final.

The 20-year-old American came from 2-0 and 5-3 down in the final set and was two points from defeat at one stage. Yet she took the set to a tiebreaker and won the first six points. Zheng threatened a comeback but Gauff took the victory off her third match point with a forehand winner as she came into the net.

She is the first American to win the Finals since Serena Williams in 2014, and received $4.8 million in prize money. She also is the youngest player to win it since Maria Sharapova in 2004, the year Gauff was born.

Gauff beat the world's top two players - Aryna Sabalenka and Iga Swiatek - on her run to the final at the season-ending event in Riyadh.

She felt vindicated after that and appeared to take a swipe at observers who wrote her off.

"I just love to say I'm right. Specifically today, I got comments about how I was going to lose badly, so I was just like, 'OK, we'll see,'" Gauff explained. "It's honestly just liking the idea of just proving people wrong and, and letting your racket do the talking. And so, yeah, I use it as motivation."

Zheng was looking to complete a season in which she reached a grand slam final for the first time at the Australian Open and delivered China's first Olympic tennis singles gold medal.

"The match today, it's just a couple of important points," Zheng said. "The match was very close."

Gauff edged the three-hour final which included 26 break points. Gauff also won their only previous meeting, in the Rome quarterfinals on clay in May.

Gauff beat Sabalenka at age 19 in last year's U.S. Open final to win her only major in singles to date. She teamed with Katerina Siniakova to win the French Open doubles this year.

In the WTA doubles final, Gabriela Dabrowski of Canada and Erin Routliffe of New Zealand beat Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic and Taylor Townsend of the United States 7-5, 6-3. They are the first players from Canada and New Zealand to win the doubles title.

Messi and Inter Miami ousted from MLS playoffs by Atlanta United

AP ■ FORT LAUDERDALE (US)

There will be no MLS Cup for Lionel Messi and Inter Miami this year. Atlanta United saw to that with a massive upset, sending the game's most decorated player and biggest-spending team home earlier than anyone imagined.

Jamal Thiaré scored twice, Bartosz Slisz's header in the 76th minute was the winner, and Atlanta United stunned Inter Miami 3-2 on Saturday night to win their best-of-three first round MLS Cup playoff series in three games.

Two free kicks by Messi in the final minutes hit the wall of Atlanta defenders, and time eventually ran out. Messi's header - yes, header - in the 65th minute tied the match at 2-2, but the hosts never reclaimed the lead and Brad Guzan stopped almost everything that came his way in the Atlanta net to seal the upset. It was the fifth win-or-else victory for Atlanta United this season - starting with two must-win matches to keep hope alive at the end of the regular season against the New York Red Bulls and Orlando City, then a wild-card match at Montreal, Game 2 of this series at home and then Saturday's stunner. And the East is suddenly wide open.

Ninth-seeded Atlanta United will play No. 4 Orlando City in the Eastern Conference semifinal, while sixth-seeded New York City FC will face the seventh-seeded New York Red Bulls in the other East semifinal.

No. 2 Columbus was already gone. No. 3 Cincinnati was ousted Saturday. And then came the biggest surprise of all - No. 1 Inter Miami's season is over. The team with the best record won the MLS Cup four times in the league's first seven seasons. In the 22 seasons since, the top overall seed has gone on to win the title only four more times.

And on paper, there may never have been a bigger upset than this one - a No. 9 seed vs. A No. 1 seed, and not just that, a No. 1 seed with Messi in the lineup. Messi's $20,446,667 in total compensation from Inter Miami this season was about $5 million more than the entire Atlanta payroll, and Inter Miami spent a record $41.7 million on payroll this season.

It got Inter Miami the Supporters' Shield, the best regular-season record in MLS history and an invitation to next year's Club World Cup, which came as no surprise. But it didn't even get the club into Round 2 of the playoffs, which will be remembered as a massive flop.

And Atlanta fully believed it was going to pull this off.

For whatever reason, Atlanta was a matchup nightmare for Inter Miami this season. It beat Inter Miami three times, all of them with Messi in the lineup; every other MLS team combined to get three wins over Inter Miami.

A five-minute, three-goal barrage in the first half set the tone. Inter Miami opened the scoring and Atlanta United punched right back - twice.

Thiaré was denied by the goalpost 14 minutes into the contest, when his deflection of a flick into the box narrowly missed opening the scoring. And Inter Miami grabbed a 1-0 lead about two minutes later - Messi was stopped by a diving Guzan, but Diego Gómez was there to lift the rebound into the net from a tight angle near the right post.The lead didn't last long. Thiaré saw to that.

He took a pass and was completely unmarked, firing into the upper right corner to beat Inter Miami goalkeeper Drake Callender - who had no chance - to tie the match in the 19th minute. And not even two minutes later, Alexey Miranchuk tapped a pass to Thiaré who went over Callender for a 2-1 Atlanta lead.Just like that, the best team in MLS regular-season history - and the best player in the sport's history - was in big, big trouble. Inter Miami thought it tied the match in the 25th minute, only for Gómez to be called offside. And the hosts argued wildly for a penalty kick later in the half, arguing that there was a handball in the box (replay suggested they had a case), but they still went into the half down 2-1.

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OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
CUTTACK (R&B) DIVISION NO.I: CUTTACK

B-586

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA "e" procurement Notice

e-procurement Notice for Building (E.I.) works
Bid Identification No. S.E. CTC(R&B) - 34 of 2024-25

The Superintending Engineer, Cuttack (R&B) Division No. I, Cuttack on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites on Percentage rate basis bid in **Single Cover System** in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractor for building work (Fire Fighting) as mentioned below .

1. No. of the Work	:-	14 (Fourteen) Nos. of E.I Works
2. Date & time of availability of bid document in the portal	:-	From dt.13/11/2024 to 5PM of dt.21/11/2024
3. Last date / time of receipt of bids in the portal	:-	5PM of dt.21/11/2024
4. Date & time of opening of bids	:-	11 A.M of dt.22/11/2024
5. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid	:-	Superintending Engineer, Cuttack (R&B) Division No. I, Cuttack

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "https://tendersodisha.gov.in

Sd/-
Superintending Engineer
Cuttack (R&B) Division No.1

OIPR-34091/11/0033/2425