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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

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

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.

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

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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.



BJP confident of easy win in Kedarnath amid Cong turmoil, says Bhatt

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Bharatiya Janata Party president of Uttarakhand Mahendra Bhatt has predicted a clear win for the BJP in the Kedarnath by-election, citing internal conflicts within the Congress as a significant advantage for the BJP. He claimed that following the ticket distribution, disgruntled Congress workers have distanced themselves from campaigning and are allegedly determined to teach their high command a lesson. Speaking to journalists in Kedarnath on Sunday, Bhatt said the Congress is not merely divided into two factions but at least half a dozen groups. Ticket aspirants, disappointed with the party's unexpected ticket distribution process, have reportedly withdrawn from active participation in the campaign. He criticised the Congress for bypassing the state party president during the candidate selection process, alleging that local factions conducted their own survey and awarded the ticket to their preferred candidate. This, he stated, has led to an embarrassing situation for the party, with the state organisation left out of the loop. Bhatt further stated that while some of the disappointed aspirants have



been named star campaigners, they are only delivering speeches and engaging in photo-ops without genuinely contributing to the campaign. According to him, apart from the candidate, only a few Congress leaders are actively campaigning. The party is struggling to station workers at polling booths, and there is widespread disillusionment among women supporters, he claimed. On the other hand,

Bhatt asserted that there is palpable enthusiasm among the public, particularly women and the youth, for BJP candidate Asha Nautiyal. He said that the youth have high hopes for chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama and his vision for a better future. Highlighting the BJP's development agenda, Bhatt emphasised that the double-engine government is the only way to address Kedarnath's challenges, includ-

ing employment opportunities, unresolved issues and advancements in education and healthcare. He assured that the BJP is committed to fulfilling the late Shailla Rani's vision and promised that the party would stand firmly behind Nautiyal. He stated that the people have seen through the Congress's false propaganda and are eager to teach the party a lesson in the upcoming election.

Police penalise over 250 vehicles, seize 60 in Dehradun for faulty number plates

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

With the authorities stepping up action against varied violations to check road accident and traffic issues following recurring fatal accidents in the State, the police penalised over 250 vehicles and seized 60 vehicles for operating without proper number plates in Dehradun district on Sunday. The special drive was conducted under the directives of Dehradun senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh to target violations across all urban and rural police station areas in the district. The oper-

ation involved intensive checks at various locations to identify and act against vehicles flouting registration norms. The SSP said that vehicles with missing or defective number plates were a primary focus of the campaign. According to him, such violations not only compromise road safety but also hinder effective law enforcement. He also emphasised the importance of strict adherence to traffic laws and warned that similar drives will be conducted regularly to ensure compliance. He urged vehicle owners to verify the legality of their registration plates and avoid penalties by adhering to the rules. After the recent road accident near ONGC intersection that claimed six lives, the police



have been conducting various drives including late night checks on drunk driving to foster a safer and more disciplined driving environment in the district.

DM allocates patrol vehicles to probation officer to rescue children involved in begging

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Dehradun district magistrate Savin Bansal allocated three patrol vehicles to district probation officer Meena Bisht for conducting city-wide patrols to rescue children involved in begging. The three vehicles allocated for this operation are undergoing mod-

Besides this, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed between the district administration and three NGO to create a collaborative framework for providing rescued children with a nurturing environment. The administration has also commenced work to



The officials concerned are also conducting interviews for hiring drivers. The chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama will soon flag off these vehicles, the DM said. These vehicles will be used to rescue children engaged in begging and transport them to the shelter. Bansal recently approved a micro-plan prepared by the chief education officer and district probation officer for the rescued children.

set up intensive care shelter to support the rehabilitation of rescued children. This will help children in their behavioural transformation and reintegration into the mainstream education system. In the first phase, three classrooms are being set up, and plans are underway to establish a multi-activity hall where children can engage in recreational and foundational learning activities, Bansal said.

Man and bull die after truck collides with bullock cart in Roorkee

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A 28-year-old man and a bull were killed in a road accident in the Khanpur area of Haridwar district when a speeding truck from Laksar collided with a bullock cart carrying three men on Sunday morning. The officials informed that the deceased, identified as Popin (28), died on the spot. The bull also succumbed to the impact. Two others, Shekhar (25) and Saurabh, sustained injuries and were rushed to a nearby hospital,

where their condition is reported to be stable, as per the officials. They said that several angry villagers gathered at the scene and blocked the highway and accused the truck driver of negligence. Despite police intervention, the protest led to significant traffic disruption for a considerable time. The officials said that the police have started an investigation and sent the body for post-mortem. Further action will be taken accordingly, they added.

Travel agents arrested in scam case granted bail, company denies allegations

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The management of PCM Worldwide Flights Private Limited has refuted allegations against three of its travel agents who were arrested on October 18 for allegedly defrauding foreigners under the pretense of booking international flights. In an official statement, officials of PCM Worldwide Flights said that the police investigations have found no violations under the Information Technology Act. The company claimed that the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (ACJM) III

court in Dehradun granted bail to the accused, who were taken into custody during a raid on the company's Dehradun office. During the raid, police seized multiple laptops and other IT equipment, which the court has now directed to be returned to the company. They emphasised the company's commitment to operating with truth and integrity. They said that the company continues its operations as usual and remains ready to fully cooperate with administrative and judicial authorities as required.

Badrinath closed to public for winter, marking end of Char Dham Yatra

More than 48 lakh visited Char Dham in U'khand this year

PNS ■ JYOTIRMATH

The portals of Badrinath Dham were ceremoniously closed to the public for the winter on Sunday night. This

Badrinath Dham had been underway for some days. On Sunday, the Rawal Amarnath Namboodari dressed up

people had undertaken the Char Dham Yatra this year. He said that the number of devotees was high despite the dura-



marks the closure of the Char Dham Yatra in Uttarakhand. Thousands of devotees were present at Badrinath in Chamoli district during the closure of the Bhu Vaikunth Dham.

The ceremonial procedure for the closure of the

in a woman's dress and installed Goddess Lakshmi in the Garbh Grah of the main shrine. Earlier, Uddhav and Kuber were also brought to the shrine. The Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee chairman Ajendra Ajay said that more than 48 lakh

of the pilgrimage season being comparatively lesser than last year. Despite the cold weather, thousands of devotees were present in Badrinath during the closure of its portals for the public.

South African student accuses classmate of raping her in Doon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A South African female student studying at a private college in Dehradun has accused a Sudanese classmate of allegedly raping her. The incident reportedly occurred on October 29 but was reported after the victim filed a zero FIR in Delhi, which was later transferred to Dehradun police for investigation. According to the officials, the victim, hailing from Lesotho in South Africa, arrived in India in August 2022 to pursue a BCom degree at a private college in Dehradun. She resides in a girls' hostel. In her complaint, she reportedly stated that while attending college, she befriended a Sudanese student pursuing a BBA degree at the same institution. The purported victim alleged that on October 29, the accused invited her to a party. After she fell asleep,

the accused allegedly raped her. The victim travelled to Delhi for personal reasons

tion was conducted and the police registered a zero FIR. The case was subsequently



the next day and did not report the incident to the Dehradun police immediately.

Upon reaching Delhi, the victim contacted the police control room and lodged her complaint at the Kashmere Gate police station. A medical examina-

transferred to Clement Town police station in Dehradun on November 16.

The officials said that a case has been registered against the accused under Section 64 (1) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sangita (BNS) and the investigation is ongoing.

Budget estimation for blood bank at district hospital presented to Health department

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In order to establish a blood bank at the Deen Dayal Upadhyay District Hospital, the Peyjal Nigam has submitted a budget estimate of Rs 1.42 crore to the Health department. Stating this, senior pathologist at the district hospital Dr JP Nautiyal stated that a meeting was recently held with the Health secretary R Rajesh Kumar, hospital officials and Peyjal Nigam officials, the executing agency selected for the blood bank project. During the meeting, Peyjal Nigam officials presented the blood bank map to Kumar for review. After examining the map, Kumar instructed the executing agency representative to make necessary adjustments to enhance the blood bank facilities for patients.

The Health secretary reassured them that the budget would be reviewed during construction and adjusted as needed, regardless of whether it falls below or exceeds the initial esti-

It will be recalled that following the district magistrate Savin Bansal's directive, the hospital administration has submitted the blood bank proposal to the State administration. The pro-



mate. The establishment of the blood bank is expected to take six to eight months, he added.

Nautiyal further highlighted the requirement of 2,000 square feet of land for a blood bank according to guidelines. However, due to limited space at the district hospital, the blood bank will be established across two floors.

posals was approved a few days ago. Additionally, the state administration has recently issued a tender for the blood bank construction to the agency Peyjal Nigam. Earlier the medical superintendent of the district hospital Dr VS Chauhan informed that once the blood bank is established, they will promptly request the necessary officials for the license.

Temperatures drop but still remain above normal in Doon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The maximum temperature has been dropping by a notch or two consistently during the past few days in Dehradun, even as the temperatures have continued to remain above normal in various parts of the State. The State meteorological centre has forecast

that dry weather is likely to be experienced in the State on Monday. The provisional State capital Dehradun is likely to witness a mainly clear sky with mist likely to occur during the morning hours. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be about 27

degrees Celsius and 11 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun today.

Meanwhile, the temperatures in various parts of the State have continued to remain above normal. The lack of rain and snowfall in the post-monsoon season is

stated to be a major reason for the real winter chill not yet setting in despite half of November having passed.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded on Sunday were 27 degrees Celsius and 11.6 degrees Celsius respectively

ly in Dehradun, 27.7 degrees Celsius and 10.4 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 18.2 degrees Celsius and 4.7 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 17.9 degrees Celsius and 7.2 degrees Celsius in New Tehri.

Energy Efficient Uttarakhand



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: DPR, Govt of Uttarakhand



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

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

Enclosed 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

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.

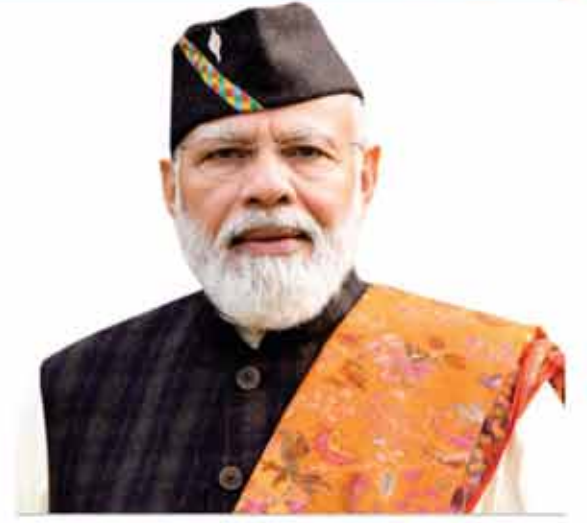
Banking
100% energy banking will be permitted during all 12 months, with energy settlement done monthly. The UERC will determine compensation for banked energy based on peak and off-peak hours.

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.

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 (CSR) 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 emphasized 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 Bundled 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 prompted 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.



GUEST COLUMN

Wake up parents before it's too late



Dr Sona Kaushal Gupta
Be glad of life because it gives you the chance to love, to work, to play, and to look up at the stars - Henry Van Dyke

Six young lives were recently lost in a tragic road accident in Dehradun. They had gone for a party and were speed driving late night and crashed into a container trying to overtake another vehicle. The rise in accidents due to speed driving among youths is a pressing concern today. The rise in drug abuse and alcohol consumption in the youth is also a major concern. Who is responsible for this and how can it be curbed? Let us understand a few basic reasons about this.

There can be many contributing factors to such cases like risk-taking behaviour of young people who often underestimate risks and overestimate their driving abilities. Peer pressure can also lead to reckless behaviour like overspeeding and drug abuse for showing off. Limited driving experience affects decision-making and reaction time in emergencies. The popular media also influences vulnerable minds. Movies, video games, and social media often glorify speed driving, smoking, alcohol, drugs, making them appear exciting and risk-free. Some youth are such behaviour they see on the screens. Substance abuse has a major impact. It results in impaired judgment due to drinking or drug use which increases the likelihood of accidents. Apart from this, the use of mobile phones for texting, calling, talking, loud music or social media use while driving is a leading cause of distraction. Many young drivers do not fully grasp traffic rules or the consequences of speeding. Further, the easy access

to powerful cars and bikes encourages youth to test speed limits. One needs to promote safe driving campaigns. There is the need to use schools, colleges, and media to educate youth about the risks of speeding and other risky behaviour and their consequences. Sensitising the youth from an early age about the consequences and preventive measures must be taken as a must as it also helps in shaping a child's behaviour. Such efforts should involve experienced people like psychologists, doctors, lawyers and police to talk to the youngsters. Educators should regularly talk of such issues and safety measures



in their classes emphasising the need for safety in all spheres of life.

One must share real-life stories of accidents to emphasise the dangers. You can also use the print and the visual media for this. Stricter law enforcement is also vital and strict adherence to speed limits through fines and penalties must also be ensured. The authorities must impose severe consequences for driving under the influence. Positive behaviour must be reinforced with rewards. Further, parents and educators must consistently emphasise the value of safety over thrill.

Teaching youth emotional resilience and self-control can reduce impulsive decisions while driving. Addressing speed driving among youth requires a multi-faceted approach involving education, enforcement, and community support to ensure safer roads for all. But parental involvement is paramount. The role of parents as ideal role models for their children is the most important factor which should be discussed in the present times. What is the role of the parents today? Parenting has taken a 360 degrees turn today. It has newer skills with different techniques which parents

should learn and apply to their children. It is totally different from what it was some years ago. We cannot and should not parent our children the way we were parented. A major reason of this change in parenting is because of the dramatic invasion of the social media and mobiles into our lives. Today parents need to be more vigilant and aware about the content their children are consuming from the social media and for how long are they hooked on to it. This means they should set stricter boundaries at home. The parents should know how long the child is on social media,

what is he or she consuming from it, the persons they are chatting with and when they return home at night. They should also be encouraged to say no to alcohol, smoking and drug abuse and the parents should make the home a 'no anger zone'. Parents need to communicate freely with their children, have a healthy bonding of respect and love with them, involve them in the boundary setting sessions so that the children should always feel loved in high self esteem and supported by their parents. All this should be age appropriate which means these rules are different for a pre teens a teenagers and a young adults. The earlier in life the

parents start to set healthy boundaries for their children the better they will learn.

Parents must be role models for their children which means they should practice what they preach to their children. Remember that children learn by observing their parents more than by listening to them. The parents should drive safe not smoke or drink have no anger issues etc if they wish this from their children. Sadly it's not being followed in most houses today because the parents are confused and unaware of the new ways of parenting.

ing. I recommend and follow the empowered parents parenting technique which is highly effective. In this technique the parents are first empowered to improve themselves and work on their childhood experiences limiting beliefs and expectations. Then we empower them with the newer parenting skills and tools needed today and such empowered parents do a much better job in their parenting journey.

The parents today are confused about their parenting skills. As I mentioned above, this is because they lack awareness and proper knowledge and also because most of them are very busy pursuing their own dreams and agendas. Therefore they hardly find time for their children and to cover up their guilt they shower them with expensive gifts like cars mobiles money etc. They do not tell the children what to do, what not to do or the difference between the reel virtual world of social media and the real world we live in. Some Parents are busy following their own dreams and ambitions. Some are busy earning a livelihood. Children from such backgrounds of lack of parental guidance end up succumbing to peer pressure and mal-adaptive coping and abuse. They smoke, take drugs, over speed and show other Risky behaviors because they want to show off and many have low self-esteem.

Parents need to wake up to reality. Your children should be your priority and you are primarily responsible for their mental social psychological well-being. Become empowered parents first and learn newer parenting skills and give quality time advice and guidance to your children before it gets too late and tragedy strikes again.

Remember -a precious life lost is a lifelong trauma for the whole family and a great loss to the society.

(The author is a neuro psychologist, founder of a crisis helpline and designated CBSE counsellor. Views expressed are personal)

Poor AQI leads to rise in throat infection in Doon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

With deterioration in the Air Quality Index (AQI) in Dehradun, there has been an increase in cases of throat irritation, asthma and other ailments among the local populace, the doctors said. The AQI levels in Dehradun have deteriorated over time as a result of heightened pollution from factors such as the increasing number of vehicles, increased tourist footfall, deforestation and other factors. The geography of the valley and lack of rainfall in the post-monsoon season have also contributed to the heightened pollution. Doctors have highlighted that the poor AQI impacts the health of residents, leading to various ailments.

Talking to The Pioneer, physician at the district hospital Dr Praveen Panwar said that since the decline in AQI levels in Dehradun, there has been a rise in cases of throat irritation, persistent cough and other symptoms among individuals who were previously unaffected by asthma or chest conditions. Further, individuals with asthma and other medical conditions are at higher risk of experiencing chest congestion,

difficult breathing and other related issues. The poor AQI in Dehradun caused by vehicle emissions, population growth and construction activities, is contributing to the prevalence of these ailments among local residents. It was noted that the undesirable AQI particularly impacts individuals during the winter season due to the lack of humidity in the air. To prevent such health problems, people are advised to limit unnecessary outdoor activities, wear N95 masks when outside and use damp handkerchiefs to cover their mouths, he added.

Further, a paediatrician at the district hospital Dr Rohit Thakur observed a rise in cases of respiratory allergies and cough among children over time. He pointed out that while children used to experience coughs for three to five days in the past, the duration has increased with the decrease in AQI levels.

In some instances, it has also been associated with the development of asthma. He attributed the deterioration in AQI to the rising levels of pollution from the increasing number of vehicles, deforestation, influx of tourists during weekends, among other factors. He recommended that in order to prevent



encing chest congestion, difficulty breathing and other related issues. The poor AQI in Dehradun caused by vehicle emissions, population growth and construction

this, parents should ensure that their children should consume healthy food to boost their immunity levels and avoid the intake of junk food.

Experts stress on need to follow rules to save lives

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Experts and prominent citizens stressed on the need for citizens behaving in a responsible manner, especially when it comes to observing traffic rules. These views were expressed at

and to provide a platform for road traffic victims and their families.

Speaking as the chief guest, former High Court judge Rajesh Tandon advised everyone to

venting road accidents is not just the police's responsibility, but a shared duty among all. He urged everyone to stay away from alcohol and follow the traffic rules. He urged the youth to

habits should be prevented from a young age. Gynaecologist Dr Sujata Sanjay pointed out that it is very sad for parents to see such accidents, and while we witness them regularly, we do

nently or temporarily disabled despite receiving proper medical treatment. These victims continue to suffer the consequences of road accidents throughout their lives. He identified the main causes of accidents as overloading, speeding and overtaking. Additionally, lack of sleep, the influence of alcohol, fatigue and the use of mobile phones while driving worsen the situation.

Orthopaedic surgeon Dr SN Singh noted that no matter how much the vehicles improve, unless we improve ourselves, we cannot reduce such accidents. He stressed that everyone should respect the police, parents, and society.

Orthopaedic surgeon Dr Gaurav Sanjay concluded that accidents happen in an instant, and therefore, all must follow the established rules to prevent such fatal accidents.

Two-day lecture series to be held at DU in December

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Devbhoomi Vikas Sansthan in collaboration with the Doon University, will organise a two-day lecture series during the last week of December at Doon University. This series will focus on pressing societal issues such as migration, sustainable policies for the hills, considering the unique capacity of the Himalayan region and the evaluation and assessment of ecosystems.

lecture series named 'Gang Dhara: Vicharon Ka Avral Pravah.' This initiative, supported by Devbhoomi Vikas Sansthan and DU, will be held annually. The series aims to create a continuous flow of ideas, much like the waters of the Ganges, which will help in finding long-term solutions to various societal challenges. Eminent scholars and experts from diverse fields will be invited to contribute to this series, he said.

The said programme was discussed in a meeting chaired by Haridwar MP and former chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat recently. During the meeting, he emphasised that solutions to societal problems can only be achieved through ideological discussions and deliberations. The intellectual community conducts ongoing research in these areas, allowing them to provide effective suggestions for resolving social issues. Further, discussions will yield important options for the formulation and implementation of policies, he added. He further added that the launch of a



a gathering held at Sanjay Orthopaedic, Spine and Maternity Centre to pay homage to those who had recently lost their lives in road accidents elsewhere in the State. The event was held to remember all those who have died or seriously injured in road accidents

follow traffic rules as adhering to the law can help prevent accidents. He also suggested that meditation could be an effective measure to reduce accidents.

The Dehradun superintendent of police (City) Pramod Kumar emphasised that pre-

use their energy constructively and focus on their future. Orthopaedic surgeon Dr Praveen Mittal stated that since Dehradun has many educational institutions and a large youth population, it is crucial that young people do not drive under the influence of alcohol. Such

not learn from them, which is unfortunate.

Senior orthopaedic surgeon Dr BKS Sanjay shared that approximately five lakh accidents occur every year in the country, resulting in around 1.5 lakh deaths and an equal number of people becoming perma-

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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 formed 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 Puna Tithi. 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 Hindudhraj Samrat Balasaheb Thackeray on his Smruti Din." 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 arial 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 Palakota 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, Chandrasekar 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 Neiphu 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 (WCNNPGs) 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, WCNNPGs, composed of seven Naga groups, have declared to accept whatever is possible for now and continue further negotiations for the remaining demand.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Left turn ho!

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

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



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

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

PICTALK



Labourers thresh paddy at a field on the outskirts of Amritsar

The smog capital of India

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



RAJDEEP PATHAK

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

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



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



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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INFANT LIVES LOST

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

M Pradyu | Kannur

BULLDOZER RULE ENDS

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

Secure online transactions



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

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

Bal Govind | Noida

DELHI POLLUTION CRISIS

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

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Let us be comfortable with silence to discover inner self



ASHA IYER KUMAR

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

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



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

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

dust of daily life drift gently to the ground. Consider, too, the depth that silence brings to relationships. When we share a moment of quiet with someone, we are not erasing the connection; we are deepening it. It is in these pauses that we see each other most clearly, unfiltered by words, and held by the simple act of shared presence. Yet, our tendency to fear silence as awkward makes us miss the power of these moments—times when we could breathe alongside one another, unburdened by the need to perform or impress. It is time we learn to embrace silence not as an absence but as a presence—a steady, gentle force that grounds us when words have exhausted their role. For in those quiet spaces, we can find not just peace, but a reservoir of strength and clarity, one that restores rather than depletes, and brings solace to our weary souls. (The author is a columnist and children's writing coach based in Dubai; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

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



SAKSHI SETHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Supreme Court strikes down 'bulldozer injustice'



K S TOMAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tackling the epidemic of diabetes and hypertension: Urgent action needed

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

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

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)

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

AP ■ LIMA

China's leader Xi Jinping met for the last time with US President Joe Biden on Saturday but was already looking ahead to President-elect Donald Trump and his "America first" policies, saying Beijing "is ready to work with a new US administration".

brushstrokes about where the relationship between the two countries has gone. He reflected not just on the past four years but the decades the two have known each other. "We haven't always agreed, but our conversations have always been candid and always been frank. We've never kidded one another," Biden said.

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

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

Trump names fossil fuel executive Chris Wright as energy secretary

AP ■ WASHINGTON

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



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

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

world," Sommers said. Jackie Wong, senior vice president for climate and energy at the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group, called Wright "a champion of dirty fossil fuels".

ever." The Energy Department is responsible for advancing energy, environmental and nuclear security of the US. The agency is in charge of maintaining the country's nuclear weapons, oversees 17 national research laboratories and approves natural gas exports, as well as ensuring environmental cleanup of the nation's nuclear weapons complex.

Young woman found murdered in car boot in UK

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

Israeli strikes kill 12 people in Gaza



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

Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip overnight killed 12 people, Palestinian medical officials said on Sunday. Israeli police meanwhile arrested three suspects after flares were fired at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's private residence in the coastal city of Caesarea.

monial president, Isaac Herzog, condemned the incident and warned against "an escalation of the violence in the public sphere". Netanyahu has faced months of mass protests over his handling of the hostage crisis unleashed by Hamas' October 7, 2023 attack into Israel, which ignited the ongoing war in Gaza.

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

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

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

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

are still inside Gaza, about a third of them believed to be dead. The Health Ministry in Gaza says around 43,800 Palestinians have been killed in the war. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants but has said women and children make up more than half the fatalities.

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

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

Trump takes break from making Cabinet picks

AP ■ PALM BEACH

President-elect Donald Trump is attending the UFC heavyweight championship clash at Madison Square Garden on Saturday night, combining two things close to his heart — fierce battles inside the octagon and New York City.

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

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

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

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

However, his call for solidarity failed to resolve the deadlock. Cosima Castle, of E3G's climate diplomacy team, acknowledged the challenges posed by geopolitical tensions but underscored the potential of the upcoming G20 Leaders' Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

per cent of global emissions and 85 per cent of the world economy, hold the key to unlocking ambitious climate agreements. The contentious issue of the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) also fuelled sharp exchanges. India and other developing nations criticised the measure for disproportionately penalising their economies, calling it a violation of equity principles and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). "CBAM shifts the responsibility of climate action onto

attempts to impose external regulations on its climate targets, emphasising that mitigation efforts should align with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and national sovereignty. The BASIC bloc criticised developed nations for attempting to dilute their commitments under the Paris Agreement by shifting additional obligations onto emerging economies.

highlighting the disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable populations and demanding scaled-up financial and technological support. The negotiations in Baku have also highlighted the urgent need for a comprehensive climate finance package that addresses both mitigation and adaptation.

assume the G20 presidency in 2025, is expected to play a crucial role in bridging the gap between developed and developing countries. Gillian Hamilton, a civil society leader from South Africa, emphasised the country's commitment to debt relief and reforms in multilateral financial systems.

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

Russia launches fiercest attack on Ukraine's infrastructure

AP ■ KYIV

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

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

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



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

Latest typhoon lashes Philippines

Manila (Philippines) (AP): A powerful typhoon wrecked houses, caused towering tidal surges and forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee to emergency shelters as it cut across the northern Philippines on Sunday in the sixth major storm to hit the country in less than a month. Typhoon Man-yi slammed into the eastern island province of Catanduanes on Saturday night with sustained winds of up to 195 kilometers (125 miles) per hour and gusts of up to 240 kph (149 mph). The country's weather agency warned of a "potentially catastrophic and life-threatening situation" in provinces along its path. There were no immediate reports of casualties from the typhoon, which was forecast to blow northward 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 @anuradisanayake, 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 numbers of districts 21 out of 22, the previous best was 19 by Rajapaksa in 2010. It has the highest number of 159 parliamentary seats over Rajapaksa's 145 in 2020. Under the proportional representation system of elections, they became the first party to cross the 150 mark to gain a two-thirds absolute majority.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Pak religious body faces backlash over anti-VPN decree

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's leading constitutional religious body came under severe criticism after it issued an edict terming the use of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to access blocked content on the internet as 'un-Islamic'. The unprecedented pro-claim by the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), which advises parliament on aligning legislation with Islamic teachings, enraged digital rights activists as well as some religious scholars. According to the Dawn newspaper, the CII chief Raghbir Naeemi said that using VPNs to access "immoral or illegal content" was against Sharia. In a social media statement on Saturday, Maulana Tariq Jameel, a prominent religious scholar, said if watching adult content or blasphemous material was an issue then mobile phones should be declared un-Islamic before labelling VPNs as such. Senator Allama Nasir Abbas, the chief of Shia organisation Majlis Wahdat 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 icebergs to get there. By the time the Carpathia arrived, the Titanic had sunk and 1,500 people perished. But the crew located 20 lifeboats and rescued more than 700 passengers and took them back to New York. Rostron was awarded the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal by President William Howard Taft and was later knighted by King George V. Madeleine Astor, who had been helped into a lifeboat by her husband, presented the watch to Rostron at a luncheon at her mansion on Fifth Avenue in New York.

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

The 'Report on Municipal Finances' delves into the fiscal position of 232 municipal corporations (MCs) from 2019-20 to 2023-24 (Budget Estimates), with a focus on the theme 'Own Sources of Revenue Generation in Municipal Corporations: Opportunities and Challenges'. "MCs can significantly enhance them (non-tax revenues) by applying appropriate and adequate fees and user charges for essential services such as water supply, sanitation, and waste management while also ensuring seamless availability of high-quality public services," it said. These measures, combined with more transparent and accountable governance practices, can contribute to bolstering the financial health of MCs, setting off a



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

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

supplies of essential municipal services such as water supply, waste management and transportation. The report further said own sources of revenues (tax revenue, non-tax revenue, and other receipts) afford municipalities increased financial autonomy, stability, and enhanced capacity to strategise and execute urban development initiatives more efficiently and effectively. Municipal corporations need to augment their own revenue sources for greater operational and financial flexibility. "By optimising property and water taxes, increasing non-tax revenues, and adopting transparent governance practices, urban local bodies can improve their finances," it said. Leveraging technologies such as Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping and digital payment systems can enhance property tax collections, it said. Periodic revisions in water and drainage taxes, and fees and user charges, coupled with use of technology for plugging leakages, can also help improve their revenue collections, it added.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

Under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) 4 (with air quality index of over 450) measures, odd/even rule for four wheelers is imposed. The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has already imposed GRAP 3 measures with the air quality remaining in the "severe" category. Taking with PTI in an interaction, Indian Biogas Association (IBA) Chairman Gaurav Kedia said, "We recommend implementing the Odd-Even Rule for Petrol and Diesel Vehicles in the coming months so that a good impact can be seen for the air pollution levels in Delhi, and subsidy on EVs and CNG/CBG vehicles, as this will compel the citizens to shift to greener fuel alternatives. The air pollution situation in Delhi NCR worsens every winter, with the seasonal air quality index consistently remaining above the 300 mark. Delhi due to its the severely polluted AQI has received worldwide attention



as one of the most polluted cities on earth. Crop residue burning, particularly of paddy straw, in neighbouring states is a major contributor to this scenario, but that's just a small piece of the bigger puzzle. Kedia suggested that the government must focus on incentive schemes such as reduced charges on electricity bills, PNG connections, and LPG cylinders for houses that effectively segregate organic waste. It would yield a double dividend: cleaner energy generation from green and leafy biomass collected for biogas plants and a significant reduction in landfill loads, he said. The upcoming budget must provide substantial amount to fulfill target of segregating and processing at least 85 per cent of Delhi's waste in the next five years, he stated. Organic waste remains one of the prime unmanaged pollution sources in Delhi,

filling up landfills. These overflowing sites continue to burn, emitting toxic fumes and significant amounts of methane gas, a potent greenhouse gas. Delhi in 2023-2024 generated about 11,342 tons of waste per day. As per the 2024 annual report on implementation of SWM (solid waste management) rules, 2016, 33.5 per cent of generated MSW (municipal solid waste) goes to landfill but an estimate by the association depicts the number to be around 35 per cent. Of all the municipal solid wastes produced, around 40-60 per cent is organic in nature. It represents an untapped resource for generating clean energy through biogas production. Kedia stated that there is a sense of urgency that no organic waste finds its way to the landfill sites and rather should be diverted into energy-generating biogas plants.

CNG retailers want price hike, government wants to see cost

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

The government, with effect from November 16, cut supplies of low-priced natural gas coming from old fields to city gas retailers by up to 20 per cent. This reduction came on the back of a 21 per cent reduction on October 16. City gas retailers IGL, which retails CNG in national capital and adjoining cities, Mahanagar Gas Ltd which does the same in Mumbai, and Adani Total Gas Ltd which operates in Gujarat and elsewhere, in regulatory filings flagged profitability concerns due to supply cut and hinted at price hike. Officials in the ministry of petroleum and natural gas however are unimpressed as they feel the retailers operate on "hefty" margins and can easily absorb the additional cost they may have to incur on replacing the lost volumes with slightly higher priced gas from new wells or imported LNG. "Take for instance IGL. It posted a net profit of Rs 1,748 crore on revenue of close to Rs 16,000 crore in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024. That is a margin of 11 per cent. MGL had a profit of about Rs 1,300 crore on a revenue of Rs 7,000 crore. Which retailer earns that kind of margin?" a senior official asked. Officials said the government is not against companies earning profits but if they want low-priced input (gas from old fields) then they should also declare the cost breakup of the final product (CNG). "There cannot be a situation where you insist on getting low cost input but will not reveal the buildup to the final product price," another official said. "The profitability numbers show they have been operating at huge margins. Indian Oil Corporation, which is also a retailer, had its best ever profit of Rs 39,617 crore on a revenue of Rs 8.71 lakh crore, implying a margin of 4.5 per cent."

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



PTI ■ SINGRAULI

Coal India arm NCL is planning a huge rehabilitation and resettlement (R&R) project and is working on relocating the residents from the township in Madhya

Pradesh's Singrauli, which has 600 million tonnes of mineable coal underneath, company's CMD B Sairam said. Talking to reporters here, Sairam said Morwa township in Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh, is spread across 927 hectares.

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

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

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

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

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

Hyundai Motor India bets on CNG vehicles, sees accelerated demand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

The company, which currently offers CNG option in its three models - Grand i10 NIOS, AURA and EXTER - has seen an increase in contribution of the CNG models to its domestic sales to 11.4 per cent in FY24 from 9.1 per cent in FY22. So far in the April-October period this fiscal, the contribution of CNG models to the company's domestic sales has risen to 12.8 per cent.

Its overall vehicle sales across different fuel options stood at 3.54 lakh units in the domestic market during the period. "At present, India already has more than 7,000 CNG stations and aim is to have



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

in October 2024. "Company-fitted CNG system with three years warranty assures maximum assurance for customers," he added. The 'Hy-CNG Duo' is also equipped with an integrated ECU for faster and seamless shifting between petrol and CNG fuel options. In October this year, HMIL had clocked 8,261 units of CNG models in domestic sales with CNG penetration in its compact car Grand i10 NIOS at 17.4 per cent, 39.7 per cent for mini SUV EXTER and 90.6 per cent for compact sedan AURA. HMIL said it has also witnessed the penetration of CNG models grow from 8.8 per cent in FY22 to 10.7 per

cent in FY24 in the urban markets, and from 7.1 per cent in FY22 to 12.0 per cent in FY24 in rural markets. As of October this fiscal, HMIL's urban penetration of CNG models stood at 12.3 per cent while it was at 14.3 per cent in the rural market. The company's top three cities for CNG vehicle sales in the January to October period of 2024 were Pune, New Delhi and Ahmedabad, while in terms of states it was Maharashtra, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. HMIL is joining rivals Maruti Suzuki India and Tata Motors which have also focussed on enhancing sales of their CNG models. In fact, Maruti Suzuki India has set a target of selling 6 lakh CNG vehicles in FY25, up from 4.89 lakh units in FY24. Tata Motors' passenger vehicles segment has also witnessed increasing penetration of CNG vehicles in its overall portfolio in the first half of the fiscal to 21 per cent, up from 16 per cent in FY24.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



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

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

Natural gas pumped from below the seabed from sites ranging from the Arabian Sea to Bay of Bengal within India is the raw material that is turned into CNG for sale to automobiles and piped cooking gas to households. Production from legacy fields, called APM gas and whose price is regulated by the government to feed city gas retailers, has been falling by up to 5 per cent annually due to the natural decline that has set in. This has led to supply cuts to city gas retailers, officials said. While the input gas for piped cooking gas that households get is protected, the government has cut supply of raw material for CNG. Gas from legacy fields used to meet 90 per cent of the demand for CNG in May 2023 and has progressively fallen.

Reliance Group establishes RGCC as part of its VISION 2030



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Dubai-based siblings Jainam and Jivika, the owners of jiohotstar.com domain, have decided to transfer it to Reliance "free of cost", resting speculations on social media platforms. The story of the internet domain name, which grabbed a lot of attention on social media platforms in the recent past, ended with "seva and kindness", according to the duo. The unique website ID was said to have been initially registered by a Delhi-based app developer last year amid speculation about the potential merger of Reliance Jio and Disney Hotstar. Last month, the developer came up with the demand for funding his higher studies at the Cambridge



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

The siblings now shared an update, saying the Reliance IP legal team approached them and the duo has decided to pass the ownership to them (Reliance), hoping that it would be "useful for them". "Reliance IP legal team has approached us, and we will be transferring this domain to them, free of cost," they said in a message on the website. "There have been some rumours online suggesting that there is a payment or deal involved, but we want to make it clear, this is not true," the message said. Moreover, the duo in his video also clarified there is "no pressure from anyone" and denied of having a "deal of any kind". "This is purely a transfer of the domain from our side

because we believe it could be useful for them. Whether or not they choose to use it is up to them," the message added. PTI reached out to Reliance for its comment on the development but did not receive any response. In their previous message, the siblings said they had received numerous offers, including some genuine ones offering significant amounts. However, they had said that the domain was not for sale. While announcing the "journey with jiohotstar.com is coming to an end", the duo said they are waiting for a draft from the Reliance legal team for the transfer. "The Reliance IP legal team has contacted us. We have told them that the domain transfer will only

happen after the agreement is signed. They have asked us to visit Mumbai to sign the agreement," they said, expecting the agreement to be signed soon. "As soon as this happens, we will transfer the domain and this website will come to an end," the message said. Reliance had last week announced completion of the merger of its media assets with the India business of global media giant The Walt Disney, forming a joint venture worth around Rs 70,352 crore (USD 8.5 billion). The JV will be one of the largest media and entertainment companies in India with a combined revenue of approximately Rs 26,000 crore and will be led by Nita Ambani as its chairperson.

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)

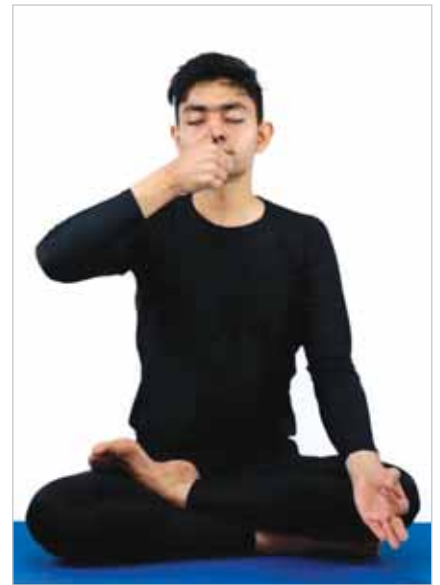
Pranayama, or controlled breathing, is one of the most effective tools for stress relief. Techniques like *Anulom Vilom* (Alternate Nostril Breathing) and *Bhramari* (Bee Breath) are ideal for calming the mind. *Anulom Vilom*, for example, involves breathing through alternate nostrils, which balances 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 micro biota. 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 micro biota 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 and doubles to lead 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.