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Manipur volatile, HM monitoring state

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

Later in the evening, the Home Minister held a meeting with senior security and intelligence officials, and reviewed the Manipur situation. Meanwhile, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) chief Anish Dayal Singh reached Imphal on Sunday, to monitor and coordinate the security operations in the region.

The fresh incidents of violent protests took place on Saturday night even as an indefinite curfew was clamped after people, agitated by the killing of three women and children each by militants in Jiribam district, attacked the residences of three state Ministers and six MLAs earlier on Saturday.

Meanwhile, the Manipur Government has requested the Centre to review and withdraw AFSPA from areas falling under the jurisdiction of six police stations in the State. The Centre has reimposed the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 in Manipur's six police station areas, including violence-hit Jiribam. Union Ministry of Home



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

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

NPP withdraws support to BJP

PTI ■ SHILLONG/IMPHAL

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

partially burnt in the incidents. Fire services rushed to the spots and doused the blaze before the flames engulfed the

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

houses. On Saturday night, protesters also advanced towards Biren Singh's ancestral residence at

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

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

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



FILE PHOTO

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

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



Communal clashes in Murshidabad puja pandal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

At least 50 people were injured and many houses were torched and shops vandalised after clashes broke out between members of two communities at Beldanga area of Murshidabad district in central Bengal, bordering Bangladesh. The injured include at least five women and many others from both the groups, sources said adding the entire area was tense though no new reports of clashes had come in till Sunday evening.

The incident took place late on Saturday night after members of one community resorted to stone-pelting as reports of alleged sacrilegious comments written on electrical light boards at a Kartik Puja pandal in ward number 10 became public. Kartik Puja is usually organised by women who want to become mothers.

India successfully flight-tests long-range hypersonic missile



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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

various payloads for ranges greater than 1,500 km, an official readout said. "India has achieved a major milestone by successfully conducting flight trial of long range hypersonic missile from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island, off-the-coast of Odisha," Rajnath Singh said in a social media post. "This is a historic moment and this significant achievement has put our country in the group of select nations having capabilities of such critical and advanced military technologies," he said. Generally, the hypersonic missiles, capable of carrying conventional explosives or nuclear warheads, can fly in the range of five times the speed of sound (Mach 5 which is roughly 1,220 km) per hour at sea level. However, some advanced versions of hypersonic missiles can even fly at the speed of over 15 mach.

At present, Russia and China are way ahead in developing hypersonic missiles while the US is in the process of developing a range of such weapons under an ambitious programme. Several other countries, including France, Germany, Australia, Japan, Iran and Israel, are also pursuing projects to develop hypersonic-missile systems.

GRAP Stage IV invoked in NCR

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA). The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued an orange alert, warning of dense fog on Monday morning. The decision to impose GRAP

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

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The usage of the medicine mentioned above is suggestive in nature and it is the choice of the treatment in the management of above-mentioned diseases. Avoid self-medication and always take the medicines under medical supervision.

Pioneering a clean energy future

Under the guidance of PM Narendra Modi and the able leadership of Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhama, the state government introduced Uttarakhand State Solar Policy 2023. This policy strives to lessen dependency on fossil fuels, foster renewable energy, and assure energy security and inclusive economic development

Pics: DIPR, Govt of Uttarakhand



>> Pushkar Singh Dhama, CM, Uttarakhand; R Meenakshi Sundaram, secretary energy; and other dignitaries participating at UREDA event

across different sectors. By leveraging solar energy, the state strives to improve power system stability, encourage rural incomes, enhance the reliability and quality of electricity supply, and create livelihood prospects, especially for youth and women.

Regulatory Framework

The Uttarakhand State Solar Policy 2023, superseding the Uttarakhand Solar Energy Policy 2013, is developed under the provisions of the Electricity Act of 2003. The policy requires the Uttarakhand State Electricity Regulatory Commission (UERC) and the state government to promote renewable energy, assuring the adoption of cleaner energy forms.

Key Provisions

To achieve the policy targets, several key provisions have been summarised:

Green Tariff

Discoms will create provisions for interested consumers to procure clean electricity from renewable sources at predetermined rates, known

as the 'Green Tariff.' The UERC will introduce economically attractive green tariff rates to encourage early adoption of green energy.

Feed-in-Tariff

The UERC will introduce feed-in tariffs for distributed solar power plants set up by residential, agricultural, government, and institutional consumers to compensate for excess generation injected into the grid.

Metering and Peer-to-Peer Trading

The policy promotes virtual and group net metering, allowing consumers with inadequate rooftop areas to adopt solar. Further, peer-to-peer trading using blockchain technologies will be promoted, allowing consumers to sell power to other grid consumers.

Banking

100% energy banking will be permitted during all 12 months, with energy settlement done monthly. The UERC will determine compensation for banked energy based on peak and off-peak hours.

Open Access

The policy ensures that captive/group-captive solar plants will be exempt from transmission and wheeling charges. Discoms are required to process open-access applications within 21 days.

Implementation Mechanisms

The policy introduces several ingenious mechanisms to encourage solar deployment:

Solar Policy Cell and Single Window Portal

A dedicated Solar Policy Cell will be created by UREDA to streamline the approval process through a single window portal, providing statutory clearances and approvals within 60 days.

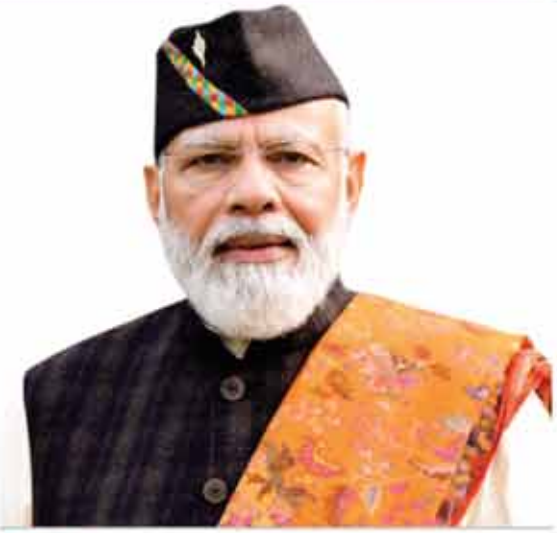
Data Rooms

UREDA will establish data rooms to host information on available land parcels, building details, and rooftop solar potential of government buildings.

OBJECTIVES

The policy summarises several essential objectives to achieve its vision:

- Reach a cumulative capacity of 2500 MW by December 2027 across diversified project portfolios.
- Accelerate solar investment via improved deployment mechanisms, incentives, and business models.
- Provide reliable electricity access to rural consumers in distant places by encouraging solar plus storage solutions.
- Support solar-based livelihood applications and occupation prospects, fostering an entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Incorporate tourism into the energy transition with incentives and innovative business models.
- Promote agro-photovoltaics to boost agricultural income.
- Provide training for skill development, focusing on vulnerable communities to create employment through solar project deployment.



Since 2014, India has increased its solar installation capacity by 30 times. We want to make every household in India a solar power home. From houses to roads, India has moved on the path of energy-efficient lighting. Through all these efforts, green jobs are being created in very large numbers. India of the 21st century is moving ahead with education, skill, research, and innovation."

-Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

Payment Security Mechanism

Payment security mechanisms, such as ESCROW accounts or letters of credit, will be created to ensure timely payments to developers selling RE to government departments and Discoms.

Land Banks and Direct Benefits to Local Communities

UREDA will facilitate the setting up of land banks and identify suitable government and private lands for solar power plant installation. The policy mandates that at least 50% of the employment potential during project construction and operation stages be provided to bonafide residents of Uttarakhand, with a preference

for displaced communities.

Manufacturing Incentives

The policy promotes solar manufacturing facilities with incentives such as priority land allotment, electricity duty waivers, stamp duty reimbursements, SGST reimbursement, and customs duty exemptions on inputs required for manufacturing solar modules and battery storage.

The Uttarakhand State Solar Policy 2023 is an exhaustive framework to accelerate the state's transition to renewable energy. By harnessing the potential of solar energy, Uttarakhand strives to attain its sustainability goals, improve energy security, and foster inclusive economy.



The Uttarakhand State Solar Policy 2023 is evidence of our dedication to a sustainable and profitable tomorrow. By harnessing the power of solar energy, we strive to not only secure our energy requirements but also encourage economic development and create multiple livelihood prospects, especially for the youth and women. Our vision is to make Uttarakhand a forerunner in clean energy, assuring a brighter, greener future for all."

- Pushkar Singh Dhama, Chief Minister of Uttarakhand

Ensclosed in the Himalayan belt of northern India, Uttarakhand is recognized for its natural magnificence, rich biodiversity, and spiritual value. However, the state encounters substantial perils from global warming and climate change. Acknowledging the pressing necessity to transition to cleaner energy, the Uttarakhand government has introduced the Uttarakhand State Solar Policy 2023. This policy strives to lessen dependence on fossil fuels, foster renewable energy, and assure energy security and inclusive economic development.

Vision

The vision of the Uttarakhand State Solar Policy 2023 is to support the clean energy transition by mainstreaming solar energy. The policy aims to accelerate solar energy deployment via distributed solar systems, ingenious business models, and increased adoption of solar applications

Initiating renewable energy endeavours

UREDA's mission involves improving energy access, encouraging sustainability, and promoting financial growth via different schemes

The Uttarakhand Renewable Energy Development Agency (UREDA), operating under the Energy & Renewable Energy Department of the Government of Uttarakhand, has been at the vanguard of propelling the state's renewable energy initiatives. UREDA's mission involves improving energy access, encouraging sustainability, and promoting financial growth via different ingenious programmes and schemes.

Mukhyamantri Saur Swarozgar Yojana (MSSY)

The Mukhyamantri Saur Swarozgar Yojana (MSSY) aims to enhance self-employment and entrepreneurship development through solar energy in Uttarakhand. Launched in March 2023, the scheme expanded its capacity options to include not only 20/25 kW solar power plants but also higher capacity installations of 50, 100, and 200 kW. Exclusively available to permanent residents of Uttarakhand, MSSY has set an ambitious target of establishing a total solar power capacity of 250 MW. Beneficiaries can access all benefits permissible under the MSME framework, with potential monthly incomes reaching up to Rs 1 lakh from these solar plants. In a notable example, 19 solar power plants are being set up in Kukreda, a remote block in Uttarkashi district, under the Chief Minister Solar Self-Employment Scheme. Out of approximately 1,077 projects (192.595 MW) allocated under MSSY, projects totalling 67 MW have been allotted in Tehri district. Additionally, 89 projects (16 MW) have been installed, with 44 of these projects allotted in Tehri.

enhancing the financial support for solar energy initiatives. For instance, beneficiaries can receive grants of up to Rs 33,000 per kW for solar power plants ranging from 1 to 2 kW, along with additional support for larger capacities. Since the scheme's inception, 25,888 applications have been submitted, resulting in the commissioning of 8,143 solar power plants with a combined capacity of 31.5 MW. Central grants have been disbursed to 2,618 applicants, while UREDA has issued state grants totalling Rs 7.03 crore to 1,384 beneficiaries, representing a capacity of 5.59 MW.

Solar Water Heater Program

UREDA provides a 50% state subsidy for domestic installations and a 30% subsidy for commercial solar water heater systems. With a target of 1.7 lakh liters per day (LPD) and a budget provision of ₹1.5 crore for 2024-25, the program has disbursed subsidies amounting to one crore for installations approx 1.29 lakh LPD.

Micro, Mini & Small Hydropower Projects

UREDA is backing hydropower projects to assure village electrification and grid strengthening.

Presently, 41 hydro projects with a cumulative capacity of 14.65 MW are operational across state, furnishing renewable energy to different rural locales. A total of six hydro projects in all the four shrines have been established to ensure regular power supply to all Char Dhams and uphill regions.

Solar Streetlight/High Mast Light

This community-centric program concentrates on installing solar street and high mast lights in rural areas, improving safety.

National Biogas Program

In collaboration with the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, the Government of India, UREDA is implementing the National Biogas Program to meet rural energy needs. The program offers financial assistance of ₹17,000 for 1 cubic meter biogas plants and ₹22,000 for 2-4 cubic meter plants, promoting sustainable energy solutions in rural areas.

Energy Conservation Program

UREDA's energy conservation efforts include developing model villages to raise public awareness about energy savings. Initiatives such as replacing conventional bulbs, tube lights, and fans with energy-efficient devices in government schools, health centers, and other public buildings are underway.

Solar Rooftops on Government Buildings

UREDA is enhancing the use of government structures for renewable energy generation, setting a target capacity of 60 MW for rooftop solar installations. Currently, 9 MW has been installed across 305 government buildings. In the 2024-25 fiscal year, the state government has sanctioned a budget of 100 crore for the first phase of this initiative and received proposals for an additional 24.5 MW capacity across 1,695 buildings. The installation of solar power plants will promote a green economy along with creating employment opportunities.

PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana

The PM-Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana aims to promote the installation of solar power plants in Uttarakhand by providing substantial financial incentives to beneficiaries. In addition to grants from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) and the Central Government, the State Government offers matching grants, significantly



Leading the charge in energy sector excellence

Uttarakhand Power Corporation Limited (UPCL) is a supreme entity in the energy sector, serving over 2.9 million electricity consumers across Uttarakhand. With an expansive infrastructure that contains more than 375 substations, over 45,000 KM of 11 KV lines, and upwards of 70,000 KM of low-tension lines, UPCL is dedicated to delivering reliable electricity to all parts of the state.

UPCL's mission is to empower the socio-economic growth of Uttarakhand by

enforcing a cutting-edge distribution network and maximizing consumer satisfaction through IT-enabled solutions. Significant accomplishments include a record revenue collection of Rs. 9,880 Crore in FY 2023-24, a substantial decrease in AT&C losses to 14.85%, and securing the 1st position among Himalayan states in the latest Consumer Service Rating of Discom (CSRSD) by the REC.

The corporation has adopted technological advances, such as the "Consumer Self-Service" mobile application and the Field Activity Management (FAM) mobile application, to enhance service delivery and operational efficiency. In FY 2023-24, UPCL ensured an impressive average power supply of 23:41 hours per day in

urban areas and 23:28 hours per day in rural areas. UPCL's dedication to quality and governance is evidenced by its various certifications and awards, including NABL certification for its test laboratories and ISO 9001:2015 certification for its corporate office. These efforts highlight UPCL's dedication to providing reliable electricity and driving Uttarakhand's socio-economic growth.



>> Pushkar Singh Dhama, CM, Uttarakhand, inaugurates RMU works at Uttarkashi

CM Dhama inaugurates RMU works in Uttarkashi

In a significant move towards enhancing power generation capabilities in Uttarakhand, CM Pushkar Singh Dhama inaugurated the Renovation, Modernization, and Upgradation (RMU) works at the Tiloth Power House, operated by Uttarakhand Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited (UJVN).

This initiative aims to rejuvenate aging power infrastructure and boost electricity output. The RMU project targets power houses with outdated equipment and diminishing generation capacity. At the Tiloth Power House, extensive repairs and renovations of the existing machinery have been undertaken. This initiative has successfully increased the installed capacity from 90 MW to 94.5 MW, leading to a remarkable surge in annual electricity generation.

Prior to the RMU, the Tiloth Power House produced approximately 397 million units of electricity per year. Post-upgrade, this figure is expected to soar to around 483 million units,

reflecting an impressive increase of nearly 22%. Additionally, the availability of machinery has improved from 73.67% to 77.5%, ensuring more reliable power supply. Financially, the RMU project is projected to significantly enhance revenue. Previously generating around Rs 57 crore annually, the Tiloth Power House is now expected to yield approximately Rs 97 crore—a potential increase of Rs 40 crore. This uptick in production and revenue is set to not only bolster the financial health of UJVN, but also contribute positively to the state's economy.

CM Dhama emphasised the importance of such initiatives in strengthening the state's power supply system, asserting that the advancements in infrastructure will ultimately benefit both the corporation and the residents of Uttarakhand. The successful implementation of RMU works at Tiloth Power House marks a significant step forward.



>> Pushkar Singh Dhama, CM, Uttarakhand; R Meenakshi Sundaram, secretary energy; and other dignitaries inaugurating power projects

Transforming Uttarakhand's power supply

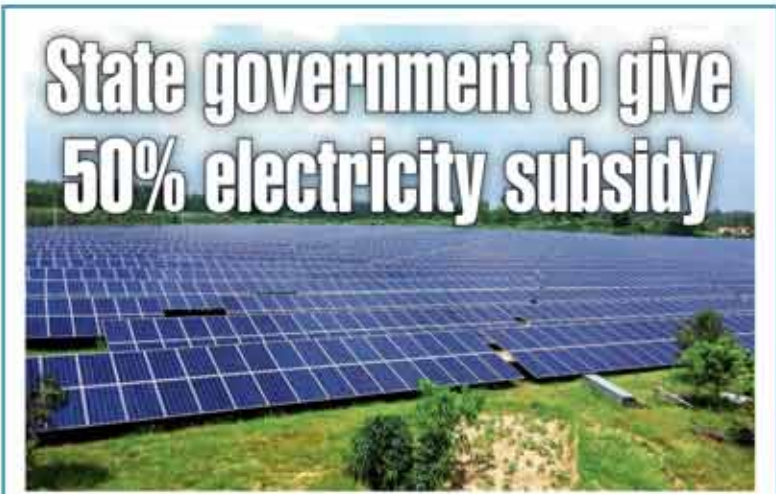
The Ministry of Power, Government of India, has established the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) to revolutionize electricity distribution across India. For Uttarakhand, the Power Finance Corporation Limited (PFC) is the nodal agency for enforcing this transformative scheme.

The RDSS seeks to improve the power supply experience for consumers in Uttarakhand with pivotal objectives, including improving quality and reliability, reducing Aggregate Technical and Commercial (AT&C) losses to 12-15% by 2024-25, and eliminating the gap between Average Cost of Supply (ACS) and Average Revenue Realized (ARR) by the same year. A critical component of the RDSS is the introduction

of prepaid smart metering, which will improve operational efficiency via Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI). This technology will automate energy flow measurement and enhance energy accounting.

Uttarakhand's distribution infrastructure will experience extensive upgrades, such as replacing old conductors, installing additional high-tension lines, and deploying Aerial Bunched Cables (ABC) and High Voltage Distribution Systems (HVDS) in high-loss areas.

The scheme also focuses on skill development and capacity building, including training personnel and running consumer awareness programs. With a sanctioned cost of Rs 2,526.17 crore for loss reduction and prepaid smart metering components, the RDSS aims to create a sustainable and efficient power supply system in Uttarakhand.



The Pushkar Singh Dhama-led government in Uttarakhand has announced a project to furnish a 50% subsidy to consumers using less than 100 units of electricity per month. This scheme is anticipated to cost the state government Rs. 130 crore annually, and aims to benefit over 11 lakh power consumers. Energy Secretary R Meenakshi Sundaram explained that the estimated expenditure is based on previous electricity bills, with Rs. 260 crore worth of electricity consumed by those using less than 100 units last year. Under the scheme, consumers using more than 100 units will have to pay the full amount.

The subsidy will also extend to consumers in the hilly areas of Uttarakhand, providing ease to users with a power load of up to 1 KW. This initiative, announced by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama on his birthday, reflects the government's adherence to lessening the economic burden on low-consumption electricity users in the state.

The subsidy will also extend to consumers in the hilly areas of Uttarakhand, providing ease to users with a power load of up to 1 KW. This initiative, announced by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama on his birthday, reflects the government's adherence to lessening the economic burden on low-consumption electricity users in the state.

Ragging kills 18-year-old in Gujarat medical college

PTI ■ PATAN

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

Politicians across party lines pay homage to Bal Thackeray



PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

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

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

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

Death toll rises to 11 in Jhansi hospital tragedy



BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ JHANSI

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

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

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

Cops recover IEDs, foil plans to disrupt elections in Gadchiroli

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

Punjab Governor GC Kataria pays tributes to martyrs

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

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

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

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

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ KOHIMA

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

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



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

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



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Left turn ho!

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

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



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

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

PICTALK



Labourers thresh paddy at a field on the outskirts of Amritsar

PTI

Let us be comfortable with silence to discover inner self

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

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



The downtime it offers is not everyone's cup of tea though, for silence can be disconcerting to many. Its virtues are disregarded and it is taken as a sign of lethargy and dispiritedness, an absence of inspiration and the ultimate sign of an introverted personality. In a world teeming with sounds, silence has become something of an endangered species. It is the quietude that we collectively fear as if the absence of words leaves us exposed, untethered, and somehow incomplete. When conversations taper off,

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

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

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

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

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

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

ASHA IYER KUMAR



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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INFANT LIVES LOST

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

M Pradyu | Kannur

BULLDOZER RULE ENDS

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

Secure online transactions



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

criminals and those of communally ostracised is an act that proclaims the rule of a dictator and the death of democracy. The rule of law is thrown in bins and the individual's whims and fancies of the persons at the helm of power prevail only in a totalitarian state. The salient feature of the verdict is the part that recommends payment of compensation to the victims. The bureaucratic section should stick to the statutory provisions and should not dance to the tunes of those in power, as persons in power may come and go but laws prevail forever. Also, those who permit illegal constructions in the water areas should be penalised by making them compensate the victims when such structures are razed. But the crux of the issue is the corruption and avaricious attitude of the political bigwigs to enjoy a monopoly in enjoying asset accumulation by demolishing dissents and oppositions. The real solution to such issues could emerge only from a people's movement against corruption.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

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

Bal Govind | Noida

DELHI POLLUTION CRISIS

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

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The smog capital of India

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



RAJDEEP PATHAK

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

The IMD has reported that the typical winter season may not arrive in Delhi as quickly as expected, thereby disrupting long-established weather patterns that typically bring cooler, less polluted air to the region.

The dense fog mixed with thick smog has created a near-total obscurity, as citizens found themselves enveloped in a hazardous blend of pollutants and moisture resulting in keeping daytime temperatures lower than expected for this time of year — because of fog and smog — although overall temperatures remain warmer than the seasonal norm. This combination of high pollution and unusual weather patterns has compounded the health concerns for residents, particularly the elderly, children and those with respiratory ailments. Delhi's persistent air pollution crisis is fuelled by a combination of local and regional sources.



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

The combination of stagnant weather conditions, pollution, and warm temperatures has created a perfect whirlpool of the smog's persistence over Delhi, making it more difficult for the city to "breathe" as it would in cooler conditions. Health experts believe that exposure to high levels of pollution can lead to short-term



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

effects like coughing, throat irritation and chest tightness. In the long term, the risks increase substantially, with studies linking air pollution exposure to chronic respiratory diseases, lung cancer, heart disease, and even impacts on cognitive functions. Air pollution is a severe health crisis in India, causing between 1.2 million and 1.8 million premature deaths each year. The 7 million annual deaths from air pollution worldwide exceed those from COVID-19, as well as combined fatalities from war, homicide, car and plane accidents. Clean air is essential for human health, yet scientific studies continue to reveal new health risks linked to air pollution, including respiratory diseases, heart issues, stroke, and lung cancer, as well as emerging links to premature births, diabetes, and brain damage.

Poor air quality can also worsen outcomes for COVID-19 by increasing vulnerability to respiratory illnesses. Dr David R Boyd, Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability, University of British Columbia, CA, Associate Professor in law, policy and Sustainability in his paper "The Human Rights to Breathe Clean Air" published in The National Library of Medicine (2019) necessitates the urgency for treating air pollution as a human rights issue and that "Air pollution on

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

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Smriti; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

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



SAKSHI SETHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Supreme Court strikes down 'bulldozer injustice'



K S TOMAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tackling the epidemic of diabetes and hypertension: Urgent action needed

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

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

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



PANKAJ BHARDWAJ

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

1 in every 4 men and 1 in 5 women—are living with this condition, which ranks as one of the leading causes of premature death worldwide. In addition to this, WHO states that more than 50 per cent of people with diabetes and about 46 per cent of adults living with hypertension don't even know about their condition.

It is safe to argue that lack of awareness is the biggest problem here. Both conditions have become the largest, silent, dual epidemics currently challenging India. The Cost of Inaction: Tertiary treatment for complications from advanced diabetes and hypertension—such as heart disease, kidney failure, or stroke—is exponentially more costly than primary health interventions. In 2024, reports from different

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Russia launches fiercest attack on Ukraine's infrastructure

AP ■ KYIV

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

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

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



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

Latest typhoon lashes Philippines

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

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

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

Lanka's new Cabinet to be sworn in today

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Pak religious body faces backlash over anti-VPN decree

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

Gold pocket watch from Titanic rescue sells for record price

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Param Amrit offers luxurious Ayurvedic skin care products for holistic beauty and wellness, writes ABHI SINGHAL

REDEFINING SKINCARE NATURALLY

Skincare has been the talk of the town from quite a time now. From using normal soaps and moisturisers, to now being choosy due to thousands of brands typically using chemicals it's difficult to rely on the ones which are healthy for the skin. Some brands live up to the mark but the others are religiously rejected by the people.

From the days Ayurvedic products have come into the business, the trust of the people have been retained. *Param Amrit*, a luxurious skincare brand launched at the *Constitution Club of India* by *Nutan Kher* recently promises you the same.

Param Amrit is a luxurious skincare brand to revive the ancient wisdom of Ayurveda by integrating the transformative power of *Mantra Aushadhi*. Each product of *Param Amrit* is handcrafted and is a testament to holistic well-being, connecting mind, body, and soul. By merging ancient rituals with modern wellness aspirations, *Param Amrit* offers a range of Ayurvedic products that go beyond surface-level beauty, promoting spiritual and emotional rejuvenation.

The Ayurvedic products that have been launched are Soaps - *Abundance*, *Celestial*, *Divine Citrus*, *Divine Orchard*, *Enchanted*, *Fairy Dust*; Face Serums - *Kumkumadi Face Serum*, *Kumkumadi Gold Face Serum* and *Ghrhitamrit face cream*.

Talking to *Nutan Kher*, Founder of *Param Amrit* about the many Ayurvedic brands, people in the majority still going for brands that use chemicals and how does she think that *Param Amrit* can bring a change to people's choices? She said, "We believe the shift towards natural, Ayurveda-based products requires more than just awareness—it calls for trust-building, education, and tangible results. That is why despite the growing awareness around Ayurveda, many consumers continue to lean toward brands that use chemicals, driven by aggressive marketing and instant results. However, *Param Amrit* is dedicated to educating consumers about the holistic, restorative benefits of Ayurvedic ingredients and the importance of understanding what they're putting on their skin. We stand out by focusing not just on the purity of its ingredients but also on the



THE AYURVEDIC PRODUCTS THAT HAVE BEEN LAUNCHED ARE SOAPS - ABUNDANCE, CELESTIAL, DIVINE CITRUS, DIVINE ORCHARD, ENCHANTED, FAIRY DUST; FACE SERUMS - KUMKUMADI FACE SERUM, KUMKUMADI GOLD FACE SERUM AND GHRITAMRIT FACE CREAM



deeply rooted Vedic processes that enhance their healing properties. Our products are carefully crafted using traditional methods, ensuring that each formulation retains its natural potency and effectiveness.

Moreover, we use high-quality, traditionally revered Ayurvedic ingredients in combination with modern testing to ensure efficacy, safety, and visible results.

We at *Param Amrit* offer the best of both worlds: effective skincare rooted in nature and Ayurveda, without the potential downsides of synthetic chemicals. Our products demonstrate how true wellness is a gradual journey that prioritises long-term health over quick fixes, we aim to shift consumer preferences. We are confident that once people experience the authentic, holistic benefits of our prioritised products, they will make more conscious, healthier choices for themselves and their families. Our mission is to make Ayurvedic skincare a primary choice for holistic beauty and wellness, shifting consumer perceptions to recognise the true, sustainable benefits of nature-based solutions."

On asking that does she (*Nutan Kher*) thinks that Ayurvedic products can lead the way, she explained, "Absolutely. The launch of *Param Amrit* will set a new standard in the skincare industry with more Ayurvedic products. This shift is timely and necessary as consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of what they put on their skin and the impact these choices have on their overall well-being. Ayurveda offers a comprehensive, time-tested approach to skincare that aligns perfectly with these values, emphasising balance, sustainability, and nurturing from within thus, reviving the age-old

wisdom of Ayurveda in a modern context. We believe that the authenticity and purity of Ayurvedic products like ours can pave the way for a more meaningful and conscious approach to skincare and self-care.

In contrast to conventional skincare, which often uses chemicals for quick, surface-level results, Ayurveda prioritises understanding each individual's skin type, body constitution, and specific needs. Our goal is to help consumers make informed choices, empowering them to experience skincare that works in harmony with their natural biology. Our formulations, rooted in ancient wisdom, are developed using ethically sourced, high-quality herbs, and botanical extracts, blended with modern safety standards. By embracing this combination of ancient science and modern rigour, our brand shows that Ayurvedic skincare is not just an alternative but a reliable and effective choice for today's consumers.

As people become more aware of the adverse effects of chemical-based products, there is a natural inclination towards embracing safer, nature-derived solutions. The market is ready for a resurgence of Ayurvedic products, and with *Param Amrit* leading by example in quality and efficacy, we are optimistic that Ayurveda can reclaim its rightful place in the mainstream, encouraging more people to choose natural, sustainable, and wellness-centric lifestyles."

With its roots in the time-tested wisdom of Ayurveda, *Param Amrit* will not just be a skincare brand; it is a movement towards conscious, holistic, and sustainable beauty. By blending ancient practices with modern aspirations, the brand promises to inspire a healthier, more mindful approach to skincare, leading the way for nature-based solutions in the modern world.



YOGA FOR STRESS RELIEF

BY JYOTI SINGH

In today's fast-paced world, stress is a constant companion for many, affecting both physical and mental well-being in New Delhi, offers yoga as a powerful remedy for stress relief. Yoga isn't just exercise; it's a way to reconnect with oneself, find calm amid chaos, and build resilience against daily stressors.

Understanding *Yoga's Role in Stress Relief* Yoga is unique in its ability to address stress at multiple levels - physically, mentally, and emotionally. Yoga isn't merely about flexibility or strength; it's about achieving balance. Practicing yoga lowers cortisol levels, the primary stress hormone, helping practitioners experience a natural sense of calm and well-being. In addition to the physical benefits, yoga cultivates mindfulness and deep breathing, both essential tools for managing stress.

By focusing on breathing and bodily awareness, yoga trains the mind to stay grounded in the present moment, reducing anxiety and worry. This mindfulness aspect of yoga empowers individuals to manage stress more effectively, turning challenges into manageable experiences. Yoga can be a sanctuary - a place to find peace within yourself, no matter the external circumstances.

Effective Yoga Practices for Managing Stress

The combination of physical poses, breathing exercises, and relaxation techniques tailored to relieve stress is recommended. Here are some practices especially effective:

PRANAYAMA (BREATHING TECHNIQUES)

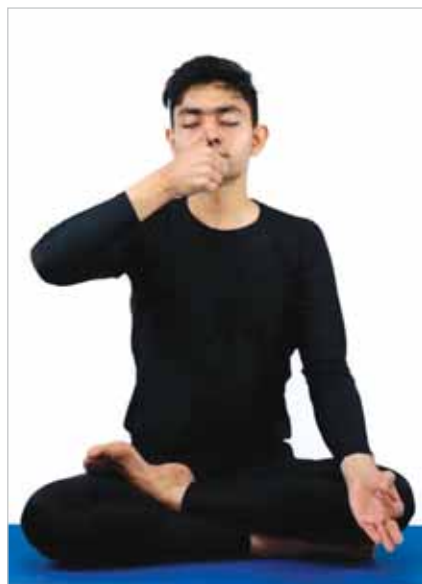
Pranayama, or controlled breathing, is one of the most effective tools for stress relief. Techniques like *Anulom Vilom* (Alternate Nostril Breathing) and *Bhramari* (Bee Breath) are ideal for calming the mind. *Anulom Vilom*, for example, involves breathing through alternate nostrils, which balances energy flow and reduces stress. *Bhramari*, on the other hand, involves creating a humming sound while exhaling, promoting a sense of tranquility and relieving mental tension.

BALASANA (CHILD'S POSE)

This restorative posture allows practitioners to rest and reset. By folding forward with arms extended or resting by the sides, the *Child's Pose* provides a gentle stretch for the back while calming the mind. It's an effective way to release built-up tension and focus on breathing, encouraging relaxation.

SUKHASANA WITH FORWARD BEND

Cross-legged with a forward fold stretches the spine and relaxes the nervous system. This position is simple yet effective for grounding



oneself and encouraging introspection, making it a valuable addition to a stress-relieving yoga routine.

SHAVASANA (CORPSE POSE)

Shavasana is the ultimate relaxation pose, allowing the body to rest and the mind to find calm. Practiced at the end of a session, it involves lying flat on one's back with the body relaxed and eyes closed. It is recommended that you do deep breathing during *Shavasana*, as it allows the nervous system to reset, enhancing relaxation and reducing stress levels.

The Science Behind Yoga & Stress Reduction

Studies confirm that yoga activates the parasympathetic nervous system, also known as the "rest and digest" mode, which is the body's natural counter to stress. Regular practice enhances this calming response, improving long-term stress management. Yoga builds resilience - it helps you create inner strength so that stress doesn't control you. Yoga is not only a coping mechanism but a preventive measure that enables individuals to handle life's challenges with greater ease.

Practicing Safely

For beginners, starting slowly and consulting an instructor to ensure poses are performed correctly. Practicing under guidance, especially when new to yoga, can enhance the benefits and minimize any discomfort. Sessions are tailored to meet individual needs, with a focus on safe and effective stress-relief practices.

Yoga offers a sanctuary from the pressures of daily life, helping individuals find inner peace and resilience. Anyone can incorporate these practices into their lives and experience the transformative effects of yoga for stress relief.

The author is the Founder and CEO of Sparsh Yog.



FIBRE-PACKED ALMONDS

The Australian almonds are your key to a healthier gut microbiome, writes KAVITA DEVGAN

Regardless of whether you're a professional athlete or simply interested in health and fitness, it's easy to integrate almonds into your routine. In fact, a regular 30-gram handful of *Australian almonds* contribute to heart health.

THE GUT BENEFITS OF ALMONDS

Interest in gut health has increased exponentially over recent years. Understanding what drives a healthy gut is still in its infancy, but current knowledge suggests a healthy gut is dependent on an abundant and diverse gut microbiota. Lower gut microbiota diversity is associated with a range of disorders and disease states, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and inflammatory bowel disease. The nutrients that we get from food, in particular fibre, phytochemicals (particularly flavonoids and polyphenols) and unsaturated fatty acids, can positively impact the gut microbiota. Almonds contain a unique nutrient package that includes all three, but what exactly is the evidence base for nuts and gut health?

Key insights you need to know:

- Gut health, and specifically microbiota balance and diversity, can influence overall health.
- Almonds are one of the few foods to



contain a unique package of fibre, phytochemicals and unsaturated fat, that can all positively affect the gut microbiota composition.

- There is established evidence that eating at least 1 large handful (>42g) of almonds daily has a positive effect on gut microbiota-both increasing beneficial bacteria

and decreasing potentially pathogenic types.

- Evidence suggests that long-term nut consumption may also decrease the risk of colorectal (and colon) cancer recurrence and death, and this link may be more apparent in women than men. Almonds contain the highest content of fibre, and one of

the highest amounts of phytochemicals, of all nuts.

About the research

A literature review investigating the relationship between nuts, specifically almonds, and gut health was conducted by *Nutrition Research Australia* (NRAUS). A review of the literature

was undertaken via the PUBMED database. Study types were limited to randomised controlled trials (RCTs), cohort studies and *systematic literature reviews* (SLR). Targeted searches were also conducted in *Google Scholar* using key terms.

Research findings in a snapshot: THE GUT MICROBIOTA

A 2020 SLR and meta-analysis of nine RCTs found strong evidence that both *almonds* (5 studies) and *walnuts* (3 studies) can improve the gut microbiota. There was an absence of evidence for other nut types (8). Almonds had a dual effect, increasing the abundance of healthy short chain fatty acids producing bacteria, and decreasing potentially pathogenic bacteria.

In one study, even greater effects were found in children, where 42.5g and 85g of almonds per day over 3 weeks had a more pronounced effect on gut microbiota in four-year-old children compared with their parents.

Is the level of processing important?

Research has shown that whole and chopped almonds have a greater positive impact on the gut microbiota than almonds in butter form. This may be because approximately 50% of the fibre

content of almonds is found in the almond skin.

How are Almonds linked to GUT HEALTH?

Nuts are one of the few foods that provide a nutrient package of fibre, phytochemicals (flavonoids, flavanones and polyphenols) and unsaturated fatty acids, which may explain their strong beneficial effects on bacterial abundance and microbiota composition.

Fibre is well known to provide important fuel for colonic bacteria, and phytochemicals act like prebiotics, positively influencing the maintenance of healthy and diverse microbiota. Unsaturated fatty acids have been shown to have antimicrobial properties and also benefit gut microbiota composition.

Amounts and frequency

- One large handful (42g) of almonds or walnuts per day over 3-12 weeks had positive effects on the gut microbiota.
- Two or more handfuls (57g) of nuts per week were associated with a lower incidence of colorectal cancer recurrence and death.

The author is the *Simone nutrition program ambassador of Australian Almonds.*

India beat Japan 3-0 to top league stage

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



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

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



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

AP ■ MALAGA (SPAIN)
Iga Swiatek won in singles Poland's 2-1 comeback against the Czech Republic in the Billie Jean King Cup. Poland will meet Italy in the semifinals after Jasmine Paolini likewise won her singles and doubles matches to lead Italy back for a 2-1 win over Japan. Marie Bouzkova beat Magdalena Frech 6-1, 4-6, 6-4 to give the Czech Republic a 1-0 lead on the indoor hard court in Malaga's Palacio del Deportes. The second-ranked Swiatek leveled the score after she held on for a 7-6 (7), 4-6, 7-5 win over Linda Noskova. The five-time Grand Slam winner then went back on the court after a short break to help Katarzyna Kawa beat Katerina Siniakova, the world's top-ranked doubles player, and Bouzkova 6-2, 6-4. "Let's enjoy this one. For sure it was an exhausting day and some really tough matches, but I am really happy we won that last one," Swiatek said. She added that she hadn't played doubles in three years and praised Kawa's well-placed passing shots in the doubles lane as key to victory. Swiatek showed no sign that she was worn down by the back-to-back matches that combined for 3 hours, 50 minutes of playing time. The Polish pair converted all four break chances and hit more winners, 29-18, than the Czechs. Poland is seeking its first title. The Czech Republic is an 11-time champion, second only to the United States' 18 titles. ITALY EYES SHOT AT CONSECUTIVE FINALS The fourth-ranked Paolini, a finalist at Wimbledon and the French Open, defeated Moyuka Uchijima 6-3, 6-4 to level the tie 1-1. She then helped Sara Errani beat Shuko Aoyama and Eri Hozumi 6-3, 6-4 to seal the quarterfinal win. Japan took the early lead when Ena Shibahara defeated Elisabetta Cocciaretto 3-6, 6-4, 6-4. Uchijima stole Paolini's first service game. But that was only a blip in an otherwise dominant showing by the Italian. Paolini broke Uchijima four times and hit 17 forehand winners to secure the straight-set victory. In doubles, the Italians broke the Japanese four times and made just 14 unforced errors to 23 by their rivals. "Japan is a tough cookie, as you say in English," Italy captain Tathiana Garbin said. "They played with a lot of courage so it was fun to watch this kind of level. My players, they played unbelievable doubles, so we made it."

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



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

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

McGrath urges Australia to 'go hard' on emotional Kohli



PTI ■ MELBOURNE
Pace legend Glenn McGrath feels Australia have the "ammunition" to target an "emotional" Virat Kohli, who will be under pressure if he gets off to a poor start at the five-match Test series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, starting in Perth from November 22. India have won the last four Test series against Australia, including two Down Under. However, they head into the much-anticipated five-Test assignment on the back of a 0-3 series whitewash at the hands of New Zealand at home. "Without a doubt, especially after coming off a 3-0 loss against New Zealand, you've got plenty of ammunition to back yourself up," Fox Cricket noted McGrath as saying on 'CODE Sports'. "So put the pressure on them and see if they're up for it," he added. Kohli, who has been India's batting mainstay for over a

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

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

AP ■ TURIN (ITALY)
Taylor Fritz is starting to make reaching big finals a habit. He feels like he belongs among the very best players in tennis, too. The American followed his runner-up finish at the U.S. Open by beating Alexander Zverev 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (3) on Saturday to play for the trophy at the ATP Finals. "I have believed that I belong, that I'm one of the best players," Fritz said. "It's not results-based. It's more I can feel how I'm playing. This week is huge." In Sunday's final, Fritz will face top-ranked Jannik Sinner — the player he lost to in the U.S. Open final. Sinner also beat Fritz in straight sets in the group stage this week. Sinner advanced with a rapid 6-1, 6-2 win over Casper Ruud. Fritz became the first American finalist since James Blake lost the 2006 final to Roger Federer. The last American to win the elite eight-man event was Pete Sampras, who beat Andre Agassi in 1999. "I trust my game and I trust my level and I don't feel nearly as uncomfortable in these situations anymore because I've been playing the top guys at big events a lot lately," Fritz said. "I'm getting more comfortable in the moment. I'm really, really confident in my game." Fritz upbeat after loss to Sinner Fritz came away encouraged from his 6-4, 6-4 loss to Sinner on Tuesday. "I felt much more comfortable from the baseline. ... I had chances to break him in both sets," Fritz said. "He had an equal amount of chances, and he took his. He played the big points better than I did. It didn't feel anywhere near as one-sided as the Open." Sinner noted that Fritz "played a great match." "The difference was just a few points. Tomorrow will be very similar. ... But finals are always different than group matches." Fritz trying to match Gauff Fritz wins the trophy, it will mark an American sweep of the season-ending events after Coco Gauff won the WTA Finals last week. Fritz's run in New York made him the first American man to reach a Grand Slam singles final in 15 years. He's playing at the ATP Finals for the second time. On debut two years ago, he beat Rafael Nadal in his opener and made it to the semifinals, losing to Novak Djokovic. "It's awesome to come back and already go a step further," Fritz said. "I'm all about always trying to do better than the year before." At the start of the week, Fritz told The Associated Press his "career has always been a very steady progression and just improving a little bit each year." Fritz has Zverev's number It was Fritz's fourth consecutive victory over Zverev, who replaced Carlos Alcaraz at No. 2 in the rankings this week. "He's an uncomfortable player for me," Zverev said. "It's no secret." Fritz also beat Zverev at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open, plus the Laver Cup. Fritz will finish year at career



high Fritz was already assured of finishing the year in the top five for the first time and he'll rise to a career-high No. 4 on Monday. Zverev has seen Fritz's improvement up close — especially on one key stroke: "His forehand used to break down quite a lot. ... I feel like the ratio is a lot more towards winners now." It was a matchup of big servers between the 6-foot-5 (1.96-meter) Fritz and the 6-

foot-6 (1.98-meter) Zverev, and when Fritz broke Zverev for 4-2 in the first set, it marked the first time that Zverev lost a service game in four matches in Turin. Eventually, though, the match turned into a physical duel from the baseline. Fritz rallied from 0-40 and held his serve for 3-2 in the third after a nine-minute game full of long rallies — winning one such exchange that lasted 30 strokes. Fritz was then under pressure one service game after another but somehow managed to keep holding. Fritz got ahead early in the tiebreaker and finished Zverev off with an audacious inside-out forehand winner on his first match point. Fritz finished with 15 aces to Zverev's 10 in a match that lasted 2 hours, 20 minutes. "I felt like statistically and shot-wise, my level maybe was even higher than his until the important moments. That's where I kind of blew it," Zverev said. "This one will hurt more than the other few." Doping case hangs over Sinner Sinner is playing at home for the first time since it was announced before his U.S. Open title that he tested positive in two separate drug tests this year. A decision to clear Sinner of wrongdoing was appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency in September and a final ruling in the case is expected next year. Last year, Sinner lost the final to Djokovic, who withdrew injured this year.