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# NOBODY STOOD BY DELHI

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■  
NEW DELHI

The National Capital was ranked the world's most polluted city on Friday morning by Swiss air quality monitoring firm IQAir, a day after Diwali celebrations pushed air quality to hazardous levels. Residents in Delhi and its neighbouring areas woke up to a blanket of toxic smoke the morning after Diwali, as people defied a ban on firecrackers on Thursday night causing severe noise pollution and reducing visibility. The Air Quality Index (AQI) in New Delhi was around 362 at 11 am on Friday a day after Diwali, which settled at 339 by 4 pm. Ironically, the firecrackers continued to be burst even on Friday evening as many celebrated Diwali on this date. Delhi Police too chose to completely 'ignore' the 'ban' and 'raids' on fire crackers imposed by the judiciary, and as the noise decibel peaked in the Diwali evening, stakeholders from the administration personified the phrase: "Nero fiddled when Rome burnt". Men and women of all ages, young children, those medically vulnerable, and other living beings such as birds, animals, plants were left to fend for themselves, as the National Capital turned into a smoky black city. The resulting pollution had a health impact on people, many of whom were dealing with breathing issues, and in inflamed throats within hours of bursting firecrackers. Hospitals also saw an increase



in the influx of such patients. "Exaggerated respiratory distress response with prior respiratory issues (asthmatics, COPD patients, etc.) due to cracker combustion smoke begins within four to six hours of smoke exposure. Symptoms including difficulty breathing, generalised visceral pain and heaviness in upper chest and skin irritation reach peak around 24 to 36 hours," Dr. Akansh Kirodiwal, a PG

Resident at Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia hospital (RML) said. He added that this was visible with the higher influx of such patients in the hospital. The relentless bursting of firecrackers caused severe noise pollution and blanketed the National Capital in dense smoke with residents flouting the restrictions till late at night. This creates several issues with animals who become extremely stressed during such times.

A Campaigns Coordinator in PETA, India Utkarsh Garg stated, "The fireworks displays that accompany Diwali can seem more like a terrorist attack than a celebration to the dogs, cats, cows, and other animals who don't understand that the explosions are meant as entertainment, not bombardment. During fireworks displays, many animals become frightened by the loud noises and run away from their homes."

Dr. Asher Jesudoss, who is a Member in Executive Committee of Delhi Animal Welfare Board said that amid the celebration, several terrified birds could be seen flying away from trees and dogs as well as cats have been maimed, paralysed, attacked by other dogs or killed in road accidents just because some citizens refuse to follow the law. "Phone calls to the police have proved to be futile as well," he said.

In contrast to the clearer sky on Diwali last year, when favourable conditions kept the AQI at 218, this year's celebrations returned Delhi to its notorious pollution levels, a pattern worsened by unfavourable meteorological conditions, stubble burning and vehicular emissions. A combination of adverse weather, vehicle emissions, local pollution, and crop stubble burning in nearby states is intensifying the smog

across Delhi, worsening air quality for residents. The smog-laden sky brought back memories of the "severe" pollution in 2020 as the PM2.5 and PM10 levels surged to 145.1 and 272 micrograms per cubic metre respectively at 9pm. These fine particles, which easily penetrate the respiratory system, pose serious health risks, especially for children, the elderly and those with pre-existing respiratory conditions. The pollution levels at many of the pollution measuring stations of Delhi NCR touched the peak around midnight. While the PM2.5 and PM10 levels dipped significantly but they remain critical. The deterioration started after 5 pm on Thursday, around the time the bursting of firecrackers was reported in the national capital. Due to the defiance of the cracker ban, PM2.5 levels in several areas soared as high as 900 micrograms per cubic metre - over 15 times the acceptable limit. The Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) reported extreme AQI levels across various parts of Delhi, with Anand Vihar registering PM2.5 concentrations high enough to categorise it as "severe," raising health concerns for those breathing the air on Diwali night. Neighbourhoods such as Wazirpur, Pusa, and Vivek Vihar recorded AQI levels of 603, 601, and 677, respectively. Many other areas, including Burari Crossing, Jahangirpuri, and RK Puram, saw AQI

readings exceeding 370, far surpassing safe limits. In 2023, the 24-hour average AQI in the capital, as of 10 am on the day after Diwali which was on November 13, was 433. This figure at 10 am on Friday was much better than last year, at around 360. The wind speed picked up to 10kmph around 9 am, creating favourable conditions for the dispersal of pollutants. On Friday morning, the AQI was 353 in Alipore, 395 in Anand Vihar, 387 in Ashok Vihar, 392 in Bawana, 395 in Burari Crossing, 395 in Chandni Chowk, 371 in Mathura Road, 372 in Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range, 375 in IGI Airport, 334 in ITO, 390 in Jahangirpuri, 343 in Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, 314 in Lodhi Road, 374 in Mundka, 329 in Najafgarh, 385 in Nehru Nagar, 390 in North Campus, 352 in Dwarka, 369 in Okhla Phase 2, 392 in Punjabi Bagh, 388 in Shadipur, 395 in Sonia Vihar, 314 in Sri Aurobindo Marg, and 389 in Wazirpur. Many places in Haryana and Punjab as well as in the Union Territory of Chandigarh reported air quality index in the 'poor' category. Last year, Delhiites enjoyed a clearer sky and abundant sunshine on Diwali, with an AQI of 218, compared to 312 in 2022, 382 in 2021, 414 in 2020, 337 in 2019, 281 in 2018, 319 in 2017 and 431 in 2016, according to the CPCB. In Delhi's neighbouring areas, such as Faridabad, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurugram and Noida, the air quality was slightly better, with all of them falling in the 'poor' category on Thursday.



Image used for representation purpose only

## Toxic millet claims another wild elephant

AKBAR KHAN ■ BHOPAL

The death of yet another wild elephant at the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve takes the toll of dead pachyderms to 10 since the discovery of four corpses at Salakhaniya on Tuesday, confirmed forest officials. Officials said that post-mortem examinations have been completed on nine of the 10 dead mammals, who are believed to have been killed by mycotoxins present in Kodo - a locally grown millet. Samples have been dispatched to the School of Wildlife Forensics and Health in Jabalpur for further analysis. Wildlife veterinarians are in constant touch with experts at the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) Bareilly, Wildlife Institute of India (WII)

Dehradun, State Forensic Science Laboratory (SFSL) Sagar, and the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) Hyderabad to get in-depth details about the said mycotoxins. The remaining three elephants from the herd - originally comprising 13 large mammals - are said to be in good health and are being constantly monitored in the forests where they are roaming. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden were also camping at the Bandhavgarh sanctuary to supervise the medical and geographical investigations into the horrific incident, being conducted by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted by the state government and experts from the State Tiger Strike Force (STSF).

Continued on page 2

## Indian Army begins patrolling at Demchok

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Days after complete disengagement by India and China from the Line Of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh, the Indian army on Friday commenced patrolling at Demchok. Patrolling at Depsang Valley is expected to resume shortly. The two sides had disengaged from the two friction points in Demchok and Depsang, sources said here while informing that the Indian army has commenced patrolling. Indian and Chinese troops have completed disengagement at two friction points at Demchok and Depsang Plains in eastern Ladakh and patrolling is set to commence soon at these points, they had said on Wednesday. The following day, Indian and Chinese troops exchanged sweets at several border points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on the occasion of Diwali. The traditional practice was observed a day after both the countries completed troop disengagement at the two friction points, bringing a fresh thaw in India-China relations.



Indian and Chinese Troops Exchange Sweets Amid Border Disengagement Progress

Sources had earlier said the areas and patrolling status were expected to be moved back to pre-April 2020 level. The verification process after disengagement was in progress and patrolling modalities were to be decided between ground commanders, the sources had said on Wednesday. "Talks will continue at the local commander level," they had added. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on October 21 said in Delhi that an agreement was finalised between India and China following negotiations

over the past several weeks and that it would lead to a resolution of the issues that arose in 2020. On October 23, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping endorsed the agreement on patrolling and disengagement along the LAC in eastern Ladakh during their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan in Russia. The agreement was firmed up on patrolling and disengagement of troops along the LAC in eastern Ladakh, a breakthrough to

end the over four-year standoff. The move marks a significant development in the pursuit of reduced tension along the LAC in eastern Ladakh since the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades. Twenty Indian Army personnel including the commanding officer were killed in the clash. At least 40 Chinese soldiers also died in the clash. The ties between the two Asian nations had nosedived following the clash.

## Two migrant workers shot

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
JAMMU

Unidentified terrorists once again targeted two migrant workers hailing from Uttar Pradesh in the central Kashmir district of Budgam late Friday evening. According to preliminary reports, two workers who have been identified as Sufiyan and Usman were injured after being shot at in the Mazhama area of Magam in the central Kashmir district. The injured workers were immediately rushed to a hospital where their condition was stated to be stable. The attack comes close on the heels of a successful anti-terrorist operation in the Batal area of Akhnor in which all three foreign terrorists were eliminated by the joint team of security forces in the 27-hour-long operation. Meanwhile, this is the fifth attack by terrorists in the Kashmir Valley since the formation of an elected government headed by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah. On October 24, two soldiers and two Army porters were killed in action while another porter and a soldier were



FILE PHOTO

injured in an attack on an Army vehicle six kilometres from the tourist hotspot Gulmarg. Earlier that day, terrorists shot at and injured Shubam Kumar, a labourer from Uttar Pradesh, in the Tral area of Pulwama district. On October 20, a local doctor and six non-local labourers were gunned down by terrorists at a tunnel construction site in the Gagangir area of Ganderbal. A labourer from Bihar was shot dead by terrorists in Shopian district on October 18.



## Overworked, understaffed: Traffic Police passes the buck

Lack of interdepartmental coordination also doesn't help unclog Delhi's jams

BY SAUMYA SHUKLA

The Delhi Traffic Police claims to be helpless when it comes to resolving the perennial issue of traffic jams in the National Capital. They are blaming the poor engineering of the roads on the persistent congestion. There is also a dearth of police personnel in the traffic department, creating a shortage of traffic police on different junctions of Delhi who help in regulating the flow of traffic. Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic), Kime Kaming told The Pioneer that, "While dealing with traffic, there are three principles, which dwell on three E's. The first E is engineering which is the most important. The road engineering, which includes the broadness of the road and topography, should be such that it is congenial to traffic movement. However, I have seen many roads in Delhi are outdated from

an engineering point of view and no longer congenial to the current capacity of vehicles which have been growing exponentially." The traffic department said that on an average 2,500 new vehicles are added in the national Capital everyday over the existing fleet of vehicles in Delhi which are already over a crore. "Hence it is necessary to work on these old roads which had been designed in the 70s and 80s and no longer capable of taking the load of the vehicles that have grown exponentially," the officer said. Furthermore, the interdepartmental coordination also doesn't work in favour of Delhi's roads. The traffic department has written repeatedly to the construction agencies including Public Works Department (PWD) for undertaking new projects in the national Capital to resolve the issue. "However, sometimes the PWD doesn't find it feasible," he said, stating that such



issues will remain unless road engineering is made congenial with the traffic load. Additionally, the traffic police has identified and shared top 12 chronic points, 134 congested roads and several dilapidated roads in a high level meeting with the Secretary of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to resolve the issue of traffic jams in the national Capital, that have been causing significant inconvenience to the commuters on a daily basis. The top 12 pain points in Delhi include Munja Chowk-Chelmsford Road, Tis Hazari Red-Light on Boulevard Road, Peeragarhi Chowk, Uttam Nagar Chowk, Khanpur M. B. Road, Kalindi Kunj red light, Kondli Bridge, Khajuri Chowk, Madhuban Chowk, Azad Pur Chowk, Samalkha T-Point Dwarka Expressway and Rangpuri, South foot, Mahipalpur flyover, NH-48 as revealed exclusively by the Delhi Traffic Police department.

Moreover, when it comes to regulation of traffic on the ground, Kaming claimed that despite their best efforts, the department remains short staffed making it difficult to manage traffic even as commuters complain often of the lack of police personnels on the road. "In Delhi we have 50 circles and in each of the circles, there are at least on an average 15 to 25 points. These points are either T-point or crossing junctions. So there we have to put people for regulation," he stated, adding that however, the staff remains limited. He added that in each circle, on an average, the police has 50 police personnel. "Now, when you have to put 50 people in 20 or 25 points, then only two people can be put on each point. And two people have to work 24 hours, day and night. So how do we do it? We have to forgo certain less important points," the officer said.

Pioneer Photo

# Maha readies for direct fights between BJP-Congress, Shinde Sena-Uddhav Sena, Ajit NCP-Sharad NCP

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Never in the past was there any Assembly election in Maharashtra fought at so many different levels as it is happening now. At macro-level, the 2024 Assembly polls will be a full-fledged war between the BJP-led MahaYuti and the Congress-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA). But, in reality, five to six sets of battles to be waged on ground --- prominent being the ones between the BJP and the Congress, the Shinde Shiv Sena and Uddhav Shiv Sena (UBT), NCP (Ajit Pawar) and NCP (Sharad Pawar).

Not to be outdone, the BJP will slug it out with the non-Congress MVA constituents, while the Congress will lock horns with non-BJP allies at some places. Given the nature of rebellion witnessed in all political parties, there will be what has come to be "friendly fights" fought between candidates of the candidates of the same political formation -- being it the ruling MahaYuti or the Opposition MVA. With three days for the withdrawal of nominations for the

November 20 State Assembly polls, the hither-to hazy political skies are clearing. A cursory study of the lists of candidates released by the different political parties reveals that of the total 288 Assembly constituencies, the BJP will be involved in a direct fight with the Congress in 70 to 75 constituencies, while the Shinde Shiv Sena will slug it out with the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena in as many as 39 seats. The feuding NCPs -- one led by Ajit Pawar and another headed by Sharad Pawar himself -- will take on each other in 36 constituencies. Interestingly enough, the main battleground for the BJP vs Congress fights will be Vidarbha region, where the two parties will have a direct battle on hand in at least 30 constituencies. Those involved in direct fights in Vidarbha will include deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnis, state BJP President Chandrashekar Bawankule, senior BJP minister Sudhir Mungantiwar, Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly Vijay Wadetiwar and state Congress President Nana Patole. Fadnis of the BJP is pitted

against Prafulla Gudadhe-Patil of the Congress in home constituency of Nagpur South West, Bawankule -- an OBC leader -- is involved in a stiff fight with Congress' Suresh Bhojar, a former President of the Nagpur Zila Panchayat. In Sakoli of Bhandara district, Patole is facing Avinash Brahmanekar of the BJP, while Wadetiwar is seeking re-election from Brahamपुरi in Chandrapur district and is pitted against Krishnalal Sahare of the BJP. BJP minister Sudhir Mungantiwar, who was defeated in the recent Lok Sabha polls, is desperately trying to retain his Ballarpur seat against Congress candidate Santosh Rawat. Elsewhere in Karad south constituency of western Maharashtra, In Karad South, Prithviraj Chavan, a former chief minister and former Minister of State in PMO under the Dr Manmohan Singh-led UPA government, will take on Atul Bhosale of the BJP, while the BJP's controversial Speaker Rahul Narwekar is up against Heera Devasi of the Congress in Colaba constituency in Mumbai. Of the 39 direct contests



between the two feuding Shiv Sena, a majority will be witnessed in Mumbai-Konkan coastal belt and Marathwada region. Both Shinde Sena and Uddhav Sena consider Mumbai, its suburbs which come under the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and the neighbouring coastal Konkan region as strong-holds. The direct fights being witnessed in as many as 27 seats in this belt will decide which of the two Senas is the "real" Sena. Similarly, the two Sena are in for close contests in Marathwada (11), Vidarbha (6), North Maharashtra (5) and Western Maharashtra (4). The most prominent among

the Sena Vs Sena contests is in Kopri-Panchpakhadi in Thane city, where chief minister Eknath Shinde is trying to prove that he is the real inheritor of the legacy of late Shiv Sena strong man Anand Dighe. The Sena, which is one of the constituents of the MVA, this battle interesting by putting up late Dighe's nephew Kedar Dighe against Shinde. The eleven seats in Mumbai where there will be direct fights between Shinde Sena and Uddhav Sena are: Mahim, Byculla, Worli, Andheri East, Jogeshwari East, Dindoshi, Magathane, Bhandup West, Vikhroli, Kurla and Chembur.

Similarly, the nine seats in MMR where it will be Sena Vs Sena contest are Kopri-Panchpakhadi, Owla-Majiwada, Kalyan Rural, Kalyan West, Bhiwandi Rural, Ambernath, Palghar, Karjat and Alibaug. The seven seats in Konkan region where the two warring Senas are engaged in bitter fights are: Mahad, Dapoli, Gubagar, Ratnagiri, Rajapur, Kudal, Sawantwadi. The 11 Marathwada seats where there will be direct fights will be: Aurangabad Central, Aurangabad West, Vijapur, Pathan, Kannada, Sillod, Parbhani, Kalamnuri, Osmanabad, Paranda, Umarga. The six Vidarbha seats the Senas are fighting against each other are - Ramtek, Balapur, Daryapur, Digras, Mehekar and Buldhana. In north Maharashtra, the Shinde Sena is taking Uddhav Sena head-on in six seats: Newasa, Nandgaon, Malegaon Outer, Pachora, Chopada, while it is fighting the rival Sena in four seats of Western Maharashtra - Sangola, Barshi, Radhanagari and Patan. Equally fierce is going the Pawar Vs Pawar contests in the Assembly polls,

Of the 36 seats where the NCP (Ajit Pawar) and NCP (Sharad Pawar) are fighting a battle of survival, they are fighting neck-to-neck battles in 15 constituencies of the sugar-rich western Maharashtra. The mother of all battles in Maharashtra is being witnessed in Pawar's home constituency of Baramati, where deputy chief minister and NCP (AP) Ajit Pawar is locked in a family war against his brother Shrinivas Pawar's son Yugendra Pawar of the NCP (SP). The contest being seen here is a battle between Ajit Pawar and his 83-year-old uncle Sharad Pawar who is trying to avenge the betrayal indulged in by the former who vertically split the united NCP and joined the BJP-led MahaYuti government in July 2023. The Baramati Assembly contest comes in the backdrop of the fact that in the recent Lok Sabha polls, Supriya --- a sitting MP and daughter of NCP (SP) supreme Sharad Pawar -- defeated Ajit Pawar's wife Sunetra by a margin of 1.58 lakh votes. While western Maharashtra accounts for a maximum NCP vs NCP (SP) clashes (15), sim-

ilar contests are being witnessed in north Maharashtra (7), Marathwada (5), Vidarbha (4), Mumbai (1), larger Mumbai Metropolitan Region (2) and Konkan (2). The western Maharashtra seats are Baramati, Ambegaon, Indapur, Kagal, Hadapsar, Vadgaon Sheri, Islampur, Tasgaon Kavathe Mahankali, Shirur, Phaltan, Mohol, Pimpri, Junnar, Wai and Chandgad, while the two feuding NCPs are trying to outbeat each other in constituencies of north Maharashtra like Ahmednagar City, Akole, Parner, Kopergaon, Yeola, Dindori and Sinner. The five Marathwada seats, where the two NCPs are pitted against each other, are Basmalga, Udgir, Parli, Majalgaon and Ahmedpur. The four NCP Vs NCP seats in Vidarbha seats are Aheri, Tumsar, Morshi and Pusad, while the two Konkan seats are Chiplun and Shrivardhan. In Mumbai, the lone NCP Vs NCP seat is Anushakti Nagar involving Sana Malik and Fahad Ahmed and in the larger MMR the two seats where the two parties are fighting against each other are: Mumbra-Kalwa and Shahpur.

## Row erupts over Sena (UBT) MP's sexist comment against Shinde candidate

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A "sexist" comment by Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant against BJP-turned-Shinde Shiv Sena candidate Shaina NC has sparked a controversy, forcing the former to withdraw his comment. The controversy broke out within days after Shaina, a long-time BJP functionary, switched sides and filed her nomination as a Shinde Sena candidate from Mumbadevi Assembly seat against Congress' three-term MLA Amin Patel. Talking to media persons, Sena (UBT) MP called Shaina as "maal" (goods), a comment that cast aspersions on her. "Yahan pe imported 'maal' (goods) nahin chalega... Yahan pe Muslim 'maal' chalta hai, aur wo hai hamare paas, Amin Patel..." Sawant remarked, while looking at a smiling Congress candidate Amin Patel. The Shiv Sena (UBT), which is a part of the ruling MahaYuti, is supporting Congress candidate Amin Patel in Mumbadevi Assembly constituency Alluding to Arvind Sawant's



comment labelling her as a 'maal', Shaina said that Sawant could have avoided making such a comment, because "we (BJP) had campaigned for him and he was elected on our strength". "Ask him where he was...? I am a 'laadli' (beloved) daughter of Mumbai, and working for the people of the city. I don't need certificates from Sawant or the SS (UBT)," an unfazed Shaina NC said with a smile. After Shaina's retort, Sawant went on the defensive and said that he had very close personal equations with Shaina NC. "Looks like she misunderstood my (maal) comment. Maal also refers to it as goods, but she could have misinterpreted it... I had no such

intentions to malign her, Sawant clarified. Known earlier as Umerkhadi constituency, Mumbadevi is a minority dominated Assembly constituency. Amin Patel has been representing this constituency since 2009. He is seeking re-election to the state Assembly polls for the fourth term. This constituency is witnessing a three-cornered contest among Patel, Shaina and the BJP "rebel" Atul Shah. Meanwhile hectic talks are currently on to make Shah withdraw his candidature to boost the prospects of the MahaYuti's Shaina, who hails from a mixed Gujarati-Dawoodi Bohra Muslim lineage.

## IMD predicts warmer November in Delhi, gives no indication of upcoming winter

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

This year October ended without its typical chill and the India Meteorological Department on Friday predicted a warmer November, giving no indication of the upcoming winter. A lookback at the India Meteorological Department (IMD) data from 1901 reveal that, this year Delhi reported the warmest October in 73 years with mean temperature recording 1.23 degrees Celsius above normal. This is the fourth highest monthly day temperature and the sixth highest monthly night temperature in October recorded since 1901. Addressing a press conference, IMD Director General Mrityunjay Mohapatra said the mean temperature in October was recorded at 26.92 degrees Celsius, the warmest since 1901, against the normal of 25.69 degrees Celsius and attributed the warmer weather to the absence of western disturbances and influx of easterly winds due to active low pressure systems in the Bay of Bengal. The minimum temperature also clocked 21.85 degrees Celsius against the normal of 20.01 degrees Celsius for the country as a whole.

Mohapatra said the weather office does not count November as a winter month. He said January and February are considered as winter months, while the hints of the cold weather are available in December. As per IMD records from 1901, the highest-ever average day temperature for October was recorded in 1951 at 36.2 degrees Celsius. The highest-ever average night temperature was 22.3 degrees Celsius in 1915 and 1951. The other warm years were in 1907 with the average maximum settling at 35.5 degrees Celsius. According to IMD, October 1930 and 1938 recorded an average maximum temperature at 35 degree Celsius. In 1941 a record-breaking average maximum of 35.8 degree Celsius was reported. Further in a decade, this record was again broken with the year 1951 reporting an even higher monthly maximum temperature at 36.2 degree Celsius. Data for the last decade shows Delhi's lowest minimum in October was 12.5°C in October 2020 (October 29). It was 14.3°C last year (October 28); 14°C in 2022 (October 25); 14°C in 2021 (October 29) and

16.5°C in 2019 (October 23). In 2018, the lowest was 15°C (25), 16.1°C in 2017 (26), 15°C in 2016 (29 and 30), 15.3°C in 2015 (29) and 15.6°C in 2014 (17). "In north-western India, north-westerly winds are needed for lower temperatures. The monsoonal flow was also there that does not allow fall in temperature," Mohapatra said. He said the temperatures will continue to remain 2-5 degrees above normal in the north-western plains at least for the next two weeks, before a gradual decline towards normalcy. In the southern peninsula, the north-east monsoon is expected to bring above normal rainfall in November in Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal, Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam, Rayalaseema, Kerala and Mahe and south interior Karnataka. "The above normal to normal rainfall is likely over most parts of the country except northwest India and some areas of central India," the weather office said. The delay in the onset of cold weather conditions could also be on account of the continued prevalence of the neutral El Nino conditions in the equatorial Pacific Ocean.

## Fashion designer Rohit Bal passes away at 63



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rohit Bal, the iconic Indian fashion designer celebrated for his luxurious, opulent style, made an indelible mark on the global fashion landscape. Known for blending traditional Indian craftsmanship with contemporary design, his work often featured intricate embroidery, vibrant colours, and signature motifs like lotuses and peacocks. Bal's collections were a celebration of Indian heritage, yet they had a universal appeal, winning him admirers worldwide. His fashion shows, marked by theatricality and grandeur, showcased his unique ability to bring artistry and storytelling to the runway. Beyond clothing, he ventured into designing accessories and interiors, estab-

lishing himself as a versatile creative force in Indian design. Bal's legacy continues to inspire designers and fashion enthusiasts alike, cementing his place as a pioneer in bringing Indian luxury fashion to the international stage. In an Instagram post, the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI) wrote: "We mourn the passing of legendary designer Rohit Bal. He was a founding member of the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI). Known for his unique blend of traditional patterns with modern sensibilities, Bal's work redefined Indian fashion, and inspired generations. His legacy of artistry, and innovation along with forward thinking will live on in the fashion world. Rest in peace GUDDA. You are a legend."

## Mela App to guide devotees to ghats for Maha Kumbh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

In preparation for Maha Kumbh 2025, expected to draw 400-450 million devotees, the Mela Authority has launched the 'Mahakumbh Mela 2025' app to guide pilgrims across Prayagraj. This digital tool aims to provide seamless access to ghats, temples, and major religious sites, ensuring an effortless experience for the devotees attending this globally celebrated religious gathering. The app features a 'Plan Your Pilgrimage' section, where users can select 'Get Direction to Ghat' to access routes to seven key ghats, including Dashashwamedh, Kila, Rasulabad, Naukaha, Maheva, Saraswati, and Gyan Ganga. This allows devotees to nav-



igate directly to their destinations with integrated Google Maps and real-time directions. During his recent visit to Prayagraj, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated both the Mela administration's offi-

cial website and this app, underscoring the state's commitment to ensuring convenience for pilgrims. The Mela area will be equipped with extensive signboards and digital navigation aids at ghats and major routes, further

enhancing accessibility. In addition to improving digital guidance, the Yogi government has also focused on beautifying and upgrading facilities at Prayagraj's iconic ghats, particularly Dashashwamedh and Kila, where pilgrims will be provided with insights into religious traditions. This initiative aligns with UNESCO's recognition of Kumbh Mela as an intangible cultural heritage, reflecting India's profound cultural and spiritual legacy. Several leading institutions, including IIM, have conducted research to aid in organizing the Maha Kumbh Mela efficiently. Based on their insights, strategic crowd management and improved facilities are being implemented across the Mela grounds, pri-

oritizing safety and ease for devotees. The Mela Authority has also advised pilgrims to avoid overcrowding at the Sangam banks by opting for other designated bathing ghats. This is part of their broader strategy to ensure a safe and fulfilling experience for all attendees. Designed to resonate with Prayagraj's ancient spiritual heritage, the 'Mahakumbh Mela 2025' app serves as an informative digital companion, guiding devotees to ghats, temples, and other sacred sites. The app not only simplifies navigation but also enriches the pilgrimage experience, allowing devotees to focus on their spiritual journey amid the vast crowds expected for Maha Kumbh 2025.

## Bibek Debroy passes away

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday condoled the death of Bibek Debroy, a key economic adviser to the Prime Minister. Debroy was 69. Debroy, who had a history of diabetes, hypertension, and a blockage in the heart for which he had a pacemaker, was admitted to the AIIMS emergency late on October 31 and died around seven am on Friday. "He was admitted with subacute intestinal obstruction. He also suffered from hypertension and diabetes mellitus," an official source at AIIMS, Delhi said. Prime Minister Modi described Debroy as "a towering scholar, well-versed in diverse domains like economics, history, culture, politics, spirituality and more". "Through his works, he left an indelible mark on India's intellectual landscape. Beyond his contributions to public policy, he enjoyed working on our ancient texts, making them accessible to the youth," Modi said in his condolence message on social media. "I have known Dr. Debroy for many years. I will fondly remember his insights and passion for academic discourse. Saddened by his passing away. Condolences to his family and friends. Om Shanti."



President Murmu said in the demise of Debroy, the country has lost an eminent public intellectual who enriched diverse fields, from policy making to translating great scriptures. "His understanding of India's social, cultural and economic landscape was exceptional. For his extraordinary contributions, he was honoured with Padma Shri. I convey my condolences to his family, friends and admirers," the President said in a social media post. An empirical economist and a Padma Shri awardee, Debroy was the chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council since September 2017. A columnist to several newspapers, he had four days before his death sent a piece to a national daily with a note: "Unusual Column. Short of a requiem," according to the daily. In the article, which was not published yet, he wrote about life after coming out of cardiac care centre (CCU) at AIIMS nearly a month ago. "There is a world outside that exists. What if I am not there? What indeed?" he wrote according to the article posted by the newspaper on its website on Friday. "A few condolences, perhaps even from important people. Irreparable loss. Perhaps a posthu-

## Toxic millet claims...

From page 1

Initial post-mortem reports say the elephants died due to multi-organ failure, and large amounts of Kodo millet were found in their bellies. Kodo, also known as cow grass or ditch grass, is a millet grown in indigenous rainfed farming systems of Madhya Pradesh. Earlier this year, the state government announced a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for its production. A staple in multigrain atta, the millet is prone to mycotoxins that may cause health risks in both humans and animals, with symptoms ranging from intoxication to poisoning, says a report pub-

lished by the Journal of Ethnopharmacology in August 2003. The study states that the mycotoxins are carried in Kita, a contaminant known for high levels of Cyclopiazonic Acid or CPA. "Mycotoxins are poisonous substances produced by fungi or mold. A small amount can be damaging to human or animal health and even cause death. Poisoning by mycotoxins is called mycotoxicosis," says research reviewed by doctors on WebMD. The top industry resource states that 'poor harvesting of crops' can lead to the spread of these deadly mycotoxins, which are said to be increasing each year due to global warming. Indigenous farmers

around the sanctuary grow Kodo. Sowing takes place in the Kharif season, and the millet is harvested in September-October. In a media brief, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), L Krishnamoorthy, insinuates that this killer crop may have been responsible for wiping out ten of the thirteen-member herd of elephants. The official statement, issued by the head of the SIT, leaves several questions lingering over how such a deadly crop was allowed to be cultivated on the margins of the sanctuary and, more importantly, if the cultivation of the millet will now be banned in the area.

## Delhi Police constable kills auto rickshaw driver in car accident near Trilokpuri road

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 24 year old auto rickshaw driver was killed after being hit by a car driven by a Delhi Police constable in east Delhi's Kalyanpuri area. According to the police, the incident took place on Thursday night when the vehicles had a head-on collision near the Trilokpuri road. A senior police officer said that it is suspected that the accident took place as the autorickshaw was coming from the wrong side of the road but it is being further corroborated. The officer said soon after receiving a call, a police team reached the spot and found the

damaged vehicles while the auto rickshaw driver, Harsh, was already taken to a hospital while the driver of the Hyundai i10 car, constable Varun Yadav, was present at the spot. "The victim was found severely injured and under observation in the hospital by the police and was unfit for a statement," he said. He said Yadav is deployed at the Mayur Vihar police station and was going to attend a case that had occurred within his police station's jurisdiction. The constable was taken into police custody and sent for a medical examination. "He was not found under the influence of alcohol," another officer said.

# Cities air quality plummets as Delhiites flout pollution norms

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi battles pollution each winter as cold air traps dust, emissions, and smoke from farm fires in the neighbouring states of Punjab and Haryana, with firecrackers exacerbating the problem after Diwali. Delhi Pollution Control Board (DPCB) claimed that the air quality index did not show any significant change this Diwali, even after many flouted pollution norms.

According to a report by the DPCB, the PM2.5 levels decreased by 4 per cent as compared to Diwali last year. While the PM10 levels, consisting of particulate matter that is 10 micrometres or less in diameter, increased by 11 per cent. PM2.5 are fine inhalable particles, with diameters that are generally 2.5 micrometres and smaller,

and are the greatest risk to health. The acceptable annual standard for PM2.5 is 40 micrograms per cubic metre. Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai however expressed gratitude to Delhiites for largely refraining from bursting firecrackers on Diwali, which helped prevent the city's air quality index (AQI) from slipping into the 'severe' category. "Thanks to the responsible actions of many residents who avoided using firecrackers, we managed to avoid a severe AQI reading," Rai said.

Meanwhile a detailed analysis by the monitoring stations reveals that night-time pollution levels on Diwali were alarmingly high, with PM2.5 and PM10 particles soaring up to 30 times the standard limit. The situation worsened dramatically as the evening progressed and firecrackers



Ranjan Dirri

began to light up the sky. At 8 pm, the PM2.5 levels skyrocketed to 324 micrograms

per cubic meter. By 9 pm, a further surge was observed, with levels reaching a haz-

ardous 539 micrograms per cubic meter. The situation spiralled by 10 pm, with

PM2.5 concentrations climbing to 898 micrograms per cubic meter and peaking at an alarming 1,527 micrograms per cubic meter by midnight. In Vivek Vihar, East Delhi, PM 2.5 increased dramatically due to fire crackers. At 8 pm, the PM2.5 concentration in the atmosphere had more than doubled to 222 micrograms per cubic meter, signalling the start of a significant air quality decline. By 9 pm, the readings escalated to 296 micrograms per cubic meter, and an hour later, the concentration surged to an alarming 677 micrograms per cubic meter. The peak was observed at midnight when the readings hit a staggering 1853 micrograms per cubic meter, marking an increase of more than 17 times the level recorded earlier at 5 pm. Most monitoring stations in Delhi showed similar pollu-

tion levels, with 37 out of 39 reporting air quality in the 'very poor' category. However, it avoided a severe spike due to various pollution control efforts implemented across the city, the report said.

A significant reduction in crop residue burning incidents also helped mitigate severe pollution levels. The data revealed a 51 per cent reduction in residue-burning incidents in Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh as compared to 2023, contributing to lower overall regional pollution.

The report further underscored the effectiveness of government efforts to combat pollution, stating that a city-wide dust-control campaign was implemented, which included deploying two mobile smog guns in each Assembly constituency. The Delhi government had

enforced a comprehensive ban on firecrackers for the fifth consecutive year, prohibiting their manufacture, storage, sale and use. They also set up 377 enforcement teams and spread awareness through local associations to ensure compliance with the ban. Police teams were deployed to monitor neighbourhoods, with officials warning that legal action would be taken against violators.

Additionally, the DPCB monitored six major gaseous pollutants ammonia, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, ozone, and benzene, all of which remain within the prescribed National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

Additionally, DPCB anticipates that air quality in Delhi will stay in the "very poor" category till November 3.

## Rai inaugurates first Mobile Anti Smog Gun at secretariat

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Friday inaugurated the first Mobile Anti-Smog Gun at the secretariat, stating that the Air Quality Index (AQI) remains around 360 post Diwali, despite projections exceeding 400.

Rai announced that, to prevent pollution from reaching critical levels, the Delhi government will conduct continuous water spraying in three shifts using two mobile anti-smog guns in each of the city's 70 assembly constituencies. "We have deployed over 200 mobile anti-smog guns. In addition to covering all constituencies, special spraying will be carried out at pollution hotspots. A dedicated coordination team has been set up to focus on these areas, and the DC of the MCD has been directed to regularly visit these hotspots with all concerned officers," he concluded.

Claiming that the government has made strides in reducing pollution, Rai said, "The government is implementing var-



Ranjan Dirri

ious initiatives to combat pollution, including an anti-dust campaign, bio-decomposer spraying, a tree plantation drive, and a public awareness campaign on the impact of firecrackers."

He added, "Given the current AQI levels, we have launched a water-sprinkling campaign across Delhi's roads using 200 mobile anti-smog guns. Each of the 70 assembly constituencies will be covered by two mobile units, while additional guns have been stationed at pollution hotspots. Water spraying will take place continuously across

three shifts each day to maximise impact."

Rai urged the people of Delhi to actively participate in efforts to control pollution, emphasising the importance of public cooperation.

"I appeal to the people of Delhi: if you notice dust rising anywhere, especially at construction sites, please take a photo and upload it on the Green Delhi app. Similarly, if you see fire or smoke nearby, report it through the app. The concerned department will take swift action," he said.

## CM Atishi declares Nov 7 public holiday for Chhath Puja

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi on Friday declared a public holiday on November 7 for Chhath Puja celebrations.

The announcement came hours after Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena wrote to the chief minister requesting her to declare a holiday on November 7. Chhath is a major Hindu festival celebrated in the state of Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Making the announcement on X, Atishi wrote, "I am happy to inform you that the Delhi government has decided to declare a holiday on November 7 for the festival of Chhath, so that all our brothers and sisters of Purvanchal can celebrate the festival with pomp and show." She also shared her signed order regarding the decision.

"Chhath Puja is an important festival for the people of NCT of Delhi. Accordingly, the Government of NCT of Delhi has decided to declare November 7, 2024, as a public holiday on account of 'Chhath Puja,' the order read.

## DFS experiences surge in fire related calls this Diwali with more than 318 such incidents reported

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Fire Services (DFS) experienced a surge in fire-related calls this Diwali with more than 318 such incidents reported across the city, an increase of 53 percent as compared to the previous year. This was the highest number of calls since 2012.

According to officials, the increase is attributed to the extensive use of firecrackers. According to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) hospital, a total of 48 emergency burn patients were admitted in the hospital including 11 in the 'ver critical' category. A total of 19 such patients were admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) with three being less than the age of 10, 11 between the age of 10 to 25, three between 25 to 60 and two above the age of 60.

A data reveals 27 patients were admitted with major burns while 32 such burns were resultants of firecrackers, six were due to other Diwali fire related burns in AIIMS

hospital. Among those admitted, 35 were from within Delhi and eight from the NCR including five from Gurugram. In the Ram Manohar Lohia hospital, 44 patients with burn injuries related to Diwali including 38 males and six females.

"The figure marks the highest number of Diwali-related fire and emergency incidents in the past 13 years," DFS chief Atul Garg said. "This year, we received 318 fire-related calls. The number is the highest in the last 13 years." "We were also fully prepared to tackle any and every situation with deployment of all the fire units and officials. We cancelled all the leaves and were ready to help everyone across the city," Garg said.

He said at least 78 calls regarding fire incidents were received between 4 pm and 9 pm. He said the peak time of such calls this year was 6 pm to 11.59 pm, when the DFS received 176 fire-related calls, and from 12 am to 6 am, when received 144 calls.

Seven people were injured in various fire incidents: four in a house fire in Gulshan Chowk, Anand Parbat; one in Vikaspuri; and two in a bus fire near Chhawla. Three floors of a residential building in Kalkaji caught fire and eight fire tenders were deployed to douse the blaze.

An official said no casualties have been reported but all domestic articles were destroyed in the fire.

There were at least three serious fire incidents of "Make 4" category that were received from Kalkaji in south Delhi, Nirman Vihar in east Delhi, and Mangolpuri in outer Delhi while three others. The DFS, which had ramped up its readiness for the festival by deploying fire engines and personnel across the city, reported that most calls were received between 5 pm on October 31 and 5 am on November 1.

According to the data shared by the DFS, they had received 206 fire-related calls in 2011, 184 in 2012, 177 in 2013, 211 in 2014, 290 in 2015, 243 in

2016, 204 in 2017, 271 in 2018, 245 in 2019, 205 in 2020, 152 in 2021, 201 in 2022 and 208 in 2023.

"Last year during the same time, we had received 195 fire-related calls," he added. The relentless bursting of firecrackers through the night blanketed Delhi in dense smoke, causing severe noise pollution and reducing visibility as residents defied the ban on firecrackers and celebrated Diwali on Thursday. The department handled 280 calls related to fire incidents, eight for animal rescue, six for bird rescue, nine each for other rescues and special jobs that include road accidents or cases not related to fire, seven for standby, and others.

Meanwhile, another official of the DFS said they received three calls of fatal nature. Two calls were received from Sagarpur area and one was received from Daryaganj area. According to the southwest district police, they received two different calls regarding suicide at Sagarpur police station.

## Justice 40 years on: LG approves relaxation in qualifications for victims of 1984 riots

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant empathetic move that will ensure justice after 40 years of anti-Sikh riots, Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has approved relaxation in qualifications for recruitment of victims of the 1984 riots. This decision, pending for decades due to procedural delays and insensitive red tape, will enable a larger pool of candidates to secure employment by becoming eligible for the same.

Recognising the immense suffering and prolonged struggle faced by the 1984 riot victims, Saxena has also directed the concerned departments to

explore the possibility of providing employment to the children of deceased or aged applicants on humanitarian grounds. This initiative is intended to alleviate the financial hardships faced by the affected families. According to political experts, this may help the BJP to woo Sikh voters ahead of the upcoming assembly polls in Delhi.

"The 1984 Sikh Riots were a blot on Indian democratic traditions. Terrible atrocities were committed upon a particular minority community, violating all standards of human rights. The riots had affected many families, taking lives of their single bread winners. I understand the

historical context of this issue and the Government commitment to provide relief and rehabilitation to those affected. Given the significant trauma and hardship endured by the victims of the 1984 riots and the absence of relief for a few families for over the last four decades, a humanitarian view is needed. Though no relief can compensate for the loss of loved ones and mitigate the trauma faced by the families of the victims, I believe it is imperative to take a compassionate view for well-being of these families and their economic stability".

"Therefore, taking an empathetic view and considering the plight of the victims; and facts of the case as above, I



hereby direct as under towards relief to the families of the victims of anti Sikh Riots, 1984, being a special category of persons which include full relaxation in

required education qualification to the post of MTS to remaining applicants who were identified by the Revenue Department and Department to process the

cases for granting employment to one of the children of the applicants wherein applicants have surpassed the age for employment, despite the age relaxations already granted, or passed away," the LG noted on the file.

The decision comes after a comprehensive review of the cases, which revealed that several applicants had been denied employment despite meeting eligibility criteria. The government had previously nominated 564 individuals for compassionate appointments, with 133 securing positions in the 1990s.

While age relaxation was granted in subsequent years, qualification relaxation

remained a hurdle for many. According to Raj Niwas, various groups, public representatives, the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee and a delegation of the victims themselves had met the LG and appealed to consider all eligible applicants, including those who may have aged out or passed away.

Following this, Saxena had directed the departments concerned to look into the issue with empathy and suggest a way forward.

The Revenue Department, in its proposal, had suggested relaxing educational qualifications and allowing family members of original applicants to apply for the MTS

posts. However, the Chief Secretary of Delhi recommended focusing solely on the qualification relaxation. However, the LG sent back the proposal for review by the Services Department.

The Services Department on LG's directions, after a thorough examination of the matter, put up the file proposing that a one-time relaxation in educational qualifications could be granted as a special case to provide relief to the victims of the 1984 riots.

With the LG's approval, the minimum educational qualification for the MTS post has been relaxed from 10th grade to 8th grade, making larger number of candidates eligible.

## Two killed, one injured in revenge-related shooting

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

A 40-year-old man and his 16-year-old nephew were shot dead while his 15-year-old son was injured for revenge after two armed men opened fire outside their residence while they were celebrating Diwali in Delhi's Shahdara.

According to the police on Friday, the juvenile, who was a distant relative to the deceased, has been apprehended in the matter. In a video surfacing on social media, two men are seen in yellow kurta who were celebrating the festival outside their house in Farsh Bazar area when two men wearing white t-shirts, with one of them riding a scooter, came there and touched Akash Sharma alias Chottu's feet. When Akash tried going inside his house, one of the men furnished his gun and shot him in the chest.

According to a senior police officer, while Akash and his teenage nephew Rishabh Sharma were killed in the incident, his son Krish Sharma sustained bullet injuries around upper to right



elbow. DCP Shahdara Prashant Gautam said, "On receiving a PCR call at 8:23 pm, a police team was dispatched. The team found blood at the spot and it was known that the three injured persons were taken to Kailash Deepak Hospital."

Akash Sharma's son Krish and nephew Rishabh, who were standing nearby, were also hit by bullets. While Akash and Rishabh were declared dead by doctors at the hospital, Krish is undergoing treatment. A case has been registered on the statement of a 16 year old Yash Sharma, who is Akash's son, who stated that the accused

have given life threats to the deceased previously as well. "As per the statement, he along with both the deceased and injured Krish Sharma was celebrating Diwali outside their house when their distant relative came there on a scooter, at the same time a person wearing a mask also came there. The juvenile asked that person to kill Akash and that person whipped out a pistol and fired shots at the three persons. Then both of them ran away from the spot," the DCP claimed.

According to the police, it seems to be a case of personal enmity. "On interrogation

he disclosed, Akash Sharma had promised to give him Rs 70,000/- but later on he refused to pay the said amount.

The CCL wanted to take revenge from Akash as the latter had not paid the amount, so he contacted his friends for killing Akash," Gautam said. The FIR reveals that the accused has come to the house for the last three days and on the eve of Diwali, he came there around 7 pm. "A call was also received on my father's phone by the accused's father who threatened my father that it is a matter of time, we will surely take revenge," it stated. An FIR under section 103 (punishment for murder), 109 (Attempt to murder), 351(3) (Criminal intimidation) and 3(5) of BNS was registered. The police recovered five empty cartridges, one live round and four bullet lead from the spot. "Statements of the victims' family members will be recorded and further investigations are underway," they added.

Meanwhile, following a double murder, the ruling AAP questioned the BJP's handling of law and order, accus-

ing the central government's inaction as a contributing factor.

In a press conference, senior AAP leader and Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj expressed concerns, alleging the worsening law and order situation in Delhi. "Due to the collapsed law and order situation in the city, two people celebrating Diwali were murdered in public last night. If the BJP had put efforts into improving the law and order situation, then murders, gang wars, and looting would not be taking place every day," Bharadwaj said.

"The BJP has to answer how the situation got so severe in the national capital. This could not have happened without the nod of the central government," he said. He added that cases of snatching have also exceeded all limits, with women now avoiding carrying phones and wearing gold ornaments in public. Bharadwaj further said that even the French Ambassador fell victim to pickpocketing in the national capital of the country, underscoring concerns despite the installation of CCTV cameras across Delhi.

## Gurugram fire department registers 57 fire related incidents during Diwali celebrations

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

The fire department of Gurugram registered 57 fire-related incidents during the Diwali festival as the city residents burst firecrackers from 6 pm till late night, officials at the Gurugram Fire Service informed on Friday. The majority of the cases were addressed quickly and there were no reports of any casualties so far, they said. Last year, the fire department received 11 fire and emergency calls.

"A total of 57 calls related to fire incidents were received in Gurugram from Thursday 4.33 pm to 12.21 am on Friday during the Diwali celebration. All the reported incidents were minor as we barely use 4 or 5 fire tenders in any incidents," said a fire official.

The affected areas were Palam Vihar, Surya Vihar, Hanuman Mandir, Jatauli, Tajnagar, Fazilpur, Kherki Daula, Pataudi, Sector-37D, Hari Nagar, Sector-28, 54, DLF Phase-1, Samaspur Sector-51, Sikenderpur, Narsinghpur,



Sector-28, Sector-69, Chakkarpur, Sushant Lok, Sector-15, Dayanand Colony, Madanpuri, Manesar area and, near Gurgaon bus stand. The fire incidents were also reported in scrap material which was lying in vacant plots and residential areas.

Apart from this, a fire broke out in residential areas, including New Palam Vihar, DLF Phase-, Bhim Nagar and Sector-4, the officials added. However, the official's firecrackers could cause these fire incidents. The city has six fire stations all are run by the government. The fire control room was busy, especially

during evening hours attending to calls and sending firefighters to various spots to douse fires due to firecrackers or short circuits. "There were minor fire incidents. There was no major fire because we had increased the fire force this time.

There were a lot of calls but there were no life-threatening cases," a fire official said. "Because of Diwali, we had stationed several fire tenders along with fire personnel to deal with fire incidents. However, no major fire incident was reported during Diwali celebrations," he added.

# Congress stands badly exposed for making unrealistic promises: PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday said the Congress stands "badly exposed" in front of people for promising to them what the party knows it will never be able to deliver. Modi launched a fierce attack on the opposition party as he seized on its president Mallikarjun Kharge's comments that the Congress' state units should make promises that are properly budgeted and do not lead to financial troubles amid reports of fiscal problems the party-ruled states are facing in keeping some of their pre-poll announcements. The prime minister said, "The Congress party is realising the hard way that making unreal promises is easy but implementing them properly is tough or impossible. Campaign after campaign they promise things to the people which they also know they will never be able to deliver. Now, they stand badly exposed in front of the people!" He said the developmental trajectory and fiscal health in the Congress-ruled states of



Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana is turning from bad to worse. People will have to be vigilant against the Congress-sponsored culture of fake promises, he said. "We saw recently how the people of Haryana rejected their lies and preferred a government that is stable, progress-oriented and action-driven." There is a growing realisation across India that a vote for the Congress is a vote for non-governance, poor economics and unparalleled loot, the prime minister said in a series of social media posts with the hashtag "fake promises of Congress". He said the "so-called

guarantees" of the Congress lie unfulfilled, which is a "terrible deceit" upon the people of these states. Modi added that the victims of such politics are the poor, youngsters, farmers and women who are not only denied the benefits of these promises but also see their existing schemes diluted. In Karnataka, the Congress is busier in intra-party politics and loot instead of even bothering to deliver on development. Not only that, they are also going to roll back existing schemes, Modi said. In Himachal Pradesh, he added, salaries of government employees are not paid on

time and Telangana farmers are waiting for the waiver they were promised. "Previously, in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, they promised certain allowances which were never implanted for five years. There are numerous such examples of how the Congress works. The people of India want development and progress, not the same old fake promises of Congress," the prime minister said. Earlier, the BJP on Friday here demanded Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge's apology following the Congress president's advice that his party's state units should make only those promises that are fiscally doable, a statement seen by many as an acknowledgment of financial constraints that some of its guarantees face in states. BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad asked mockingly if Kharge has given his first "gyan" to Rahul Gandhi, noting the former Congress president often boasts of "khata khat" (immediate) transfer of money to different population segments during state and national elections in the case of his party coming to power.

Kharge has realised that the Congress should not make reckless announcements, the former law minister told reporters, claiming that the party-run governments in states like Karnataka, Telangana and Himachal Pradesh are faced with financial hardships in fulfilling the guarantees offered to people. In Himachal Pradesh, Congress ministers were asked to not take salary and even a toilet tax was introduced, which was withdrawn after protests, he added. In Karnataka, the state government is reviewing its promise for free bus rides to women, Prasad added. Hitting out at the Congress, he said it is the party's history of fooling voters by making them false promises, and recalled the "garibi hatao" slogan given by Indira Gandhi during the 1971 polls. Unlike the Congress, he claimed, the BJP makes only those promises which are guided by "fiscal prudence". The party had promised to transfer Rs 6,000 annually to 11 crore farmers, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been fulfilling it with a click of button.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday greeted the residents of various states and Union Territories on their formation day. Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Lakshadweep came into being on this day in 1956. Punjab and Haryana were formed in 1966 while Chhattisgarh was carved out of Madhya Pradesh in 2000. In a social media post in Hindi, President Murmu said, "I extend my heartfelt greetings to the people of Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Lakshadweep on their formation day." "I wish that the people of all these states and Union territories continue to contribute to the country's development journey and that their lives be filled with peace and prosperity. I wish them and all the countrymen a bright future," she added. Prime Minister Narendra



Modi greeted the people of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Haryana and Chhattisgarh on their states' formation day. In social media posts, Modi highlighted various features of these states as he extended his wishes to the people living there. "Kannada Rajyotsava" is a very special occasion, recognising the exemplary culture and traditions of Karnataka, he said. "This state is blessed with outstanding people, who are powering growth and innovation across sectors. May the people of Karnataka always be blessed with happiness and success," he added. Modi noted that Madhya Pradesh is blessed with bountiful natural resources and cultural heritage and described Chhattisgarh as a state known for its impressive

folk traditions and tribal culture, wishing the states continued development. He said in another post, "Kerala is known for its mesmerising landscapes, vibrant traditions and hardworking people. People from Kerala have made their mark all over the world, across different fields. May the people of the state keep progressing in the times to come." Haryana is known for its rich and historic heritage and has always made important contributions to the country's development, the prime minister added. In his greetings, Home Minister Shah said people of these states had contributed immensely to nation-building. In separate messages on social media, Shah expressed hope that the states would continue the journey of progress and development uninterrupted in the coming years.

## Jharkhand CM urges EC to direct district administrations to grant leaves to employees amid festive seasons



PTI ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Friday urged the Election Commission of India (EC) to issue directions to district administrations not to

deny leaves to employees, including police personnel, in the ongoing festive season. He stated that leaves were denied to the employees in view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to the state and election work. PM Modi is scheduled to address two rallies at Chaibasa and Garhwa in poll-bound Jharkhand on November 4. "Diwali was on October 31, now there is Bhaiya Dooj, Sohrai, Gohal Puja, Bandhana festival and Chitragupta Puja. The great festival of Chhath falls between November 4 and

November 8. These festivals are very important for the people of Jharkhand. In this, all the common people, government employees, police personnel take leave and go to their homes. But it has been informed that the district administrations are not giving any kind of leave due to elections and the proposed visit of the prime minister," Soren posted on X. The Jharkhand assembly polls will be held in two phases - November 13 and 20. The counting of votes will take place on November 23.

He urged the ECI to issue clear directives to district officials to grant leaves during this vital time, stating that it is essential that "public servants are able to participate in significant cultural events with their families". Additionally, the CM called for the temporary release of buses and other vehicles currently seized for election purposes. He proposed that these seized vehicles be released for a period from November 2 to 8 to ensure smooth travel by residents to visit their homes and celebrate Chhath.

## BJP accuses Congress of converting farmers' and temple lands into Waqf properties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday here accused the Congress of seeking to convert the lands of farmers and temples into Waqf properties due to its vote-bank politics and asserted that it would oppose such attempts "tooth and nail." Senior BJP leader and former law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad cited notices served on farmers in Karnataka's Vijayapura district for allegedly encroaching on Waqf

properties and alleged that a temple is also facing similar claims. Forty-four properties of farmers have received such notices in three weeks, he told reporters. The Congress has been doing it due to its vote bank politics, Prasad added while asserting that the BJP would "protest any such attempt tooth and nail." Only after a row erupted that Karnataka law minister M B Patil sought to defuse the crisis by blaming a gazette error for the notices, he claimed.

At the press conference, Prasad also slammed Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant for his derogatory swipe at Shaina N C, a BJP leader who has switched to Shiv Sena to become its candidate from the Mumbai Devi constituency. He described Sawant's comments as shameful, scandalous and condemnable. To a question about former US president and Republican nominee in the November five presidential polls Donald Trump's

condemnation of attacks on Hindus, he said it is for the External Affairs Ministry to comment. Trump, in a social media post, has vowed to strengthen ties with India and described Prime Minister Narendra Modi as his "good friend". Bangladesh, he said, remains in a total state of chaos and alleged that his Democratic rival Vice President Kamala Harris and her boss President Joe Biden have ignored Hindus around the world and in America.

## Karnataka Government approves tourism Policy 2024-29 with ₹1,349 Crore allocation

PTI ■ UDUPI/KARNATAKA

The Karnataka government has approved the Tourism Policy 2024-29, allocating Rs 1,349 crore to develop essential infrastructure and attract international tourists, state Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar announced on Friday. Speaking at the 'Karnataka Rajyotsava' celebrations here, the Women and Child Welfare Minister, who is also Udupi district in-charge, emphasised the government's commitment to transforming Karnataka into a global tourism hub through enhanced services and facilities. Highlighting Karnataka's investment appeal, Hebbalkar stated that Bengaluru continues to lead the nation in investment inflow, a feat credited to the government's strategic efforts. She noted that youth skill

development programmes have equipped local talent to contribute effectively to various industries, further driving economic growth and investor confidence. Reaffirming the government's dedication to promoting the Kannada language, Hebbalkar urged the public to engage more deeply with Kannada literature and culture. "We are committed to establishing Kannada as the primary administrative language and have initiated several measures to support this goal. Programmes celebrating literature, folk arts, and environmental and cultural heritage are central to our mission," she added. Hebbalkar also highlighted the government's broader vision for socio-economic empowerment. "Our five guarantee schemes are designed to give people

greater autonomy in social and economic realms," she asserted. Addressing educational initiatives, she announced Rs 14.2 crore grant under the 'Odhu Karnataka' (Read Karnataka) programme, aimed at improving literacy among government school students in Classes 4 and 5. Study materials and teacher training have been implemented to ensure the scheme's success. Turning to irrigation developments in the Udupi district, Hebbalkar revealed plans to construct vented dams worth Rs 1.88 crore under the Paschima Vahini project this financial year. "These dams will irrigate 33 hectares of farmland. Additionally, embankments will be built along 151 km of riverbanks at a cost of Rs 6.15 crore to prevent farmland flooding," she explained.

## Indian Army contingents depart for US and Indonesia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Two Indian Army contingents on Friday left for US and Indonesia respectively to take part in Special Forces exercises there. Giving details here, officials said the Indian contingent left for the 15th edition of India-US joint Special Forces Exercise Vajra Prahar. The exercise is scheduled to be conducted from November two to 22 at Orchard Combat Training Centre in Idaho, USA. Last edition of the same exercise was conducted at Umroi, Meghalaya in December 2023. This will be second exercise of the year between Indian and the US Army, the previous being Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2024, conducted at Rajasthan in September. Contingents of both the countries taking part in the upcoming joint exercise will comprise 45 personnel each.



The Indian Army contingent will be represented by Special Forces units and the US Army contingent will be represented by Green Berets of US. Aim of the exercise is to promote military cooperation between India and the US through enhancement of interoperability, jointness and mutual exchange of special operations tactics. The exercise will enhance combined capabilities in executing joint Special Forces Operations in desert/ semi desert environment. The exercise will focus on high degree of physical fitness, joint planning and joint tactical

drills. Drills/ aspects to be rehearsed during the exercise will include planning a Joint Team Mission, Reconnaissance Mission, employment of Unmanned Aerial Systems, execution of Special Operations, actions of Joint Terminal Attack Controller and Psychological Warfare in Special Operations. Exercise Vajra Prahar will enable the two sides to share their best practices and experiences for conduct of joint Special Forces Operations. The exercise will facilitate developing inter-operability,

bonhomie and camaraderie between soldiers of both the countries. The Indian Army contingent comprising 25 personnel departed for Cijantung, Jakarta, Indonesia to take part in the ninth edition of India-Indonesia Joint Special Forces Exercise GARUD SHAKTI 24. The Exercise will be conducted from November one to 12. The Indian contingent is being represented by troops from The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) and Indonesian contingent comprising 40 personnel is being represented by Indonesian Special Forces Kopassus. The aim of Exercise GARUD SHAKTI 24 is to acquaint both the sides with each other's operating procedures, enhance mutual understanding, cooperation and interoperability between the Special Forces of both armies. The Exercise is designed to develop bilateral military cooperation and strengthen

bond between two armies through conduct of discussions and rehearsal of tactical military drills. The drill will involve planning and execution of special operations, orientation to advance special forces skills, sharing of information on weapon, equipment, innovations, tactics, techniques & procedures. Joint Exercise will also involve jointly practicing Special Forces Operations in Jungle terrain, strikes on terrorist camps and a Validation Exercise integrating basic and advance special forces skills apart from gaining an insight into the lifestyle and culture of both countries to foster military cooperation. The Exercise will provide an opportunity to both the contingents to strengthen their bond and share best practices. It will also act as a platform to achieve shared security objectives and foster bilateral relations between two friendly nations.

## Congress slams EC for rejecting allegations of irregularities in Haryana Assembly Polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday hit out at the Election Commission (EC) after it rejected allegations over irregularities in the Haryana assembly polls, saying if the poll panel's goal is to "strip itself of the last vestiges of neutrality", then it is doing a "remarkable job" at creating that impression. The opposition party claimed that the EC's reply was written in a tone that is condescending and warned that if the poll panel persists with such language then it would have no choice but to seek legal recourse to expunge such remarks. The Congress's response came days after the EC rejected allegations levelled by it over irregularities in the just-held assembly polls, saying the party was raising "the smoke of a generic doubt" about the credibility of an entire electoral outcome like it did in



the past. In its letter to the EC signed by nine senior Congress leaders, including general secretary in-charge communications Jai Ram Ramesh, the party said, "We have carefully studied your response to our complaints. Not surprisingly, the EC has given a clean chit to itself. We would normally have let it be at that. However, the tone and tenor of the EC's response, the language used, and the allegations made against the INC compel us to submit the counter-response." "We do not know who is

advising or guiding the hon'ble Commission, but it seems that the Commission has forgotten that it is a body set up under the Constitution and charged with the discharge of certain crucial functions - both administrative and quasi-judicial," the response by the Congress leaders said. Posting the reply on social media, Congress general secretary Ramesh said, "ECI gave a non-reply to Congress' specific complaints in 20 Vidhan Sabha constituencies in Haryana."

The Congress letter said if the Commission grants a recognised national party a hearing or examines issues raised by them in good faith it is not an 'exception' or 'indulgence' but it is the performance of a duty which it is required to do. "If the Commission is refusing to grant us a hearing or refusing to engage on certain complaints (which it has done in the past) then the law allows recourse to the higher courts' extraordinary jurisdiction to compel the ECI to discharge this function (as happened in 2019)," the letter said. The Congress leaders, who had petitioned the EC alleging irregularities in the polls, said every reply from the EC now seems to be laced with ad-hominem attacks on either individual leaders or the party itself. The leaders said the Congress' communications confine themselves to issues and are

written with a regard for the high office of the CEC and his brother Commissioners. "However, the ECI's reply is written in a tone that is condescending. If the current ECI's goal is to strip itself of the last vestiges of neutrality, then it is doing a remarkable job at creating that impression," the party said in its letter to the EC. "Judges who write decisions do not attack or demonise the party raising the issues. However, if the ECI persists then we shall have no choice but to seek legal recourse to expunge such remarks (a remedy with which the ECI is familiar since it unsuccessfully sought to do the same with a high court's unflattering but accurate observations after Covid)," said the letter signed by Ramesh, K C Venugopal, Ashok Gehlot, Bhupinder Hooda, Ajay Maken, Hishesh Singhvi, Uday Bhan, Partap Bajwa and Pawan Khara.

## Senior bureaucrat Rajesh Kumar Singh takes over as new Defence Secretary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Senior bureaucrat Rajesh Kumar Singh took over as defence secretary on Friday. The 1989-batch IAS officer from the Kerala cadre assumed charge at the South Block, where the ministry is housed. Before taking charge, Singh laid a wreath and paid homage to the fallen heroes at the National War Memorial. He had assumed charge as officer on special duty (defence secretary-designate) on August 20. "The nation will remain forever indebted to our brave soldiers who make the supreme sacrifice in the service of the motherland. Their extraordinary bravery and sacrifice is a source of strength and inspiration for us to make India a safe and prosperous nation," he said



after laying wreath. Singh held the post of secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry from April 24, 2023, to August 20, 2024. Prior to that, he was secretary in the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal

Husbandry & Dairying. Singh has held many other important positions in the Union government, including director of works and urban transport in the Ministry of Urban Development; commissioner (lands) in the Delhi Development Authority; joint secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas; joint secretary in the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare; and chief vigilance officer in the Food Corporation of India, the ministry said in a statement. He has also held charge as urban development secretary and finance secretary in the Kerala government. Singh succeeds Gridhar Aramane, a 1988-batch IAS officer of the Andhra Pradesh cadre, who superannuated on Thursday.

# BJP MLA Devender Singh Rana passes away; cremated with full honors

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A close aide of a common Aman and sitting Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) MLA from Nagrota constituency Devender Singh Rana, who passed away late Thursday night in a Faridabad hospital after a brief illness, was cremated with full state honors in Jammu on Friday. He was 59 and is survived by his wife, two daughters, and a son. Rana's elder brother and MoS PMO Dr Jitendra Singh, Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, and people from different walks of life also attended the last rites.



His supporters were left shell-shocked to hear the news of his sudden demise. Rana, who took oath as an MLA on October 21, was often described as the 'voice of Jammu'. He was last seen in public on October 24, the day he visited the residence of Shashi Abrol to offer his condolences. Abrol was killed in the terror attack on construction workers in Sonamarg on October 20. Condoling his death Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a

post on X said, "He (Rana) was a veteran leader, who worked diligently towards Jammu and Kashmir's progress. He had just won the assembly polls and had also played a noteworthy role in making the BJP stronger in Jammu and Kashmir." "In this hour of grief, my thoughts are with his family and supporters. Om Shanti," he added. Union Home Minister Amit Shah also expressed grief over Rana's untimely passing.

"Devendra ji, who was always dedicated to the peace and development of Jammu and Kashmir and the interests of the people, made an invaluable contribution to the progress of the region. His demise is an irreparable loss for the BJP family. I express my condolences to his family and supporters," he said. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah along with his cabinet colleagues also arrived here from Srinagar to bid farewell to his former political advisor. Before visiting his residence in Jammu Omar Abdullah posted an emotional message on his X handle, saying, "The terrible news from late last night isn't really sinking in. I know the last few years have been marked by our differences, Devender, but I prefer to focus on the fun times we shared together, the excellent work we did together and the memories." "You have been taken from us all too soon

and will be missed. May your soul rest in peace now, DSR. My heart goes out to your family as I struggle to find the words to convey my condolences to them," he said. National Conference president Farooq Abdullah also expressed shock at Rana's sudden passing. "We had a great relationship with him and his father before him. Omar liked him a lot. He (Rana) held a big position in our party in Jammu and had made the party stronger," he told reporters in Srinagar. Rana, who spent a major part of his political career in the National Conference, joined BJP in October 2021. He won the recent Assembly polls by the highest margin of over 30,000 votes. Rana's family members, including his daughters, the BJP's Jammu and Kashmir chief Ravinder Raina, MP Jugal Kishore Sharma, and MLA Pawan Gupta carried his body on their shoulders for his final journey amid chants of "Rana sahib amar rahi (Long live Rana saheb)". "Rana's death is an irreparable loss to Jammu and Kashmir and the BJP. He was a political

stalwart whose influence reached beyond party and religious lines," Raina said. The Congress's Jammu and Kashmir unit chief spokesperson Ravinder Sharma also expressed his condolences. "This is very unfortunate. Despite ideological differences, he maintained a friendly relationship with everyone," he said. A civil engineer by training, Rana graduated from the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Kurukshetra, and ventured into business, founding the Jamkash Vehicleades group, which became a leading automobile company in Jammu and Kashmir. Rana's political career began at a young age when he joined the National Conference. He quickly rose to prominence as a key strategist, serving as the provincial president and political advisor to Omar Abdullah. Rana was also a vocal advocate for the Jammu Declaration, which sought the restoration of statehood for the Jammu region following the August 2019 abrogation of Article 370.

## Party confident of winning by-elections: TMC leaders

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Notwithstanding the mass Nupheaval post RG Kar rape and murder case the Trinamool Congress is confident of winning all the six Assembly seats up for the grab in the November 13 by-elections. "There is no problem with the elections 'the party is confident of winning all the seats,' said a senior leader and minister in the State Government. That the RG Kar started with a bang and ended in a whimper and the way the Left forces led by the CPI(M) which was primarily behind the movement failed to capitalise on it would only help the TMC's cause, he said. "There are people who are trying to compare the Singur and Nandigram movement with the one we saw recently stoked largely by the CPI(M) the fact that those were primarily rural movements led by a mass leader like Mamata Banerjee who was tactically and strategically far more superior than the present leaders like Meenakshi Mukherjee says it all," the TMC leader said adding "simply they failed to carry RG Kar movement to the villages ... move so the women." His views were buttressed by a former CPI(M) leader Samir Putatundu who said that strategically the doctors' movement failed because they could not realize the importance of the villages. "There were at least half a dozen cases of rape and even murder after RG Kar ... mostly in villages ... but instead of shifting the epicenter from RG Kar to the villages they remained grounded in Kolkata," he said adding unlike in the past when the Mamata Banerjee successfully transferred the epicenter of the farmers' movement from Singur to Nandigram and then to Lalgarh in the recent case the doctors remained confined to Kolkata. Continuous protests by junior doctors for the last two months --- in the wake of the brutal rape and murder of a postgraduate lady doctor of RGKMCH --- compelled the TMC government to replace the Kolkata police commissioner, Director of Medical Education and Director of Health Service, amidst mounting allegations of corruption and a lack of cooperation with doctors and

protestors. But the movement tended to stumble post that despite 17-days fast unto death undertaken by 12 doctors with the Chief Minister playing waiting game for the agitators to exhaust and then surrender. TMC MP Saugato Roy too said that the RG Kar movement had failed. "It has entered a blind lane from where it can never come out ... the movement has ended without any political impact remaining," he said. Even Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari whose BJP had tried to control the movement in the beginning but failed too said that the "doctors made a mess ... they started impressively but failed to convert it to a bigger movement." It is against this backdrop that TMC leader Kunal Ghosh once again repeated his prediction saying, "we will win all the six out of six Assembly seats ... the CPI(M) tried to play mischievous games in RG Kar but they have failed ... now they will end up even behind the BJP their goal to come up to the second spot will also fail." Another TMC leader and a former MLA said that though the doctors' movement impacted the party's image it failed to make inroads in the rural areas and particularly the party's minority vote base. Apparently the Muslim community that comprises about 30 percent of the voters remained spectator to the movement. "It's true our image took some beating. But that doesn't mean our election machinery is weakened. That was intact and this movement has no impact in the village areas ... they simply failed to capitalize on the women sentiments by taking the movement to the villages," the leader said. With the sitting TMC MLAs getting elected to Parliament in this year's general elections, by-elections will be conducted in six seats which are Sitai and Madarihat in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts of North Bengal, Haroa and Naihati in North 24 Parganas, Taldangra in Bankura and Medinipur in West Midnapore district. The TMC had won five out of the six seats in the 2021 Assembly elections with the BJP winning the sole seat of Madarihat. "This time round we will wrest that seat too from the BJP and the CPI(M) will remain in its 'zero' position," said Ghosh.

## Marine fishing ban enforced along Odisha coast for Olive Ridley turtle conservation

PTI ■ KENDRAPARA (ODISHA)

The Odisha government on Friday enforced a seven-month-long prohibition on sea fishing activity within 20 km of the coast at the river mouths of Dhamara, Devi and Rusikulya as part of the annual Olive Ridley turtle conservation programme, officials said. The fishing ban would remain effective from November 1-May 31 to ensure the safety of marine animals during their breeding and mating season, they said. The ban has been clamped in accordance with Sections 2, 7 and 4 of the Orissa Marine Fishing Regulation Act (OMFRA), 1982 and provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, they said. The fishing ban imposed along a specified coast of the sea comprising sea turtle congregation area and their buffer zones at the river mouths of Dhamara, Devi and Rusikulya. The prohibition will be strictly implemented as it is done every year as the turtles perish in larger numbers either by getting entangled in



fishing nets or hit by fishing trawlers' propellers. It will be a multi-layered patrolling exercise involving forest, fisheries, and marine police besides the coast guard personnel, an official said. To ensure effective patrolling, 61 on-shore camps and five off-shore camps have been set up in the state's four wildlife divisions - Bhradrak, Rajnagar, Puri and Berhampur. The armed police constabulary force will flank the forest and fisheries patrolling teams. Five high-speed boats, 13 trawlers and support boats are pressed into service to intercept illegal marine fishing in prohibited zones, said Sudarshan Gopinath Yadav, Divisional

Forest Officer, Rajnagar Mangrove (wildlife) Forest Division. Around 10,666 fishermen's families will be affected following the fishing ban. Therefore to compensate for the loss of income avenues, the state government has decided to extend one-time livelihood assistance of Rs 7,500 to the affected fishermen families. The female turtles virtually invade the nesting beaches usually at the dead of the night for laying eggs, the phenomenon otherwise described as 'arribada'. After laying eggs, the turtles leave the nesting ground to stride into the deep seawater. Hatchlings emerge from these eggs after 45-60 days. It is a rare natural phenomenon where the babies grow without their mother, the official said. The ban on sea fishing, however, remains enforced round-the-year in the Gahirmatha coast, which is widely regarded as the largest habitation corridor of these highly endangered marine species.

## West Bengal Governor launches 'Apna Bhaarat - Jagta Bengal' initiative

PTI ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose on Friday launched a mass outreach initiative for the welfare of the weaker society. As part of the initiative, 'Apna Bhaarat - Jagta Bengal', special stress will be given to the empowerment of women, safety and security of children, and how to deal with human trafficking and drug abuse, a Raj Bhavan statement said. The initiative will also encompass cultural and educational aspects in which the educated youth can benefit from interactions with experts about their future, it said. "The programme, in keeping with Hon'ble Governor's continued policy of mass outreach, will be earmarked by several initiatives and multipronged strategies that are aimed at addressing different important issues that people face and also to guide the young," the statement read. 'Apna Bhaarat - Jagta Bengal'



was launched on the occasion of Bose completing two years in office. One of the important components of the initiative is the 'Abhaya Plus' self-defence courses for girls. Notably, 'Abhaya' is the name given by a section of the media to the on-duty medic who was raped and murdered at R G Kar Hospital on August 9 triggering a mass outpouring of anguish and protests across the state. Identifying a rape victim is illegal. The multi-pronged initiative will also have a 'File To Field' segment - where the Raj Bhavan will reach out to 250 places across the state covering all the districts. In the 'Duare Rajyapal' or

'Governor at Your Doorstep' programme, Bose will visit tribal areas and visit anybody who calls him, especially those in distress. Among the other planned events, the governor will visit various colleges and schools and interact with students. Scholarships will also be provided to meritorious and needy students. The 'Jan Ki Baat' programme will be oriented at listening to the views and interacting with anyone who wishes to contact the governor directly. Under another scheme, those who have contributed to the enrichment of life in diverse fields are to be awarded by the Raj Bhavan, the statement added.

## CPI(M) leader PP Divya in custody over ADM suicide case



PTI ■ KANNUR (KERALA)

A Kerala court on Friday granted CPI(M) leader PP Divya's custody to the police for six hours for being questioned in the Additional District Magistrate Naveen Babu suicide case. The Judicial First Class Magistrate (JFCM) court allowed the police to question Divya, accused of abetting the suicide of Babu, till 5 PM. The police had sought her custody for two days. Subsequently, she was questioned at the Kannur Town police station by the investigation team. Meanwhile, the Thalassery Principal District Sessions Court adjourned Divya's bail application to Tuesday. The day also saw the Congress carrying out a protest march to the collectorate seeking action against District Collector Arun K Vijayan. The protest was led by Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) chief K Sudhakaran, who said the Collector should have had the courage to stop Divya from making her allegations.

The KPCC chief also alleged that the Collector was trying to help Divya by saying that Babu had later admitted to making a mistake. He said that the Collector should be ready to rectify his stand. Sudhakaran also alleged that Divya was being involved in corrupt activities. After his speech concluded, the police used water cannons several times to disperse the protestors, but were unsuccessful. Protestors also clashed with the police present at the collectorate. The Congress protest came a couple of days after it alleged that the Collector was forced to say that his former colleague the late ADM Naveen Babu had admitted to committing a mistake following the graft allegations against him. According to the Collector's statement to the police, after the farewell function, in which Divya had levelled corruption allegations against the ADM, Babu met Vijayan in his chamber and said that he had committed a mistake. The Collector on Friday told

reporters here that he was sticking to what he said in the statement given to the police. Babu's family, on the other hand, said he would not have made any admission of mistake before the Collector. Babu's wife said that he was not that close to the Collector for him to make any such submission. She also said that she did not like the Collector's body language in the video of the send-off event and claimed that had he consoled Babu after the allegations by Divya, what had happened could have been prevented. Attending Babu's send-off function allegedly uninvited on October 14, Divya had criticised him for delaying approval for a petrol pump in Chengalai for several months and remarked he had okayed it only two days after being transferred, hinting she knew the reasons behind the sudden approval. The following day, Babu was found dead at his quarters in Kannur. Divya had moved the Thalassery Sessions Court on October 19, seeking anticipatory bail after the police registered a case against her for abetting the suicide of the ADM under Section 108 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNS). The sessions court on October 29 rejected her anticipatory bail plea, following which she was arrested and remanded to judicial custody for 14 days.

## Yogi Adityanath promises swift and fair redressal of public grievances

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ GORAKHPUR

In a public outreach initiative, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held a Janta Darshan in Gorakhpur on Friday, addressing the grievances of over 200 citizens who gathered outside the Mahant Digvijaynath Smriti Bhawan. In a move that underlines his commitment to public welfare, CM Yogi personally interacted with attendees, assuring them of timely and effective solutions to their concerns. Reaching out to each individual seated in the designated area, CM Yogi listened to their issues and accepted written applications, directing officials to address every case with urgency and compassion. "Don't worry; the government will take effective action on every issue," he assured the crowd. The Chief Minister focused particularly on complaints related to crime and land encroachment. He directed police officials to take strict measures against those involved in criminal activities and land grabbing, particularly targeting "dabang" elements and mafias who encroach on lands. "Those who exploit the poor should not be spared," he declared, emphasizing his administration's firm stance against individuals who harm vulnerable sections of society. Several attendees at the Janta Darshan requested financial aid for medical treatments, reflecting the ongoing need for healthcare support. CM



Yogi assured them that the government would provide financial assistance to ensure that no one is denied critical care due to lack of funds. He instructed officers to expedite the preparation of cost estimates for those requiring advanced medical treatments and pledged immediate disbursement of funds upon submission. Additionally, he urged officials to facilitate smooth access to medical facilities for Ayushman cardholders and to issue cards promptly to eligible individuals still awaiting them. The day began with CM Yogi following his traditional routine at Gorakhnath temple. Known for his strong spiritual connection to the temple, he offered prayers to Guru Gorakhnath and paid respects at the samadhi sthal of his guru, Brahmalin Mahant Avedyanath. In a touching moment, the Chief Minister spent time at the temple's Gaushal, where he greeted and fed the cows, calling them by affectionate names such as Shyama, Gauri, Ganga, and Bhola. The cows responded warmly, gathering around as he gently stroked their foreheads and fed them jaggery with his own hands.

## Jharkhand Election to save 'Sanatan': CM Himanta Biswa Sarma



PTI ■ DEOGHAR (JHARKHAND)

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said that the upcoming assembly election in Jharkhand was for saving 'Sanatan' in the state. He claimed that the Hindu population in Jharkhand's Santhal Pargana region has declined from 90 per cent in 1951 to 67 per cent in 2011. Sarma, also the BJP's Jharkhand election co-charge, was addressing an election rally in Deoghar district in favour of BJP nominee Randhir Singh, who filed his nomination from Sarath assembly constituency. "The election this time is not for JMM or Congress but for saving the Sanatan in Jharkhand," he said. He claimed that Santhal Pargana region, which comprises six districts of Sahibganj, Godda, Pakur, Dumka, Deoghar and Jamtara, had a total population of 26 lakh in 1951. "Of the total population,

around 90 per cent were Hindu and 9.43 per cent were Muslim. The tribal population at that time was 10.34 lakh, which was 44 per cent of the total Hindu population. In the 2011 Census, the Hindu population declined to 67 per cent and the tribal population to 28 per cent in the Santhal Pargana region," Sarma claimed. He said that the Hindu population might go down to 60 per cent in the latest census, which is yet to be conducted. Sarma claimed that the native Muslim population in the region has not increased that much. "We don't have any issue with them. But we have a problem with the Bangladeshi infiltrators, who are coming to Jharkhand through West Bengal's Murshidabad and getting the government's patronage here," he said. He claimed that the infiltrators are marrying tribal girls, occupying lands

and becoming 'mukhiya' (village head). "They are disturbing the social fabric of the region. But the Hemant Soren government will not take any action against them," he alleged. Sarma said after the formation of the BJP government in Jharkhand, the National Register of Citizens (NRC) would be implemented and infiltrators would be chased out of the state. Sarma claimed that if the BJP is voted to power, it would fill up 2.87 lakh government vacancies and provide 1.5 lakh jobs in the very first year. He said that the BJP, if voted to power, would build 21 lakh houses under PM Awaz Yojana and provide sand for free to construct houses. Elections to the 81-member assembly in the state will take place in two phases on November 13 and 20, and votes polled will be counted on November 23.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Message from Kutch

PM Modi's Diwali with the troops shows the profound respect and support between a nation and its defenders

In a powerful address from Kutch, Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated his Government's unwavering commitment to the country's sovereignty, vowing that India will not cede "even an inch" of its land. This steadfast message, delivered while celebrating Diwali with India's security forces, emphasised the government's pledge to fortify the nation's defences to meet the challenges of the 21st century. "When the world looks at you, it sees India's strength," Modi said to the soldiers. "When our adversaries look at you, they see the end of their malicious plans." Addressing personnel of the Border Security Force (BSF), Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force at Lakki Nala in Gujarat's Kutch region, the Prime Minister highlighted his administration's dedication to transforming the country's military into one of the most advanced in the world. Modernisation efforts, he said, are anchored on the principle of self-reliance, a cornerstone of his government's vision for India's defense sector. PM Modi also spoke on the lesser-discussed role of



border tourism, an initiative he believes holds strategic importance in national security. With Kutch being a crucial geographical area, he mentioned that promoting tourism in border areas helps increase awareness, instills a sense of patriotism, and brings citizens closer to the nation's defense reality. This Diwali marks yet another year of Modi's cherished tradition of celebrating the festival with India's armed forces. Since 2014, the Prime Minister has made it a point to spend Diwali with soldiers across various fronts, symbolising both gratitude and solidarity with the defenders of the nation. Each year, his Diwali visits have become moments of deep emotional connection with the troops, underscoring the mutual respect and morale shared between the leader and his soldiers. As the Prime Minister continues to foster self-reliance in defence, his words serve not only as a reassurance to the nation but as a warning to adversaries. Indeed, the soldiers stationed in India's remote borders stand as sentinels of peace, and their Diwali with the Prime Minister serves as a reminder of the unity and resilience that drive India forward. In times of celebration, when families gather to share in the joy of festivals, there exists a silent, steadfast group of heroes who forgo these moments with loved ones to protect the heart and soul of our nation. Our soldiers, standing guard at the borders, embody resilience, courage, and patriotism that transcends any personal sacrifice. They endure the harshest of conditions, from the scorching sun to the bitter cold, and face unforeseen challenges to ensure that our celebrations remain undisturbed, safe, and joyous. This sacrifice takes on a deeper meaning during festival seasons, such as Diwali. While we light our homes with lamps, these brave souls light the way of duty, standing as sentinels against any threats to our country. They spend their festivals under the open sky, far from the warmth of family and loved ones, driven solely by their sense of duty and deep love for the country.

### PICTALK



Illuminated Bapu Bazar on the eve of the Diwali festival, in Jaipur

## A pathway to deeper connections

Effective communication demands more than mere words; it requires rhythm, empathy and the ability to adapt to the nuances of each moment



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

Communication is central to existence. All living creatures communicate with each other, and there are people who believe that even plants and foliage, amongst other leafy life existences, communicate with each other. In certain cases, language is coded, and in other cases, the impact is seen not because of a translation of a coded language but because of the results it produces.

The long and short of the matter is that communication is a way of transmission of feelings, ideas, possible actions, and more. Volumes of literature have been surfaced in different languages about communication, which can take place through eyes and without making a sound.

However, a language code is necessary if somebody other than two live existences, in communication, are involved. Therein comes the language, the sound, and the script. The language of sounds has developed as phonetics, and the language of the written word with or without oral transmission is known as linguistics. The sophistication of these specializations has used the machine and technology to lend both credence and depth to the field of specialization.

The present understanding of digitalization needs to be more enriched while incorporating these ideas. However, the moot point remains that communication is central to existence. The more adept persons have incorporated music and rhythm into such communication, not to overlook the power of touch, which ranges from fingers to other parts of the body.

Accordingly, the study of communication needs to be enriched by the realization of the wide spectrum of its ambit. Many aspects of process are still to be explored in a deep scholastic mode. This alone will enable credible theories to emerge. This process will be a major contribution to the concerns of relationships.



Relationships and emotions are difficult to comprehend and manage because of various levels at which the exchange occurs. The mind is supposed to be affected by various kinds of waves, which have been identified as alpha waves, beta waves, and so on and so forth. This is not only the touch but also the rhythm and words which impact a response.

If someone is annoyed, the level and pitch of the voice is often raised. A common response to somebody's annoyance is a follow-up question, some what to the effect of 'Why are you annoyed?'

The truth is, one knows why the other person is annoyed. One is only waiting for a verbalization of the cause of annoyance. This act by itself may or may not help. In fact, unless sincerely intended, asking this question is questionable and indeed could have the effect of aggravating the situation.

For good communication, rhythmic synchronization of each other's moods is necessary. Usually, the opportunity for rhythmic understanding is disturbed by the different moods of the two or more persons involved in communication. In such circum-



THE MIND IS SUPPOSED TO BE AFFECTED BY VARIOUS KINDS OF WAVES, WHICH HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS ALPHA WAVES, BETA WAVES, AND SO ON AND SO FORTH. THIS IS NOT ONLY THE TOUCH BUT ALSO THE RHYTHM AND WORDS WHICH IMPACT A RESPONSE

stances, a change of topic, a change of tone, or even some humour may help in 'aiding' ease all-round.

The challenge is that in the heat of the moment, one loses track of the options for keeping the communication on track or simply persisting with one's perspective. The message is simple: at all stages, one needs to keep one's calm, look at the options, and select wisely. This would help one to not only adjust better in communication but also help carry the other person along.

To do this, it is essential to realize that a major purpose of any communication is to be able to share one's own chosen facts in an appropriate tone and content, for the other person to hear. Similarly, to intertwine the communication, it is important to hear what the person is stating. A person who can read the other persons unstated wish to 'posture' can communicate better.

It is this complexity coupled with intangible simplicity that makes communication so much of an art and a skill beyond words. Deft negotiators know how to be flexible and accommodating to the other person's point of view. There is also scope for

emphasizing an assertion, but that is few and far between and has to be timed properly with chosen words, appropriate posture, accompanying softness, and suitable intonation in the voice or more.

At the end of the day, unless there are special circumstances, in most of communication to win, both must win. It is a rarity to have 'peace' if one wins and the other person loses. People generally do not like to accept defeat, which means that the apparent loser will bounce back in the communication and raise it again sooner or later. All in all, it is important to realize that communication, like all arts, must be gradually perfected. It also requires technological sensitivity. It requires choice of appropriate methods/medium such as the telephone, video, and more to relate with each other. In many cases, the choice of medium itself can convey a message. The art of communication is challenging and fascinating. There are many who are better than others in the practice of this art.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute; views expressed are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### AMUSING AND EMBARRASSING!

Madam—A recent news report mentions that the French Ambassador's phone was stolen by "experts" in the trade, only to be promptly recovered, likely due to the high-profile nature of the owner. An average citizen, however, would not have been as fortunate in similar circumstances.

The incident was undoubtedly amusing for readers, likely alarming for the Ambassador, and ultimately embarrassing for India as a nation. This is one experience the Ambassador may never forget. As the saying goes, "When in Italy, keep three purses, two pairs of shoes, and one heart open to adventure." Perhaps this applies equally well to India, particularly to areas like Chandni Chowk. Finally, a note of reassurance: some CCTV cameras do indeed function at strategic locations—at least, sometimes.

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

#### ISRAEL BANS UNRWA

Madam—Israel's recent policy to ban UNRWA, the UN agency assisting Palestinian refugees, is a deeply concerning move that only intensifies an already devastating humanitarian crisis. This decision raises critical questions: by cutting off an agency that has supported Palestinian refugees for decades, what alternative does Israel propose to address the immense health and nutrition needs of millions?

Additionally, can Israel's detachment from global efforts be deemed legitimate if it comes at the expense of the welfare of vulnerable populations? This policy appears to prioritize political gains over humanitarian duty and risks further destabilizing the region. If sustainable peace is the ultimate goal, policies must aim to reduce suffering, not exacerbate it, ensuring all vulnerable populations are given the support they urgently need. The war must end before it spills over across the region.

Anshu Bharti | Begusarai

#### Traumatic traffic



The editorial 'Traffic Mayhem' addresses the pressing traffic issues plaguing Delhi—an issue common to most major metro cities. Despite only 7% of Indians owning cars, a large portion of this car-owning population is concentrated in metropolitan areas. In high-traffic zones, parking becomes another major hurdle that demands effective solutions. The experience of being stuck in traffic during peak hours, often resulting in delays and frustration, detracts from

the convenience and enjoyment of car travel. Unfortunately, governments typically respond only once traffic congestion reaches critical levels. Even then, plans are often focused on immediate needs rather than long-term solutions. By the time projects like flyovers are completed, the surge in vehicle numbers has already reduced their effectiveness.

Given the significant resources spent on infrastructure, planning should be forward-looking, ideally considering projections for the next fifty to a hundred years. For main traffic arteries, threatened flyovers with side wings to manage separate lanes for heavy vehicles, cars, and smaller vehicles could greatly improve traffic flow. While long-term planning may demand greater initial investment, it offers lasting relief from congestion while creating employment opportunities during project development.

A G Rajmohan | Ananthpur

#### LONG WAIT FOR JUSTICE

Madam—It has been 40 years since the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, yet justice remains elusive. Thousands of Sikhs were brutally killed in cities across the country, yet not a single individual has been sentenced to death for orchestrating, planning, or participating in these atrocities. Despite numerous inquiries, commissions, extensive charge sheets, and the establishment of fast-track courts, justice has been endlessly delayed, leaving the accused in limbo as undertrials. One wonders what kind of "fast" justice these courts offer, given that even after four decades, they have yet to reach a conclusion. India, as a nation, failed to learn from the horrors of 1984, leading to repeats of such violence in places like Gujarat and Manipur. The impunity with which the orchestrators of these riots operate is evident, as convictions remain rare. The system has allowed mass murderers to escape accountability, and justice has turned a blind eye. Had the perpetrators been adequately punished, it might have

served as a deterrent to others. For the victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots who still await justice, hope fades with each passing day.

The saying "justice delayed is justice denied" rings painfully true when thousands of deaths remain unacknowledged in the eyes of the law. Justice may have lifted her blindfold, but she remains blind to the tears of the widows and mothers who witnessed their loved ones burned alive four decades ago. As a country that has greatly benefited from the Sikh community's contributions, we should feel a deep sense of shame for the suffering they endured. While an apology was offered by the Prime Minister, an apology is no substitute for justice.

The time has come to correct this injustice and enact laws that deliver timely justice—before both the victims and the accused are lost to time.

Gurnoor Grewal | Chandigarh

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## A good lifestyle is essential for overall wellbeing

Lifestyle changes can significantly reduce risk of brain stroke. One can recognise it by its early symptoms and take preventive measures

Understanding the Neurological Damage of a Stroke: What Happens in Your Brain Dr Praveen Gupta, Principal Director & Chief of Neurology, Fortis Hospital Being the central organ of the human nervous system, the brain controls both motor and sensory functions throughout the body.

During a stroke, the blood supply to a part of the brain is obstructed depriving the brain of much-needed oxygen and nutrients. This lack of oxygen damages the brain cells resulting in inflammation and swelling in the brain. As the blood supply remains obstructed, more cells die, weakening the blood-brain barrier. This breakdown of the barrier causes water to enter the brain, worsening the swelling. The swelling usually lasts for seven days, following which the brain's natural mechanisms begin to take effect, causing the swelling to subside as the body starts to repair the damaged tissue. How Strokes Can Be Prevented,



A healthy lifestyle is key to the prevention of stroke. To begin with, consume a diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables, have walnuts and almonds, engage in regular physical activity, aim for 30 minutes of walking every day, take care of central abdominal obesity, control your salt intake (less than 6 grams per day) along with eating food low in saturated fats like oil, butter, ghee. In addition, develop a proper sleep schedule to get at least six to eight hours of peaceful sleep every night, and avoid smoking and excess alcohol intake. Also,

you need to be watchful of excess pollution and keep your blood sugar, cholesterol and blood pressure under control. In addition to a healthy lifestyle, you need to keep other parameters in check. If you suffer from heart disease, it's essential to take appropriate medical care to prevent the clots from moving to the brain. This can control the possibility of strokes in at least 50 per cent of people. Warning signs everyone should know. The warning signs of stroke can be classified as BEFAST, where B stands for

balance. Being unable to walk properly or losing your balance can be one of the first signs of stroke. E is for eyes - if you suffer from a stroke; you may have difficulty seeing properly or have double vision. F is for face, your face droops to one side. A is for arms - you may have trouble lifting one of your arms and S is for speech - there is slurring of speech or inability to speak. T is for time. Time is of the essence when you suffer from a stroke. A person suffering from a stroke loses 1.9 million brain cells for every minute. A person's risk of being disabled or dying increases with the length of time they have a stroke. If you can recognize the symptoms of a stroke within the first four and a half hours, you can receive clot-busting drugs, which can break the clot, restore the blood supply to the brain, and prevent the occurrence of a cascade of events.



PRAVEEN GUPTA

(The writer is a Principal Director & Chief of Neurology, Fortis Hospital; views expressed are personal)



## FIRST COLUMN

## BUILDING A MENTAL RETREAT

We often chase external escapes, yet the true sanctuary lies within



RAVI VALLURI

We should develop a holiday home in the mind to relax. Instead, we build concrete jungles of thoughts where we fear to tread. Summer was simmering, temperatures were rising in Delhi, and the beer-guzzling husband and wife duo, and their college-going children fed on junk food, were looking forward to their first overseas trip "together". "Eureka," he screamed, "Leave sanctioned." "Trip to Chiang Mai will now be a reality," screamed the children and wife. "Bonding at last," the wife mused effusively. The manic and frenetic-paced lifestyle had invaded a bonding that ought to have been a natural part of their living.

This is a familiar tale of several upper-middle-class families and the ones who mimic them as they crave to keep up with the Joneses. The prana levels of such individuals are low. In several cases, opulence without proper responsibility has corrupted their minds and they carry the burden of the twin maladies of inflated egos and judgmental attitudes. But this was not the case with the family. Would they have relished the getaway to Chiang Mai?

The human mind is both a friendly retainer and a dangerous liege. A beleaguered mind causes immense suffering to the individual, those around him and also society at large. An alert mind learns positive lessons from life to take recourse to remedial measures and discovers ingenious ways to address and arrest negativity. Just as an architect designs buildings, we humans can construct an oasis of peace in our minds where we can luxuriate on a genuine holiday. This is mandatory for individuals who are at the worn-off edge or the precipice of disequilibrium. The land-



scape of the mind should be attractive and harmonious, which one would like to frequent. Aeon's ago, there was an old farmer. One day his horse ran away. Upon hearing the news, his neighbours came to commiserate. "Maybe," the farmer replied laconically. The next morning the horse returned, bringing along with it three other wild horses.

Taken aback at the turn of events, the neighbours congratulated the farmer. "Maybe," was the reply. His son tried to ride one of the untamed horses and was thrown off the saddle and broke his leg. The neighbours expressed their grief. "Maybe," answered the farmer. Shortly, some military officials came to the village to draft young men into the army. The wounded son was not recruited. Soon congratulatory messages poured in from the neighbours as the son escaped the hazardous employment. "Maybe," said the farmer.

The stoic farmer remained unfazed in all situations. The supercilious family from Delhi was so full of themselves hurtling towards an imminent disaster that it would undeniably benefit by learning a few secrets from the old farmer. Instead of planning an annual holiday, the family ought to create a sacred space within their hearts and minds where positivism mushrooms and develop a delicate balance of detachment like the old farmer. They could visualise and connect to a soothing terrain in their minds, which would restore equilibrium to their disoriented lifestyles. This topography could upend the pyramid and radically alter a desultory lifestyle to a more harmonious one. Imagine the mind conceptualises a retreat within its containments, where supposedly a thousand monks practice meditation, observe their breath and remain in silence say for three months. Pranayama and the practice of yoga – be it for the propertied or poor, healthy, or unhealthy – help in mental reconfiguration, rejuvenation, and revitalisation, which soothes frayed nerves and makes individuals happy. This should rekindle happiness, energy and joy in their minds.

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

## Turn of the tide in Myanmar?

As the opposition secures control over key territories, including vital trade corridors, the junta's authority appears increasingly tenuous



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR



Myanmar's ruling junta is facing defeat and ouster, which will happen sooner than most people think. The latest, and one of the most serious, reverses suffered by the Sit-Tat (Myanmar's Army's name), has been the fall, on October 8, 2024, of the township of Pinlebu to the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), an important part of the coalition of forces fighting the junta, and its allies. Located on the border of the Sagaing Region and Kachin State, its capture opens up to the opposition forces the routes leading to the Kawlin township and the surrounding areas.

Apart from its geo-strategic importance, the township's capture is significant for what it revealed of the Sit-Tat's state. It suffered a resounding defeat. A report by Saw Lin, published in the news website, The Irrawaddy, on October 14, 2024, cites the opposition National Unity Government as claiming that the junta's troops, numbering 800, were defeated despite 670 airstrikes and the dropping of over 5,000 bombs, that around 70 junta soldiers were killed, 275 were missing, 225 were wounded, 48 surrendered and 102 captured during the fighting. Around 400 firearms and other military equipment were seized.

The report further cites Thoe Gyi, the leader of Kawlin District People's Defense Team, as saying that Pinlebu, surrounded by forests and mountains, was easy to defend, and difficult to attack. There had been four attacks since the first one in 2022, each of which had almost succeeded but the regime held on with air support and airlifted troops. The fifth one, which began on August 15, 2024, was successful. The enemy, Thoe Gyi said, was weak. Those who were forcibly recruited or drafted under the conscription law dared not fight and surrendered when the fighting broke out. Others surrendered after they ran out of food and could no longer fight. The Sit-Tat suffers from other weaknesses as well. There is discord within. Several three-stars generals have been removed. Many younger officers are unhappy as they recognise that almost the entire country is against them.



THE ODDS ARE NOW RAPIDLY INCREASING AGAINST THE JUNTA. THE LATTER DOUBTLESS HAS TANKS AND OTHER ARMoured VEHICLES, ARTILLERY AND AIR FORCE. TANKS AND ARMoured VEHICLES ARE VERY DIFFICULT TO DEPLOY IN THE AREAS DOMINATED BY THE ETHNIC FORCES

Prior to Pinlebu, anti-junta forces had captured four towns in northern Mandalay. According to a report by Andrew Nagemson published in Al Jazeera dated September 23, 2024, their capture had placed them within striking distance of the city of Mandalay, Myanmar's second largest urban centre, with a population of nearly two million.

In fact, the Sit-Tat has suffered a series of reverses since the opposition Three Brotherhood Alliance (henceforth the Alliance) launched its offensive, codenamed Operation 1027, on October 27, 2023. Comprising the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), active in the Kokang Special Region of northern Shan State, the Taang National Liberation Army (TNLA), also active in the Shan State and the Arakan Army (AA), based in the Rakhine State in the country's western part, it has been acting in close cooperation with the opposition National Unity Government's military arm, the People's Defence Force (PDF) and other ethnic armies like the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and Karen National Army.

The AA had brought almost the entire Rakhine State under its control by April, 2024. In a major development, the MNDAA claimed on July 31, 2024, that it had captured Sit-Tat's military base in Lashio, a city in Shan State close to the border with China, and its airport. This was a major loss for the junta. As Vivek Shankar has pointed out in a piece in The New York Times datelined August 5, 2024, the "city of Lashio and its airport lie on a crucial trade corridor to Yunnan Province in China, which is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on a high-speed rail link and other infrastructure projects on both sides of

the border."

The opposition forces now control large swathes of territory along Myanmar's borders and mountainous region; the military retains control over the major cities and lowlands in the central Irrawaddy Valley. It is losing even the cities and towns. As Vivek Shankar has stated in the article cited above, the forces resisting the junta now held "roughly 75 cities and towns across Myanmar and two airports, one in Thandwe in Rakhine State in the west, and the other in Lashio." The odds are now rapidly increasing against the junta. The latter doubtless has tanks and other armoured vehicles, artillery and air force. Tanks and armoured vehicles are very difficult to deploy in the areas dominated by the ethnic forces. With densely forested mountainous terrains, deep gorges and steep climbs, these are ideal for staging ambushes. Moreover, airstrikes and artillery do not win wars, even when backed by heavily armed and trained infantry. Otherwise, the United States would have romped to a victory in Vietnam.

Can the junta see the writing on the wall? During its 8 p.m. news broadcast on September 26, 2024, the junta seemed to offer, for the first time, a major concession to the opposition armed resistance groups. It said in a statement, "The state lost a large number of human resources, infrastructures, lives and property of the people due to the fact some individuals and organizations chose to resort to armed terrorism and armed struggle line without solving political problems through political ways." Given the statement's accusatory undertones and unbelievable inherent irony, it is hardly surprising that several commanders of the rebel forces, ethnic armies, and the opposition NUG government,

promptly rejected the offer.

A report (datelined September 27, 2024) by Sui-Lee Wee in The New York Times, quoted Ye Myo Hein, a visiting senior expert for the Myanmar programme of the United States Institute for peace, as saying, "The reason they made this announcement is to appease China." It could well be so.

As Wee points out in her report, while expressing support for the junta, Beijing has also been engaged in talks with northern Myanmar's ethnic armed groups. According to the report, China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, had travelled to Myanmar in August, 2024, to urge the country's army chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, to pursue political reconciliation and hold elections. Earlier, in a meeting with Myanmar's president, Thein Sein, in China in June, Wang Yi had also called on the military to hold talks with Aung San Suu Kyi, who is currently serving a 27-year prison term on totally false charges.

There is no indication that the junta has any intention of holding talks with Suu Kyi. In fact, in an interview to Myein Myein carried in The Irrawaddy on October 24, 2024, her son, Kim Arlis, said she had been kept completely incommunicado in prison in Naypyitaw with even her family and lawyers barred from meeting her. The conditions in the prison being terrible and with Suu Kyi having serious health issues, he expressed the fear that she might die in prison, which may well happen. In that case, the burden of guilt not only be on the junta but the Western democracies which seem no longer bothered about developments in Myanmar.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

## Reforming India's education system for job market alignment

With comprehensive planning, a revitalised education system could become the catalyst for national prosperity and social stability

In today's industrialised economy, formal education has become the backbone of personal and national development. Originally introduced around 1830 by Lord Macaulay, formal education gained momentum post-independence, facilitating India's shift from an agrarian to an industrialized economy. However, as the job market has evolved, a concerning mismatch has emerged between the skills provided by the education system and the needs of the workforce. This disparity has led to high unemployment rates, particularly among educated youth, while certain sectors experience a shortage of skilled labor. Thus, India's education policy requires significant reform to better align with employment needs and sup-



R P GUPTA

port the country's development goals. Human capital is undoubtedly the most valuable resource for a nation's growth and development. However, to leverage this asset, it must be channeled appropriately into the economy. Failure to do so could lead to an increase in poverty rates and potential social unrest. For meaningful employment and economic improvement, the workforce

must be equipped with skills relevant to market demands. By bridging the gap between education and employment, India can reduce unemployment, enhance income levels, and improve overall economic efficiency.

According to a survey by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), in the third quarter of fiscal year 2022-23, only 12% of job-holders were graduates. The majority, 40%, had completed only high school (10th grade), 28% had not completed high school, and the remaining 20% had education levels below the 5th grade. Surprisingly, the unemployment rate among graduates was 17.2%, compared to 10.2% for high school graduates and 1.6% for those with lower education levels. This

data reveals that India's education policy is misaligned with its employment demands, underscoring the urgent need for change.

The first step in this reform should involve conducting a comprehensive survey to assess current and future labor demands across various sectors. Such a survey would help young people make informed decisions about their education and career paths. Using this data, policymakers could create a dynamic, responsive education system that evolves with changing market needs. Firstly, completing basic education, up to matriculation, should be universally encouraged. Financial assistance programs could be provided for those in need. Physical activities, like yoga



and sports, should be made compulsory to promote physical health. Ancient teachings on humanity, ethics, and nationalism could also be incorporated to build a responsible, compassionate society. After completing matriculation, students should have access to short, specialized courses (2-4 years) in fields such as engineering, nursing, and hospitality management.

This model could be expanded to cover a broader range of fields based on market demand. These courses should blend formal education with vocational training, with course duration varying according to job requirements. For students pursuing higher education, curricula should be adapted to reflect the skills demanded by the job market, and mandatory internships should be introduced to provide hands-on experience. Developing soft skills, like communication and problem-solving, is also essential. With India's growing population, opening new educational institutions, supported by both public and private sectors, is necessary to meet increasing demand. Research and innovation are

crucial for a nation's future. India must support a select group of students pursuing research to meet the country's long-term needs. However, given the limited market for research roles domestically, many scholars are compelled to seek opportunities abroad. Governments, both central and state, should invest in research institutions, providing more funding to retain skilled researchers and encouraging innovation within India. Self-employment accounts for nearly 50% of India's workforce, with a large portion comprising farmers and small business owners. However, these individuals often earn less than those in salaried positions and may have entered self-employment due to a lack of alternative oppor-

tunities. Beyond the industrial sector, there is a significant demand for skilled and semi-skilled workers, including drivers, electricians, masons, cooks, and security guards, among others. Many self-employed individuals, like craftsmen and repair technicians, have learned their trades informally, often without pay. Vocational training combined with formal education could significantly enhance their earning potential. For example, an educated driver with certification in vehicle maintenance and traffic regulations would have better job prospects and could command higher wages.

(The writer is an author and writes on education; views are personal)

# Five schoolchildren among seven killed in blast in southwest Pakistan

**PTI ■ ISLAMABAD/KARACHI**  
Seven people, including five schoolchildren and a policeman, were killed while 17 others were injured on Friday in a remote-controlled blast targeting a police van in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province. The blast occurred at 8.35 am near a girls' high school at the Civil Hospital Chowk of the Mastung district of the province. Terrorists used a remote control device to detonate explosive material hidden in a parked motorbike, officials said. "It was an IED (improvised explosive device) used in the blast, and the target apparently was a police mobile parked near the school," Kalat Division Commissioner Naem Bazai said. The IED detonated when the police mobile came close to it, and a school van was caught in the mayhem. The police van and several auto-rickshaws were also damaged in the explosion. "The blast was so powerful that schoolchildren who were going to the school at that time were hit by the explosion," Bazai added.



Mastung District Police Officer (DPO) Mianad Umrani confirmed that five schoolchildren, one police official and a civilian were killed in the blast. The 17 injured, including

schoolchildren between the ages of eight and 13 as well as policemen, were shifted to various hospitals in the province. Those with the most serious injuries were taken to the

capital Quetta for treatment. According to DPO Umrani, 11 people were moved to the Quetta Trauma Centre for treatment. TV footage after the attack showed policemen and other

people surrounding a charred vehicle. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack yet, but ethnic Baloch terrorists and Taliban often attack the

security forces in the province, which has been facing a low-level insurgency for about two decades now. Meanwhile, Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti took to X to condemn the blast, calling it "inhumane". He said terrorists had now "targeted innocent children along with poor labourers" in an apparent reference to a recent attack by unidentified gunmen at a dam construction site in the province's Panjur district, which killed five workers and injured two others. "We will avenge the murder of innocent children and people," CM said, adding that civilians in urban areas also needed to be on the watch for the terrorists. "The monster of terrorism can only be fought together," he said. He added that terrorists had targeted children, deeming them to be a "soft target". In the aftermath of the blast, an emergency was declared across all Quetta hospitals, Geo News reported, quoting the provincial health department spokesperson, adding that all doctors, pharmacists, staff nurses and other medical staff were summoned.

# Not just for summer: 'Brat' is Collins Dictionary's word of the year

**AP ■ LONDON**  
Collins Dictionary has declared "brat" - the album title that became a summer-living ideal - its 2024 word of the year. The word, used by singer Charli XCX as the title of her sixth studio album, has been defined as "characterised by a confident, independent, and hedonistic attitude." Collins lexicographers said on Friday that in the phrase "brat summer," it became "one of the most talked about words of 2024." "More than a hugely successful album, 'brat' is a cultural phenomenon that has resonated with people globally, and 'brat summer' established itself as an aesthetic and a way of life," the dictionary said. Collins experts monitor their 20-billion-word database to create the annual list of new and notable words that reflect the ever-evolving English language. Other new and notable words for 2024 include "era," in the sense of "a period of one's life or career that is of a distinctive character." It's inspired by Taylor Swift's world-conquering Eras tour. Other notable neologisms among the dictionary's word-



of-the-year finalists include the growing movement against mass tourism, "anti-tourism"; "delulu," meaning utterly mistaken or unrealistic in one's ideas or expectations; and "rawdogging," taking a long-haul flight with no devices or distractions. "With many of this year's notable words being popularised by generations Z and Alpha, we can confidently say this is the most 'brat' Word of the Year list ever," said Collins managing director Alex Beecroft. Collins' 2023 word of the year was "AI," short for artificial intelligence.

# North Korea's top diplomat is in Moscow as Pyongyang sent troops to help the war on Ukraine

**AP ■ MOSCOW**  
Russia's top diplomat on Friday hosted his North Korean counterpart for talks amid reports that Pyongyang has sent thousands of troops to Russia to support its military in the war in Ukraine. Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui's visit to Moscow and her meeting with Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov came on the heels of the Pentagon's statement that North Korea has deployed about 10,000 troops to Russia to fight against Ukraine within "the next several weeks." Western leaders have described the North Korean troop deployment as a significant escalation that could also jolt relations in the Indo-Pacific region. Neither Moscow nor Pyongyang have specified the agenda for Choe's talks in Moscow, but in a closed-door

hearing at South Korea's parliament, the South's spy agency said Choe may be involved in high-level discussions on sending additional troops to Russia and negotiating what the North would get in return. South Korean and Western officials have voiced concern that Russia may offer technology that could advance the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programme. Meeting Choe in Moscow on Friday, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov hailed ties between Moscow and Pyongyang, saying that they "have reached an unprecedented high level over the past few years," and proposed discussing the implementation of the strategic partnership agreement the two nations signed earlier this year. "We will have discussions on a

series of issues regarding politics and foreign policy as well as matters that require a joint response between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation," Choe said, invoking the North's formal name. She reiterated Pyongyang's support "for the just fight of Russia's military and people to defend their country's sovereign rights and security interests" in Ukraine. Moscow and Pyongyang have responded vaguely to South Korean and Western claims of the North Korean troop deployment to Russia, emphasising that their military cooperation conforms with international law, without directly admitting the presence of the North's forces in Russia. The United States and its allies also have accused North Korea of providing millions of artillery shells and other



equipment to Russia to fuel its military action in Ukraine. Russia, along with China, has blocked US-led efforts at the

Security Council to tighten sanctions on North Korea over its recent missile testing, which intensified after Russia's

invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Russia also vetoed a UN resolution to extend the mandate of monitors in

March, in a move that effectively abolished oversight by UN experts of Security Council sanctions against North Korea. South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol last month raised the possibility of supplying Ukraine with weapons while saying Seoul is preparing countermeasures that could be rolled out in stages depending on the degree of military cooperation between Pyongyang and Moscow. South Korea, a growing arms exporter, has provided humanitarian aid and other non-lethal support to Ukraine and joined US-led economic sanctions against Moscow. It has so far resisted calls by Kyiv and NATO to directly supply Ukraine with weapons, citing a longstanding policy of not providing arms to countries engaged in active conflict. In other developments: Russia launched three aviation

missiles and 48 drones of various types, including Shaheds, at Ukraine overnight, Ukrainian air force said. One missile and 31 drones were intercepted, 14 drones were jammed, three drones flew to the territory of Belarus, the air force said in a report on Friday morning said. Several civilian facilities, as well as apartment buildings and private houses in Poltava, Cherkasy, Kyiv and Odesa regions were damaged by drone debris. The Russian military on Friday said it intercepted and destroyed a total of 83 Ukrainian drones over four Russian regions near the border with Ukraine and the annexed Crimean Peninsula. In the Bryansk region, a drone hit a residential block, local authorities said. No casualties were reported. In the Stavropol region, a drone hit an oil depot, according to local officials.

# Spanish residents appeal for help, 3 days after historic floods left at least 158 dead



**AP ■ MADRID**  
Three days after historic flash floods swept through several towns in southern Valencia, in eastern Spain, the initial shock was giving way to anger, frustration and a wave of solidarity on Friday. Many streets are still blocked by piled-up vehicles and debris, in some cases trapping residents in their homes. Some places still don't have electricity, running water, or stable telephone connections. Residents turned to media to appeal for help. "This is a disaster. There are a lot of elderly people who don't have medicine. There are children who don't have food. We don't have milk, we don't have water. We have no access to anything," a resident of Alfajar, one of the most affected towns in south Valencia, told state television station TVE. "No one even came to warn us on the first day." So far 158 bodies have been recovered - 155 in Valencia, two in the Castilla La Mancha region and one more in Andalusia - after Spain's deadliest natural disaster in

living memory. Members of the security forces and soldiers are busy searching for an unknown number of missing people, many feared to still be trapped in wrecked vehicles or flooded garages. And as authorities repeat over and over, more storms are expected. The Spanish weather agency issued alerts for strong rains in Tarragona, Catalonia, as well as part of the Balearic Islands. Meanwhile, flood survivors and volunteers are engaged in the titanic task of clearing an omnipresent layer of dense mud. Residents in communities like Paiporta, where at least 62 people died, and Catarroja, have been walking kilometres to Valencia to get provisions, passing neighbours from unaffected areas who are bringing carry water, essential products or shovels to help remove the mud. Juan Ramón Aduara, the mayor of Alfajar, one of the hardest hit towns, said the aid isn't nearly enough for residents trapped in an "extreme situation." "There are people living with corpses at home. It's very sad.

We are organising ourselves, but we are running out of everything," he told reporters. "We go with vans to Valencia, we buy and we come back, but here we are totally forgotten." Rushing water turned narrow streets into death traps and spawned rivers that tore through homes and businesses, leaving many uninhabitable. Social networks have channelled the needs of those affected. Some posted images of missing people in the hope of getting information about their whereabouts, while others launched initiatives such as Support Mutu - or Mutual Support - which connects requests for help with people who are offering it; and others organised collections of basic goods throughout all the country or launched fundraisers. Spain's Mediterranean coast is used to autumn storms that can cause flooding, but this was the most powerful flash flooding in recent memory. Scientists link it to climate change, which is also behind increasingly high temperatures and droughts in Spain and the heating up of the Mediterranean Sea. Human-caused climate change has doubled the likelihood of a storm like this week's deluge in Valencia, according to a partial analysis issued Thursday by World Weather Attribution, a group made up of dozens of international scientists who study global warming's role in extreme weather. Spain has suffered through an almost two-year drought, making the flooding worse because the dry ground was so hard that it could not absorb the rain. In August 1996, a flood swept away a campsite along the Gallego river in Biescas, in the northeast, killing 87 people.



# Shooting kills two, wounds six during Halloween celebrations in Orlando

**AP ■ ORLANDO**  
Two people were killed and six others were wounded in a shooting early Friday at a public Halloween celebration in Florida, police and local media said. The Orlando Police Department said in a social media post that it was conducting an investigation into a shooting in the city's downtown area. Orlando Police Chief Eric Smith said the victims were shot while hundreds were celebrating Halloween in public around 1 am, WTVT reported. A 17-year-old male suspect was being interviewed by detectives, Smith said. Additional details were expected to be released at an upcoming briefing, police said.

# Greek police say fatal Athens apartment blast was likely caused by improvised bomb

**AP ■ ATHENS**  
Greek police said Friday that an explosion in an Athens apartment that killed a man and severely wounded a woman appeared to have been caused by an improvised bomb. Police searching the wrecked apartment seized two handguns and ammunition, authorities said in a statement, as well as mobile phones and other "digital evidence." The statement added that the blast is being investigated by the police's special violent crimes unit. Firefighters who responded to the explosion Thursday afternoon freed the wounded woman from the wreckage, and later found the man's body while using sniffer dogs to search the apartment for other survivors, the fire service said. The injured woman is Greek, police said, while the dead man has not

been identified. No further details on her identity were released. The explosion in the capital's central residential neighborhood of Ambelokipi demolished internal and external walls in a third-floor apartment, blowing away its balcony railings and damaging neighboring apartments. Greece has a decades-long history of far-left extremism involving small urban groups, while organized crime and racketeering groups have also carried out small-scale bombings and targeted killings. The major extremist groups that carried out a string of assassinations from the mid 1970s to the early 2000s have been eradicated and their members jailed. They were succeeded by smaller and less efficient groups which mostly staged bomb attacks on symbols of state authority and wealth but have been largely dormant in recent years.

# Bus carrying students skids off road in Sri Lanka, killing two and injuring 39 others

**AP ■ COLOMBO**  
A bus carrying university students on a field trip skidded off a road and tipped over in central Sri Lanka on Friday, killing two students and injuring 39 others, officials said. Police said the accident occurred when the driver lost control of the vehicle on a curve near the town of Badulla in the country's mountainous tea-growing region, about 330 kilometers (205 miles) north of Colombo, the capital. Derana television showed residents helping health workers remove the wounded students from the toppled bus. Police and doctors said 39 wounded passengers, including six in critical condition, were admitted to the main hospital in Badulla. Two others were declared dead. Deadly bus accidents are common in Sri Lanka and are often caused by reckless driving and poorly maintained roads.

# Kenya's new deputy president sworn in as his predecessor challenges his impeachment in court

**AP ■ NAIROBI**  
Kenya's new deputy president has been sworn into office, two weeks after his predecessor was overwhelmingly voted out in an impeachment motion in parliament over allegations of corruption and inciting ethnic division. Kindiki Kithure took office on Friday after a colourful event in the capital, Nairobi, attended by government officials and western envoys among other guests. His swearing-in was cleared by the court on Thursday after orders that had suspended it were lifted, despite a continuing court case challenging the impeachment of the previous deputy president, Rigathi Gachagua.

Gachagua is challenging the impeachment before the High Court in Nairobi, arguing that the charges are unsubstantiated and that the hearings were unfair. The former deputy president was impeached and removed from office by a vote of more than two-thirds of legislators on October 17 on charges of corruption, inciting ethnic divisions and support for anti-government protests. President William Ruto nominated Kindiki for the deputy role the next day. Gachagua's impeachment had highlighted divisions within the ruling United Democratic Alliance, or UDA, and friction between Ruto and Gachagua, both UDA members. Gachagua had been accused of



insubordination when he opposed the government's policy of forced evictions during heavy rains that caused flooding and deaths. Kindiki - the former interior minister - takes the deputy president's office at a time when arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances in Kenya have

raised concerns among western envoys and human rights groups. The country is also going through economic hardships with a rising cost of living and newly increased taxes. In June, the country witnessed a series of nationwide anti-government protests over a finance bill that proposed to increase taxes, culminating in the storming and burning of parliament on June 25, when several protesters were shot dead outside parliament gates. Ruto, who came to office claiming to represent Kenya's poorest citizens, has faced widespread criticism over his efforts to raise taxes to pay off foreign creditors. But the public opposition led him to shake up his Cabinet and back off from certain proposals.



# Donald Trump unstable, obsessed with revenge, consumed with grievance: Kamala Harris

**PTI ■ PHILADELPHIA**

Former President Donald Trump is becoming increasingly unstable, obsessed with revenge and is out for unchecked power, Vice President Kamala Harris said on Friday in an unprecedented attack on her Republican rival ahead of next week's election.

In a rally in Las Vegas, Harris, the Democratic leader of Indian heritage said Trump is all about "hate" and more division and that he would bring an "enemies list" to the White House while she would carry a "to-do list" of priorities.

Singer Jennifer Lopez joined the Democratic leader at the rally.

"We all know who Donald Trump is. He is not someone who is thinking about how to make your life better. He is someone who is increasingly unstable, obsessed with revenge, consumed with grievance, and he is out for unchecked power," Harris said at the rally.

With just four days left for the November 5 vote, the race between Trump and Harris remained very tight in the key battleground states.

"If he (Trump) is re-elected, Donald Trump will walk into the office with an enemies list. If I am elected, I will walk in with a 'to-do list' on behalf of



you," Harris said.

"And at the top of my list is bringing down the cost of your living. That will be my focus every single day as the President," she added.

Harris said she would put the country ahead of her party and be a president for all Americans.

"Unlike Donald Trump, I do not believe that people who disagree with me are the enemy. He wants to put them in jail. I want to give them a seat at the table. That's what real leadership look like," she said.

"I pledge to always put country above party, and self and to be a president for all Americans," she added.

Harris said, if elected to the White House, she would make housing more affordable by building more houses.

"We will cut taxes for small business, we will lower health care costs."

"I see the promise of America in everyone here," she said.

The Democratic leader also attacked Trump for his comment that he would protect women whether they "like it or not."

The comments showed that Trump "does not understand women's rights to make decisions about their own lives, including their own bodies," she said.

The remarks by Harris came as the presidential election race remained razor-tight. The latest CNN polls showed that Harris has a narrow advantage in Michigan and Wisconsin, while she and Trump remain tied in Pennsylvania.

In Michigan, Harris holds a lead over Trump by 48 per cent to 43 per cent among likely voters, according to the findings.

Harris also leads Trump in Wisconsin, where 51 per cent support her to 45 per cent for Trump, but the race is tied in Pennsylvania with both having 48 per cent support.

More than 62 million voters have cast early ballots, according to the University of Florida's Election Lab.



## Ben Mendelsohn, LaKeith Stanfield & Juno Temple board true-life heist movie 'Rooftop'

**PTI ■ LOS ANGELES**

Robber' or 'Roofman'. Tatum will essay the role of Manchester, who was a specialist in robbing McDonald's locations across the US.

His exploits kicked off in November 1998 and his modus operandi was to drill through the roof during the night or early morning, maintaining a gentle demeanour and rarely resorting to violence over the course of 40-60 estimated robberies, even while holding employees at gunpoint.

Additional cast members for "Rooftop" are Uzo Aduba, Melonie Diaz, Molly Price, Lily Collias, Emory Cohen and Tony Revolori.

Jamie Patricof, Lynette Howell Taylor, Alex Orlovsky, Duncan Montgomery, and Dylan Sellers will produce the movie with Rachel Halilej is a co-producer.

Actors Ben Mendelsohn, LaKeith Stanfield and Juno Temple joined the cast of American filmmaker Derek Cianfrance's new feature film "Rooftop".

The trio joins Hollywood stars Channing Tatum, Kirsten Dunst and Peter Dinklage in the project, according to entertainment news outlet Deadline.

The director, known for critically-acclaimed titles such as "Blue Valentine", "The Place Beyond the Pines" and the HBO miniseries "I Know This Much Is True" has also penned the movie along with Kirk Gunn.

"Rooftop" is based on the unbelievable true story of Jeffrey Manchester, a US Army Reserve officer turned convicted spree-robber who rose to infamy as the 'Rooftop

## Adani reduces power supply to Bangladesh by half over outstanding bills: Report

**PTI ■ DHAKA**

India's Adani Power Bharkhand Limited (APJL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Adani Power, has stopped half of its power supply to Bangladesh because of outstanding bills of USD 846 million, according to a local media report on Friday.

Data from Power Grid Bangladesh PLC showed the Adani plant reduced supply on Thursday night, The Daily Star newspaper said.

Bangladesh reported a shortfall of more than 1,600 megawatts (MW) on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday as the 1,496 MW plant is now producing 700 MW from a single unit, the newspaper reported.

Earlier, the Adani company wrote to the power secretary asking the Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) to clear its outstanding dues by October 30.

The letter, dated October 27, said that if the bills are not paid, the company shall be constrained to take remedial action under the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) by suspending the power supply on October 31.

The company said that the PDB has neither provided a letter of credit (LC) for an amount of USD 170.03 million from Bangladesh Krishi Bank nor cleared the outstanding amount of USD 846 million.

The newspaper quoted a PDB official as saying that they had



earlier cleared a portion of previous dues, but since July, Adani has been charging more than the previous months.

He said the PDB has been paying around USD 18 million weekly, while the charge is more than USD 22 million.

"This is why the due payments increased again," he

said, adding that they had submitted last week's payment to Krishi Bank as well, but due to a dollar shortage, the bank failed to open a letter of credit against the payment.

About the additional payment, he said, when the PDB raised a question on the coal pricing in February last year, they signed a supplementary deal that obliged Adani to quote coal prices less than the rates charged by the other coal-fired power plants.

After the tenure of the one-year supplementary deal, Adani has again started charging as per the PPA, the report said.

According to the PPA, coal prices are calculated based on the average price of two coal indices — the Indonesian coal index and the Australian Newcastle index — which increases the prices.

Adani said that during the period of suspension of supply, the company reserves its right to recover capacity payments under Section 13.2(1) of the PPA.

Adani has been pressing the interim government to pay the dues since they took charge after the ouster of then prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

An interim government led by Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus was installed in Bangladesh on August 8. Gautam Adani, chairman of Adani Group, also wrote to Chief Adviser Yunus.

## Algeria pardons, releases journalist Ihsane El Kadi

**AP ■ ALGIERS (ALGERIA)**

Algeria has pardoned a journalist who emerged as a key voice during the country's 2019 pro-democracy protests and was later imprisoned for taking foreign funding for his media outlets and threatening state security.

Ihsane El Kadi was released from prison on Thursday evening, along with eight others who were imprisoned after criticising the state.

Their release coincided with the 70th anniversary of the start of Algeria's revolution, a date that authorities have in the past used as an occasion to offer pardons.

Fetta Sattad, one of El Kadi's lawyers, told The Associated Press that he was released from



El Harrah prison after receiving a presidential pardon. He had been serving a sentence for receiving foreign financing for Radio M and Maghreb Emergent, two media projects that were key outlets during the Hirak protests that led to the resignation of octogenarian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika in 2019.

He was among 4,000 released on Thursday based on clemency decrees signed by President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, according to a statement from his office.

Those released included people imprisoned for low level crimes and for "undermining public order," a charge that Algerian authorities have used to target dissidents in the past.

## US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan calls Indian counterpart Ajit Doval

**PTI ■ WASHINGTON**

India and the US over the alleged targeting of Sikh separatists by India, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke over the phone with his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval during which they discussed regional security developments, bilateral issues including defence cooperation.

The two leaders also discussed the need for further efforts to ensure stability in the Indo-Pacific region and globally, the White House said on Wednesday in a readout of the call.

"They welcomed progress in the bilateral partnership, including through the upcoming Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) Intersessional and Indian Ocean Dialogue. They also discussed further opportunities for closer collaboration in key domains, including clean energy supply chains and defence cooperation," said the White House.

Early this week, the US had said that Canada's allegations against Union Home Minister Amit Shah are "concerning".

"The allegations made by the government of Canada are concerning, and we will continue to consult with the Canadian government about those allegations," State



Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters on Thursday.

Canada's Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister David Morrison had "confirmed" a leaked Washington Post report alleging that Shah was behind a campaign to target Khalistani separatists in Canada.

In response to a question Morrison said he had "confirmed" Shah's name to The Washington Post.

"The journalist called me and asked if it was that person. I confirmed it was that person," he said.

The United States also said that it welcomes any

## Lily James, Pierce Brosnan to lead 'Cliffhanger' reboot

**PTI ■ LOS ANGELES**

A reboot of the 1993 action-thriller "Cliffhanger" is in development with Lily James and former James Bond star Pierce Brosnan leading the cast.

It was earlier reported that the original film's lead, veteran actor Sylvester Stallone, will be returning for a follow-up to the original movie that would be directed by Ric Roman Waugh of "Greenland".

The project has now been reimagined but will retain the original's high-stakes, mountainous action, while exploring a fresh storyline, according to entertainment news outlet Variety.

The reboot will be directed by Jaume Collet-Serra, who earlier worked with Brosnan on the Dwayne Johnson-led "Black Adam".

"Cliffhanger" featured Stallone as Gabe Walker, a former mountain rescue ranger who becomes embroiled in a high-stakes heist gone wrong.

The new script is based on a story by Ana Lily Amirpour. Filming is underway in Austria.

Brosnan will play seasoned mountaineer Ray Cooper, who operates a luxury chalet in the Dolomites with daughter Sydney. During a weekend trip with a billionaire's son, they are targeted by a gang of kidnapers. Ray's daughter Naomi (James), still haunted by a past climbing accident, witnesses the attack and escapes. To save her family, she must confront her fears and fight for survival.

The movie will also feature Nell Tiger Free, Franz Rogowski, Shubham Saraf, Assaad Bouab, Suzy Bemba and Bruno Gouery in pivotal roles.

Case Ref. No. DIAC/5662 D/11-22  
In the matter of  
M/S Mihurisha Global Marketing Pvt. Ltd. ...Claimant  
Versus  
M/S Ohana Creation ...Respondent

Notice to Respondent  
M/S Ohana Creation having Reg. office at 11128, Tower 9A, 11th Floor GH-7 Crossing Republic, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Whereas the above noted case is listed before Sole Arbitrator Mr. K. Venkatraman, the Delhi International Arbitration Centre (DIAC), Delhi High Court, S-Block, New Delhi on 11.11.2024 at 12:00 p.m. Since despite the service, no one has appeared and represented the Respondent (M/S Ohana Creation) on date fixed i.e. 03.10.2024. Consequently, the Ld. Arbitrator has directed the Claimant (M/S Mihurisha Global Marketing Pvt. Ltd.) to serve the respondent through publication as a precautionary measure before proceeding Ex-Parte against the respondent.

In pursuance to and compliance with the order dated 03.10.2024, we do hereby serve upon you the present notice to appear either in person or through your Authorized Representative before the Ld. Arbitrator, DIAC in captioned matter on 11.11.2024 at 12 p.m. please note, in case no one appears on the said date, time and venue before the Ld. Sole Arbitrator, the matter will be heard and determined Ex-Parte in your absence.

For b Mr. K. Venkatraman, (Sole Arbitrator)  
The Delhi International Arbitration Centre (DIAC)  
Delhi High Court, S-Block, New Delhi  
Tel: 011-23386492

**kotak**  
Kotak Mahindra Bank

**NOTICE**

Locker Hired by Ms. Neena Khanna having address at- G-8 1st Flr Lajpat Nagar-3 Behind IDBI Bank New Delhi- 110024 with Nehru Place Branch of Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd. situated at Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd - Shop No. 1,2,3,6 & 6A Gr. Floor, Deenar Bhawan, 44 Nehru Place, Delhi-110019 remains un-operated since past 5 years and the rent is also due for the last 4 years.

All the 3 letters earlier sent to Ms. Neena Khanna calling upon them to operate the locker has return unreserved and the aforementioned are not contactable.

It is hereby informed that despite this notice, if the said locker is not operated by Ms. Neena Khanna within 90 days from the date of issuance of this notice, break open of the said locker will be done as per the extant process of the bank on February 01, 2025 at around 12:00 PM.

राष्ट्रीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, कुरुक्षेत्र  
**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KURUKSHETRA**  
(Under the Ministry of Education, Govt. of India)  
KURUKSHETRA-136119 (HARYANA)

Advt. No.: 96/2024

**CONVOCATION - 2024**

The 19th Convocation of NIT Kurukshetra will be held on 17th November, 2024. Hon'ble Governor of Haryana Shri Bandaru Dattatreya Ji will be the Chief Guest of the convocation. All eligible degree recipients are invited to attend the convocation. The final list of the degree recipients is uploaded on the Institute website. For registration schedule and other details related to the convocation, please visit the Institute website [www.nitkkr.ac.in](http://www.nitkkr.ac.in) regularly.

Sd/-  
Registrar /lc

**OFFICE OF THE NAGAR PARISHAD, PATHARIYA, DIST- DAMOH**  
Notice Inviting e-Tenders  
(Second Call)

NIT No. 375  
Online lumpsum bids for the following works under "sbm (u) - 2.0" (estimated on uadd issr (w.e.f - 02.08.2021) are invited from registered contractors and firms of repute fulfilling eligibility criteria

Tender ID	Scope of the work	Probable amount of contract (Rs. In Lacs)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (In Rs)	Cost of Bid Document (In Rs)	Time of Completion including rainy season
2024_UAD_379735_1	Interception & Diversion for tapping nallah and setup of sewage treatment plant for Used Water Management of PATHARIYA Town	476.58	238290/-	15000/-	12 months

- Interested Bidder can view the NIT on website [www.mptenders.gov.in](http://www.mptenders.gov.in) and [www.mpurban.gov.in](http://www.mpurban.gov.in)
- The Bid Document can be purchased only Online from 14:30 Hrs of 30-10-2024 to 17:30 Hrs. of 16-11-2024
- Amendment to NIT, if any, would be published on web site only, and not in Newspaper.
- GST shall be payable extra as per Govt. rules.

**CHIEF MUNICIPAL OFFICER  
NAGAR PARISHAD PATHARIYA  
DIST DAMOH**

राष्ट्रीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, कुरुक्षेत्र  
**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KURUKSHETRA**  
(Under the Ministry of Education, Govt. of India)  
KURUKSHETRA-136119 (HARYANA)

Advt.No.95/2024

**Admission to Ph.D. Program in Even Semester of Academic Year 2024-25**

National Institute of Technology, Kurukshetra invites online applications via Google Form from Indian and Foreign nationals for admission to Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Degree Programmes on Full Time (Institute/CSIR-UGC-NET-JRF, Project), Visvesvaraya Fellowship Scheme, Self-Financed Full Time and Part Time seats for Academic Year 2024-25.

Number of Seats, Online Application Form Link, and other relevant details along with Ph.D. Regulation are available on the Institute website: [www.nitkkr.ac.in](http://www.nitkkr.ac.in) under Admission 2024-> Ph.D. tab.

All interested candidates may fill the Google Form latest by **November 20, 2024, 03:00 p.m.** If the application is incomplete or any information is found misleading/false at any point during or after the admission process, the candidate's candidature/admission will be cancelled and the application fee will not be refunded in any case.

Please visit Institute website regularly for any announcement or updates in this regard.

Sd/-  
Registrar /lc

**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, MEGA LIFT  
BHUBANESWAR**

Plot no. A 8/2, Bhojnagar, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, PIN-751022  
E-Mail: [cemlpwr.od@gmail.com](mailto:cemlpwr.od@gmail.com)

**Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice**  
Bid Identification No. 04ML/2024-25

On Line open tender is invited for EPC Contract (Turn Key Basis) for Mega Lift, Odisha

- Name of Work:** Operation and Maintenance of existing 15 nos. schemes with intake points in Tel Basin having command area between 500 Ha. to 2000 Ha. in Megalift Cluster-XV in the districts of Sonepur, Boudh & Bolangir comprising all electro-mechanical & instrumentation equipments installed in pump house & MCC room including pumps and motors, switchyard & Transmission lines, Intake well, Sump well, Rising main, Distribution chamber, Gravity main, complete distribution network by UGPL covering culturable command area of 20404.69 Ha. with operation of maintenance of all its 15 completed schemes including its power system connectivity, proper distribution of water to the ayacut including watch & ward with testing and calibration of all electro-mechanical components before the start of each irrigation period in the O & M period of 10 years on "Turn-key basis".
- O & M Period:** 120 (One hundred twenty) calendar months.
- Date & time of availability of bid document in the portal** : 08.11.2024, 10 A.M.
- Last date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal** : 07.12.2024 up to 5.00 P.M
- Name & address of the officer inviting Bid** : Chief Engineer, Megalift

A-8/2, Bhoi Nagar,  
Bhubaneswar, Pin - 751022  
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>"  
Chief Engineer, Megalift  
Bhubaneswar

OIPR-32504/11/0006/2425

# Fuelled by festive demand, Indian automobile sales surges in October

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

In October 2024, the Indian automobile market witnessed a robust increase in sales across major manufacturers, largely driven by festive demand and the launch of new models. The Hyundai Motor India recorded a 2% increase in total sales, reaching 70,078 units compared to 68,728 units in October 2023. Domestic sales saw a slight uptick to 55,568 units, while exports rose by 6.7% to 14,510 units. The company's SUV portfolio performed exceptionally well, with sales peaking at 37,902 units, including a record 17,497 units for the Hyundai Creta. JSW MG Motor India reported an impressive 31% year-on-year growth in wholesales, totalling 7,045 units. This surge was significantly bolstered by new energy vehicles (NEVs), which comprised over 70% of total sales. The newly launched electric crossover utility vehicle, Windsor, contributed 3,116 units in its debut month. Toyota Kirloskar Motor also enjoyed a substantial 41% increase in total sales,



reaching 30,845 units compared to 21,879 units in the same month last year. Domestic sales amounted to 28,138 units, while exports stood at 2,707 units. Strong demand for the company's SUVs and MPVs, along with the introduction of limited-edition models for the festive season, fuelled this growth. Maruti Suzuki India achieved its highest-ever monthly sales, reporting 206,434 units—a 4% increase year-on-year. Despite a decline in mini and compact car sales, utility vehicles saw a

significant boost with 70,644 units sold. The automaker also experienced a notable increase in exports, which rose to 33,168 units. Mahindra & Mahindra celebrated its best-ever monthly sales with 96,648 units, marking a 20% increase from the previous year. The company's domestic SUV sales reached 54,504 units, a growth of 25%. The Thar ROXX, launched recently, garnered significant attention with 1.7 lakh bookings within

the first hour. Additionally, Mahindra's Farm Equipment Sector reported record tractor sales, driven by favourable agricultural conditions. The festive season has proven advantageous for multiple automakers, leading to impressive sales figures and positive market sentiment. The strong demand for SUVs and NEVs highlights a robust recovery and growth trajectory for the Indian automobile industry as it moves into the final months of the year.

## ATF price hiked three per cent, commercial LPG up



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Jet fuel, or ATF, price on Friday was hiked by 3.3 per cent and rate of commercial LPG used in hotels and restaurants increased by Rs 62 per 19-kg cylinder in the monthly revision done in line with international oil price trends. The aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price was increased by Rs 2,941.5 per kilolitre, or 3.3 per cent, to Rs 90,538.72 per kl in the national capital, according to state-owned fuel retailers. The hike comes after two rounds of reduction that had taken the rates to their lowest this year. ATF price on October 1 was cut by 6.3 per cent (Rs 5,883 per kl) and by Rs 4,495.5 per kl, or 4.58 per cent on September 1. The ATF rate in Mumbai was increased to Rs 84,642.91 per kl on Friday from Rs 81,866.13 previously. Oil firms also increased the price of commercial LPG by Rs 62 to Rs 1,802 per 19-kg

cylinder. This is the fourth straight monthly hike in commercial LPG prices. Prices were hiked by Rs 48.5 to Rs 1,740 on October 1. Prior to that rates were increased by Rs 6.5 per cylinder on August 1 and by Rs 39 on September 1. The four rounds of increase follow four monthly price reductions. In four price reductions, rates were cut by Rs 148 per 19-kg cylinder and now in four rounds of increase, prices have gone up by Rs 156 per bottle. Commercial LPG now costs Rs 1,754.50 per 19-kg cylinder in Mumbai, Rs 1,911.50 in Kolkata and Rs 1,964.50 in Chennai. The rate of cooking gas used in domestic households, however, remained unchanged at Rs 803 per 14.2-kg cylinder. State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) revise prices of ATF and cooking gas on the first of every month based on the average price of benchmark international fuel and foreign exchange rate. Prices of petrol and diesel continue to remain frozen. Rates had been cut by Rs 2 per litre in mid-March. Petrol costs Rs 94.72 a litre in Delhi while diesel is priced at Rs 87.62.

## SEBI proposes changes to ESG Rating framework



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has proposed tweaking framework for ESG Rating Providers (ERPs), particularly for those using a subscriber-pays model, including an exemption from the requirement to disclose ESG ratings to stock exchanges. Additionally, the regulator has suggested that ERPs using a subscriber-pays model should share ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) rating reports with both subscribers and the rated issuer simultaneously. ERPs should ensure that rated entities, their group companies, or associates cannot subscribe to their own ESG ratings, Sebi said in its consultation paper. These proposals are aimed at

enhancing the clarity, transparency, and regulatory alignment of ESG ratings within Sebi's framework. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) had introduced regulations for ERPs in July 2023, but ERPs have sought clarifications on certain provisions, particularly for those using a subscriber-pays model, and accordingly the regulator issued a consultation paper on Thursday. In the paper, the regulator proposed that ERPs should allow issuers to respond to the ESG rating report within a set timeline. Any comments from the issuer should be added to the report as an addendum. If the ERP disagrees with the issuer's perspective, it may respond through remarks or an addendum. Further, ERPs on a subscriber-pays model should be exempted from disclosing ESG ratings to stock exchanges, provided they confirm they have no non-public information affecting the rating. ERPs can rate unlisted issuers or other products under specific guidelines from relevant regulators. Sebi-registered ERPs should clarify the regulatory body overseeing any non-Sebi regulated ratings. The regulator has sought public comments on the proposals till November 15.

## Apple sets all-time revenue record in India: CEO Tim Cook

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The iPhone maker Apple has set an all-time revenue record in India and observed a double-digit growth in iPad sales in the country in the September 2024 quarter, senior officials of the company said on Friday. The company reported an over 6 per cent growth in total net sales to USD 94.93 billion during the reported period from USD 89.49 billion a year ago. "We also set September quarter segment revenue records in the Americas, Europe, and the rest of Asia Pacific, as well as in a large number of countries, including the United States, Brazil, Mexico, France, the UK, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and we continue to be excited by the enthusiasm we're seeing in India, where we set an all-time revenue record," Apple CEO Tim Cook said during the company's earnings call. Cook said Apple also opened two new stores - one in Mumbai and the other in Delhi - in the country during the quarter. "We can't wait to bring four new stores to customers in India," he said. In early October, Apple announced plans to open four more stores in India, located in Pune, Bengaluru, Delhi-NCR and Mumbai. According to a Counterpoint Research report, Apple iPhone sales accounted for 21.6 per cent of market share in value terms in the September 2024 quarter in



India. It trailed behind Samsung by a small margin. Apple's revenue from sales of products grew by 4.12 per cent during the reported quarter to USD 69.95 billion from USD 67.18 billion in the September 2023 quarter with iPhone sales growing by about 5.5 per cent to USD 46.22 billion from USD 43.8 billion on a year-on-year (YoY) basis. The services sales grew faster than product sales at around 12 per cent on a YoY basis and reached an all-time high at USD 24.97 billion during the quarter from USD 22.31 billion in the September 2023 quarter. The iPad sales of the company grew by about 8 per cent to USD 6.95 billion in the September 2024 quarter against USD 6.44 billion. "iPad generated USD 7 billion in revenue, up 8 per cent year-over-year. In addition to growth in developed markets, we also saw strong performance in many

emerging markets, with double-digit growth in Mexico, Brazil, the Middle East, India, and South Asia," Apple Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Luca Maestri said. Apple's annual revenue grew by about 2 per cent to USD 391 billion in the financial year ended September 28, 2024, from USD 383 billion in the financial year 2023. The annual product sales of Apple dropped by 2 per cent to USD 185.23 billion in FY24 from USD 189.28 billion in FY23 while services revenue grew marginally to USD 25.11 billion from USD 24.85 billion on a YoY basis. While Apple recorded sales growth across geographies, its quarterly sales in China were almost flat during the quarter while annual sales declined by 8 per cent on a YoY basis. In the product segment, annual sales of iPad dropped by about 6 per cent to USD 26.69 billion in FY24 from USD 28.3 billion in FY23.

## Property registrations in Mumbai surge in October

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Registration of properties in the Mumbai municipal region rose 22 per cent last month to 12,960 units on higher demand during the festive period, according to Knight Frank. There were 10,607 properties registered during October 2023. Citing Maharashtra government data, real estate consultant Knight Frank India said the Mumbai city (area under BMC jurisdiction) saw higher registration of properties during October this year on the back of two major

festivals Dussehra and Diwali. "The festive period, beginning with Navratri and Diwali, are considered auspicious for property purchases, and played a role in this rise in registrations," the consultant said. Additionally, Knight Frank said, the surge in year-on-year terms can be partly attributed to the base effect. "In October 2023, first 14 days were influenced by the Shradh period, during which buyers generally avoid big ticket investments, whereas this year, Shradh ended on October 2nd, impacting only the first two days of the



month," the consultant said. In October 2024, residential units constituted 80 per cent of the total registrations, underscoring strong housing demand in the city. Knight Frank India CMD

Shishir Bajjal said, "Mumbai embraced the festive season with a remarkable surge in property registrations, underscoring a strong commitment to high-value investments."

A rise in volume of registration by 22 per cent year-on-year is a sign that the sentiments towards home ownership continues to remain strong, he said. "The onset of festivities has reignited sales momentum, fuelled by stable interest rates and a strong appetite for premium properties," Bajjal said. As the festive season progresses, he hoped that robust registration volumes are expected to continue, supported by favourable market conditions, festive offers on property purchase and stable policy interest rates.

## Maldives estimates securing MVR 1.6 billion foreign aid from India in 2025

PTI ■ MALE

The Maldivian government has estimated that India will provide MVR 1.6 billion in grant aid to the archipelago nation in 2025, constituting 72 per cent of the total foreign aid it will receive from friendly countries, according to media reports. The estimates were made in the proposed State Budget 2025 submitted to the Parliament on Thursday, news portal Adhathu.Com reported. In the proposed budget, President Mohamed Muizzu-led administration projected a total of Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR) 2.25 billion as international grant aid. Of this, India is expected to



provide 72 per cent, amounting to MVR 1.6 billion (approximately USD 104 million). China will provide the archipelago nation MVR 502 million, 22 per cent of projected free aid, the report said. The Maldivian government expects to receive free aid from other friendly nations such as Japan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the Netherlands. According to the proposed budget, around MVR 336

million will be received as free aid from international organisations. India has provided "substantial" financial help to the Maldives this year, the report said. During Muizzu's state visit to India last month, New Delhi announced a USD 400 million support to the island nation. The two sides also inked a currency swap agreement to the tune of Rs 3,000 crore. Earlier this year, India came to the assistance of the Maldives by agreeing to rollover the Treasury Bills subscribed by the State Bank of India amounting to USD 100 million in May and September for a further period of one year.

## GST collection grows 9 per cent to ₹ 1.87 lakh crore in October

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gross GST collection grew 9 per cent to over Rs 1.87 lakh crore in October on higher revenues from domestic transactions. The Central GST collection stood at Rs 33,821 crore, State GST at Rs 41,864 crore, Integrated IGST at Rs 99,111 crore and cess at Rs 12,550 crore. The total gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue grew 8.9 per cent to over Rs 1.87 lakh crore last month. In



October 2023, the mop-up was at Rs 1.72 lakh crore. GST from domestic transactions grew 10.6 per cent to Rs 1.42 lakh crore, while tax on imports rose about 4 per cent to Rs 45,096 crore during October 2024. Refunds worth Rs 19,306 crore were issued during the month, registering 18.2 per cent growth over the year-ago period. After adjusting refunds, net GST collection grew 8 per cent at over Rs 1.68 lakh crore.

## SEBI proposes doubling threshold for 'High Value Debt Listed Entities'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has proposed raising the threshold for identifying High Value Debt Listed Entities (HVDLEs) to Rs 1,000 crore from Rs 500 crore at present to reduce compliance burdens. Currently, an entity having outstanding value of listed non-convertible debt securities of Rs 500 crore and above are referred to as 'High Value Debt Listed Entities'. In its consultation paper, Sebi has proposed introducing a sunset clause that would end governance obligations if an HVDLE's outstanding debt falls below the threshold for a specified period, providing more flexibility. It has suggested a dedicated chapter within LODR (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations focused solely on corporate governance norms for HVDLEs distinguishing them from equity-listed entities.



Also, it has been proposed filing of governance reports in XBRL format, voluntary Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR), and harmonised HVDLE reporting with equity-listed entities. Further, Sebi has proposed relaxation for HVDLEs which are not companies as per the Companies Act, 2013, relaxation with regard to the constitution of the Nomination and Remuneration Committee (NRC), Risk Management Committee (RMC) and

Stakeholders Relationship Committee (SRC). To avoid the constitution of multiple committees by HVDLEs, Sebi has proposed that the board of directors of an HVDLE may either choose to constitute NRC/RMC/SRC or may ensure that the functions of these committees are delegated and discharged by the audit committee. "It is proposed that the threshold of listed outstanding non-convertible securities for identification of a debt listed entity as HVDLE may be increased from Rs 500

crore to Rs 1000 crore," Sebi said in its consultation paper on Thursday. Also, Sebi has proposed setting a cap on the total number of committees a director can serve on, whether in equity or debt-listed entities. This would help in preventing over-commitment and ensure they can fulfil their responsibilities effectively. It has proposed that committee limits for directors should include HVDLEs, along with equity-listed companies, to protect investors and ensure directors have sufficient time for each role. The proposals, part of corporate governance norms, for HVDLEs are aimed at promoting ease of doing business and the interest of investors in such HVDLEs. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has sought public comments till November 15 on the proposals.

## India sees growth in iron ore, manganese, and aluminium production in H1 FY25



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The production of iron ore, manganese ore and primary aluminium increased in the first six months of the ongoing financial year, government data showed. As per provisional data, production of iron ore rose 5.5 per cent to 135 million tonne (MT) in April-September FY25 over 128 MT in the year-ago period.

Output of manganese ore increased by 6.2 per cent to 1.7 MT in April-September from 1.6 MT during the corresponding period of previous fiscal year, the mines ministry said in a statement. In the non-ferrous metal sector, primary aluminium production in April-September rose by 1.2 per cent to 20.90 lakh tonne (LT) from 20.66 LT in the year-ago period. "During the same comparative period, refined copper production has grown by 4.6 per cent from 2.39 LT to 2.50 LT," the ministry said. Iron ore accounts for about 70 per cent of the total mineral production by value. Production of iron ore was 274 million tonne in 2023-24. Continued growth in production of iron ore in the current financial year reflects the robust demand conditions in the user industry viz. Steel. Coupled with growth in aluminium and copper, these trends point towards continued strong economic activity in user sectors such as energy, infrastructure, construction, automotive and machinery. India is the second largest aluminium producer, among top ten producers of refined copper and fourth largest iron ore producer in the world.

## Royal Enfield bike sales up in October

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Eicher Motors Ltd on Friday reported a 31 per cent rise in total sales of its Royal Enfield motorcycles at 1,10,574 units in October. It stood at 84,435 units in the year-ago period, according to a filing. International business sales were at 8,688 units last month against 3,477 units in October last year, Eicher Motors said in the regulatory filing. Sales of models with engine capacity up to 350cc rose 27 per cent to 96,837 units compared to 76,075 units in October last year, it added. Similarly, sales of models with engine capacity exceeding 350cc grew 64 per cent to 13,737 units from 8,360 units a year ago, the company said.

After adjusting refunds, net GST collection grew 8 per cent at over Rs 1.68 lakh crore.



The International Festival of Indian Dance, a first-of-its-kind event, unites performers from around the world on a single stage to explore the vast possibilities of Indian dance, says **ABHI SINGHAL**

# A GRAND CONFLUENCE OF TRADITION, INNOVATION AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE

The Sangeet Natak Academy, India's esteemed national academy for music, dance, and drama, recently unveiled a landmark event: the inaugural *International Festival on Indian Dance (IFID)*. This pioneering festival drew a global assembly of artists, scholars, critics, and performers to explore the vast and intricate world of Indian dance. Over six days, participants delved into an array of subjects that spanned the historical evolution, contemporary practice, and future direction of dance in India. At the heart of the festival was a focus on artist sustainability and policy support, addressing pressing issues such as sustainable livelihoods for dancers, dance education, and the impact of technology on the arts. In a series of discussions, attendees examined how funding, including through corporate social responsibility, could foster stability in the artistic community. The conversations aimed to chart new directions for the preservation and propagation of Indian dance, touching on the balance between tradition and modernity in the digital age.



The festival was inaugurated by the Minister of Culture and Tourism, **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, at the A.P. Shinde Symposium Hall, setting the tone for a vibrant lineup of performances. The program celebrated the diversity of Indian classical dance forms, with captivating showcases of Kathak, Kuchipudi, Bharatanatyam and more. The presence of luminaries such as **Padma Shri K. Kalyanasundaram Pillai**, **Raja Reddy**, and **Radha Reddy** added a distinguished touch to the proceedings. One of the key objectives of the IFID was to illuminate the vital role that festivals and forums play in shaping the future of dance and art. Sessions



## IN CONVERSATION WITH SANDHYA PURECHA

**Dr. Sandhya Purecha** is a prominent figure in the world of Indian classical dance, known for her contributions as a performer, choreographer, and educator. As an exponent of Bharatanatyam, she has dedicated decades to mastering and popularizing this ancient dance form, blending traditional techniques with innovative choreography. Dr. Purecha's work extends beyond performance; she is a respected scholar who has made significant contributions to dance research, helping to preserve and propagate India's cultural heritage. Her leadership roles, including serving on various cultural committees, underscore her commitment to fostering the growth of Indian classical arts at national and international levels. She talked about her journey, *International Festival of Indian Dance and art* with **ABHI SINGHAL**. Excerpts



won't be able to inspire future generations.

### Your background is incredibly diverse, spanning from law to dance. What inspired your journey into the performing arts?

As a young girl, my exposure to the arts came from my father, who was very open-minded and passionate about art. He encouraged my mother, despite the societal norms of the 1930s, to ensure that I learned dance. We couldn't afford classes, so he would walk miles with me to attend them. Dance became a part of my life, not just as an extracurricular activity but as an essential experience. Meeting my guru, Acharya Parvati Kumar Ji, was a turning point. He challenged me to reflect on my reasons for learning dance, and I realized I wanted to become like him and open a college for dance. That encounter ignited a lifelong dedication to dance.

### What are the biggest challenges facing the Indian performing arts scene today?

The primary challenge is the perception of performing arts as merely extracurricular activities. Our ancient Sanskrit literature, including the Puranas, recognizes 64 art forms as vital disciplines, placing them on par with subjects like mathematics. However, colonial influences have marginalized these art forms. Unless performing arts are treated as mainstream education from the school level, we

### What is your vision for the future of Indian classical dance?

Since taking over the Sangeet Natak Akademi, my goal as chairperson has been to foster an inclusive and collaborative dialogue. For instance, at the G20 summit, we showcased 85 rare musical instruments in a three-hour non-stop performance. Initiatives like these help connect people to our cultural heritage. My vision includes expanding the Republic Day celebrations to involve thousands of artists performing tribal and classical dance, covering the entire Kartavya Path. This reflects the collaborative spirit needed to promote Indian dance on a global stage.

### What inspired the idea for the first-ever International Festival of Indian Dance, and what do you hope to achieve?

As the principal of the College of Fine Art and Culture, I've attended many national and international seminars. The openness at these events to discuss the challenges facing dance inspired me to create a platform for collective dialogue. The festival aims to bring together artists, scholars, and enthusiasts to explore and celebrate the depth of Indian dance.

emphasized the potential of technology and artificial intelligence (AI) to transform artistic expression, with a spirited debate on whether these advancements enhance or dilute the authentic experience of traditional dance forms. The festival sought to redefine how dance is perceived, taught, and preserved, fostering a dialogue that bridges the gap between the past and the future. The Kamani Auditorium served as the stage for a series of enthralling performances that brought the beauty and depth of Indian dance to life. Audiences were enraptured by **Dr. Sonal Mansingh's** evocative presentation, while **Ramli Ibrahim's** artistry captivated with its profound elegance. The performance of "Prakriti," choreographed by **Mamata Shankar**, stood out as a highlight. Other notable performances included **Shantha Ratii's Kuchipudi** from Singapore, **Sunanda Nair's Mohiniattam** from the USA, and a riveting **Kathak** performance by **Archana Joglekar** and her group.

The festival concluded on a grand note, with a ceremony attended by dignitaries such as **Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar**, Minister of Culture **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, and **Mathura's Lok Sabha MP Hema Malini**. In his closing address, **Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** lauded the event as a "Sanskritik Mahakumbh" - a monumental confluence of art, knowledge, and introspection.

The IFID emerged as a resounding success, not only as a celebration of artistic excellence but also as a platform for fostering sustainable careers in the arts. The festival's impact extended beyond its six days, leaving a legacy that promises to shape the future of Indian dance for years to come.



# THE SILENT STRENGTH

Pranita Gusain's exhibition "Whispers of the Unveiled" at the Open Palm, India Habitat Centre celebrates the complexity of femininity, exploring strength and vulnerability through powerful imagery. Each piece invites viewers to connect with their own stories and emotions, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

In an era where female narratives often go unheard, 'Whispers of the Unveiled' invites viewers to explore the intricate layers of femininity. Pranita Gusain's powerful exhibition challenges societal perceptions, celebrating the strength and vulnerability inherent in womanhood. Each painting resonates with deep emotional truths, encouraging us to connect with our own stories and embrace the beauty of being unapologetically ourselves.

Art reveals the silent stories that dwell beneath the surface, offering us a glimpse into the profound emotions we often cannot express. This sentiment captures the essence of Gusain's exhibition, 'Whispers of the Unveiled'. Through her evocative work, Gusain explores the delicate balance of strength and vulnerability within the female form, inviting viewers to see beyond the surface and into the emotional depths of each piece. The exhibition is deeply personal for Gusain, as she reflected on her journey with art and womanhood. One of the standout pieces, 'Woman Holding a Ball', depicts a woman balancing a ball in various positions, symbolising the challenges and pressures women face in life. The ball represents these struggles, while the woman's ability



to handle it gracefully illustrates resilience and adaptability. It speaks not only of physical balance but of an emotional and mental equilibrium that women must often master. In 'Awakening of the Self', Gusain portrays a woman holding a lotus, a symbol of spiritual enlightenment and inner strength. This piece conveys the woman's battle to not only navigate external challenges but to seek inner peace and understanding. The painting



radiates tranquillity, reminding us that true strength often comes from within. 'The Invincible Warrior' is a powerful depiction of feminine courage. With a bow in hand, the woman is shown ready to fight her battles with confidence and power. This piece highlights not just physical strength but the emotional and mental resilience that is vital to overcoming life's struggles. It's a tribute to the everyday warrior

within each woman. Perhaps the most poetic of all, 'Female as Butterfly', represents transformation and rebirth. The butterfly symbolises a woman's evolving spirit, ready to break free and soar. Gusain beautifully captures the contrast between the butterfly's delicate appearance and the strength it symbolises, a reminder that women, too, are always growing, changing, and uncovering new facets of themselves.

Pranita Gusain's 'Whispers of the Unveiled', is an introspective journey through the many layers of femininity. It blends modern and traditional imagery to capture the complexities of the female experience, challenging societal perceptions and inviting viewers to look deeper. Each painting is a story, a reflection, and an unveiling of the inner strength and beauty that women carry within

Photos: Pankaj Kumar

# India hand New Zealand control after batting flop show on Day 1

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's batters lost the plot in a matter of 20 minutes, leaving the side at a jittery 86/4 after Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar gave the hosts the early bragging rights by dismissing New Zealand for 235 on an eventful day one of the third and final Test here on Friday. Jadeja (5/65) and Sundar (4/81) did their job to perfection but India's batting continued to be a weak link as the side lost three wickets in the space of eight balls, starting with Yashasvi Jaiswal's (30) inexplicable reverse slog sweep. With his 14th five-for in Tests, Jadeja also moved ahead of former pace bowling teammates Zaheer Khan and Ishant Sharma to climb to the fifth spot in the list of highest wicket-takers for India in the format. With 314 wickets so far, Jadeja is now behind Harbhajan Singh (417 wickets) in the all-time list.



India, who lost by eight wickets in Bengaluru and by 113 runs in Pune, are in a desperate position to remain alive in the race to the World Test Championship final but the contest seems to be slipping away. If Virat Kohli (4) missed an innocuous full toss to be cleaned up in first innings at Pune was an aberration, the batting maestro ran himself out in ending stages of the first day's play which left India

staring at a mountain to climb. India's rapid fall displayed their fast eroding confidence with the bat as Rohit Sharma (18) too was among those who fell without making a significant dent. In between the loss of the team's batting pillars, Jaiswal and Shubman Gill (31 not out) forged a 53-run stand for the second wicket before the closing stage collapse. Rohit, playing only his second Test on his home turf of the Wankhede Stadium, dazzled

with a few attractive strokes to get off the blocks quickly but failed to make the most of a reprieve. William O'Rourke spilled a tough chance at fine leg off Henry when Rohit pulled one towards his left with the fielder also covering fair distance to get to the ball in the fifth over. In the seventh, Rohit played awkwardly at a back of a length ball, looking to work it on the leg side, the Indian skipper was perhaps surprised with the

bounce as he closed the face of the bat but the ball flew to his counterpart Tom Latham in the second slip. Rohit's fall had Gill joining Jaiswal and the two did try to rebuild before the latter's dismissal. Earlier, spinners ruled the roost as Jadeja (5/65) and Washington (4/81) shared nine wickets between them to keep New Zealand to 235 after the visitors opted to bat. Washington sparkled with a crucial two-wicket burst

back and handing the advantage to India with his mastery over the pitch and the conditions, picking five wickets along the way. R Ashwin, deployed first among the Indian spinners, remained wicket-less despite his variations but his bowling partners exploited the pitch perfectly, particularly left-arm Jadeja who bowled comparatively quicker and attacked the wickets. New Zealand, who crumbled from 159 for three to 235 all out predominantly against Jadeja, did deserve credit for braving the conditions which had their highest scorer in the innings, Mitchell, really struggling in the middle. The burly batting all-rounder consumed liquids frequently and kept dropping to his haunches and even lay flat on his back as he made a fighting 82 off 129 balls, laced with three fours and as many sixes. Mitchell felt the heat more than anyone else also because he dealt a lot in singles and doubles until he brought up his maiden fifty of the tour. Each of this three sixes came towards the end. Like Mitchell, Young too looked set for a century but Jadeja's brilliance ended his knock. Getting one to turn away against Young's front-foot defence, Jadeja had the ball kissing the shoulder of the bat and Rohit did the rest at first slip, bringing an end to a fine knock in which Young scored 71 off 138 balls with four fours and two sixes.

## Four senior players led IPL retention discussions: MI coach Jayawardene



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mumbai Indians head coach Mahela Jayawardene has disclosed that the team's senior quartet - Rohit Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, Hardik Pandya, and Suryakumar Yadav - was actively involved in discussions about captaincy and retentions for the IPL's 2025 season. The five-times champions have retained the quartet of Bumrah, Suryakumar, Pandya and Rohit along with youngster Tilak Verma. "We had extensive discussions. These four senior guys led those discussions. Obviously, what happened last season, as well as how we collectively move forward that was crucial for us to align in that right direction," Jayawardene told Jio Cinema on Thursday. "So coaching staff, owners,

management and these four guys the direction came from them, what needs to be done, how it needs to go about." MI have paid the top retention price of Rs 18 crore to pace spearhead Bumrah while Suryakumar and Pandya have been retained for an equal retention price of Rs 16.35 crore each. Jayawardene said Rohit (Rs 16.30 crore), who has retired from the format after leading India to the T20 World Cup in June, agreed to be the fourth retention. Verma (Rs 8 crore) was the former champions' final retention pick. "And obviously Ro (hit) led the retention part, and everyone agreed that Booms (Bumrah), you know, being the best sport in the world, and it's been very consistent, and we need to recognise that at the top. "And then he wanted the other

young Indians to be recognised, and it was his call. So all in all, it was brilliant to see that you know them leading that conversation and agreeing to everything. So it was quite easy for us." Pandya was named captain last season, replacing Rohit amid a lot to backlash from the fans. However, Jayawardene, who recently returned as the team's head coach, said the all-rounder will continue to lead the side. "The leadership, as well Hardik being appointed captain, we had that conversation with them. So that was led by them." MI endured a disastrous season, finishing at the bottom of the 10-team league. Asked what the discussions are going into the new season Jayawardene said, "It's about learnings for us, understanding what went right, what went wrong. We need to learn from that and that was part of the discussions that we had." "We need to control things on the field and then off the field stuff will be handled quite easily. I think with it, it was tough for us to perform on the field, and everyone acknowledged that, you know, we underperformed as a group." MI will head into the auction with a purse of Rs 45 crore.

## Man United target Rúben Amorim promises decision after his Sporting Lisbon

AP ■ LISBON

Manchester United target Rúben Amorim has promised to clarify his future coaching plans after his Sporting Lisbon team plays a Portuguese league game on Friday evening. Amorim spoke on Thursday at a news conference ahead of league-leading Sporting facing Estrela da Amadora. Sporting has started its title defense with nine straight wins. "After the game tomorrow, we will have the decision made," Amorim said. "It will be very clear, so it's one more day." The 39-year-old coach's growing reputation and two Portuguese league titles in four seasons attracted Man United, which fired Erik ten Hag on Monday with the team 14th in the English Premier League. Sporting's statement to the Lisbon Stock Exchange said United was interested in paying the release clause in Amorim's contract worth 10 million euros (\$10.8 million). "It is a negotiation between two clubs," Amorim said on Thursday. "It's never easy. Even with the clauses it's never easy, they have to talk." Reports in English and Portuguese media suggest



Amorim will move to Manchester during the next break for national team games. That would make his first Man United game on Nov. 24 at Ipswich. One of Amorim's likely final games with Sporting is hosting Manchester City on Tuesday in the Champions League. Amorim had been linked to joining Man City, where Pep Guardiola has not publicly committed to renewing a contract that expires after the season. Man City's next director of football, Hugo Viana, will join from Sporting after this season. Man United was led by interim coach Ruud van

Nistelrooy on Wednesday and beat Leicester 5-2 in the English League Cup. Van Nistelrooy, a former Man United star striker who returned in the offseason to assist his Dutch compatriot Ten Hag, seems set to coach the team for three more home games: Chelsea visits in the Premier League on Sunday, then PAOK in the Europa League, and Leicester again in the Premier League on Nov. 10. Van Nistelrooy said on Thursday that it had been well-communicated that his new role would be interim only. "I was happy with that," he said at a news conference ahead of Sunday's game. "I felt that I was called upon to help the club forward in the situation and obviously it was difficult that Erik had to leave." Van Nistelrooy, who is under contract as an assistant through next season, said "you have to switch and (adopt) the mindset to win because in the end 75,000 (are) people waiting and celebrating and millions watching at home. "I think that's what we try to do," he continued, "and same for Sunday at least, and then after that we'll see.

# Humbert knocks out Alcaraz to join Zverev and Tsitsipas in Paris Masters quarterfinals

AP ■ PARIS

Frenchman Ugo Humbert harnessed the energy of the home crowd and produced one of his best career performances in beating Carlos Alcaraz 6-1, 3-6, 7-5 to reach the quarterfinals of the Paris Masters. A flurry of forehand and backhand winners had Alcaraz 5-0 down in a first set so one-sided that Alcaraz - a four-time Grand Slam winner - ironically waved his racket and grinned to the crowd after holding in the sixth game. "There were some incredible points, I think I have just experienced one of my greatest moments on a tennis court," Humbert said. "I don't want it to end here." The second-seeded Alcaraz controlled the second set, but after missing chances during the third set, served to stay in the match.

The crowd jeered a replayed point but Alcaraz was unperturbed and held comfortably for 5-5. Sensing a big upset, Humbert got the Bercy Arena crowd going in the next game. The 26-year-old left-hander looked like he was about to do a lap of honor after a brilliant forehand pass down the line at full stretch and earned ovations following a superb angled volley and a booming winner that flew past his Spanish opponent. "I have to congratulate Ugo. His performance has been really high," Alcaraz said. "The way he hits the ball is unbelievable." Alcaraz said Humbert deserved victory, but added that the unusually high speed of the court made it more difficult for him - especially with the low trajectory of Humbert's shots. "The stats came out that this is the fastest court in the Masters 1000,



probably on the tour," the 21-year-old Spaniard said. "For example, the Davis Cup indoor court (was) way slower." A rattled-looking Alcaraz trailed 0-30 in the 12th game. Umpire Richard Haigh intervened to calm the crowd, urging them not to cheer when Alcaraz made a fault on serve and then said in English "Guys, you're affecting both players." Serving again to stay in the match at 15-40, Alcaraz saved one match point but returned long on the next as the 15th-seeded Humbert set up a last-eight contest with Australian Jordan Thompson. Eighth-seeded Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov beat Arthur Rinderknech 6-2, 4-6, 7-6 (5) to have an outside chance of reaching the season-ending ATP Finals. Dimitrov, who served 17 aces, needs to reach Sunday's final and next faces 2018 champion

Karen Khachanov. Earlier, Alexander Zverev silenced the raucous home crowd, beating French prospect Arthur Fils 6-4, 3-6, 6-3. The third-seeded German compiled 16 aces compared to nine for the 20-year-old Fils in their first indoor meeting. "I am happy I hung in there today," Zverev said. "He is a great player and has improved a lot this year. I am looking forward to the next few battles we are going to have." Zverev, the French Open runner-up, saved three break points in serving for the match at 5-3. "The atmosphere here is a lot louder than at Roland Garros," the 27-year-old Zverev said. "The crowd is on top of you." He next plays 10th-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas in their 16th career meeting, with Tsitsipas 10-5 up.

The big-serving Greek earlier rallied to beat Francisco Cerundolo 6-7 (1), 6-4, 6-2 to stay in contention to qualify for next month's Finals in Turin, the year-end tournament gathering the season's top eight players. Although Tsitsipas hit nine aces and saved all three break points, he converted only three of his 11 break-point chances. In other third-round matches, ninth-seeded Alex De Minaur kept up his chances of reaching the Finals with a 5-7, 6-2, 6-3 victory against Britain's Jack Draper, the U.S. Open semifinalist, and 2022 champion Holger Rune edged out lucky loser Arthur Cazaux 3-6, 6-3, 6-4. Khachanov won 7-6 (5), 6-4 against Alexei Popyrin and Thompson advanced to the first Masters quarterfinal of his career by beating veteran Adrian Panatta 7-5, 7-6 (5).



## Kolkata Anish three years old becomes youngest rated chess prodigy

PTI ■ KOLKATA

While most children of his age are absorbed in cartoons like Peppa Pig or Chhota Bheem, or simply playing with toys, young Anish Sarkar found his fascination in the quiet strategy of chess pieces, sparking a journey few could fathom. At just three years, eight months, and 19 days, the kid from Kaikhali in north Kolkata on Friday became the youngest rated chess player in history. Born on January 26, 2021, Anish made his debut in competitive chess with the West Bengal state Under-9 Open in October, securing an impressive 5.5 out of 8 points and finishing 24th overall defeating two rated players -- Arav Chatterjee and Ahilaan Baishya. He was also fortunate to get an opportunity to play against India No. 1 and World No. 4 Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi in a simultaneous exhibition match during the Bengal Rapid Rating Open.

to reach the chessboard, making it an endearing sight. In one video, Anish plays against three GMs, including Barua and Surya Sekhar Ganguly, while balancing on the chairs as his coach Barua, playfully pinches his cheek. "We've put him in a special group, where he trains for seven to eight hours," said Barua. "Sometimes, he even comes to my home to play, and once he sits down at the board, he simply won't get up. His focus is truly astounding." Born into a lower-middle-class family with parents who had "zero knowledge of chess," Anish's journey began just a year ago when he was a toddler. "We introduced him to different YouTube channels, including cartoons like Peppa Pig, but he was drawn to chess videos," his mother said. "By January, his interest had grown, and he would watch those videos endlessly. I bought him a chessboard and pieces, thinking it was safe for him to handle even if I couldn't supervise him closely. "Since he was already good with numbers and counting, chess quickly became his favourite. That's when we decided to place him under the guidance of Dibyendu Sir," she recalls. His mother, however, prefers to stay anonymous for now. "We come from a lower-middle-class family and would rather avoid the limelight at this stage," she said. "This is his moment, and he deserves to be the one in focus. We'll be happy to share our names when he becomes a GM!" "Till date, I don't know a single chess move," his mother admits with a laugh. "Maybe his father knows a bit more, but he hasn't managed to beat him even once." She goes on, "We're happy to support him quietly from behind and let him make his mark, wherever his interests lead him. There's no pressure on him; we just want him to enjoy himself. My time is fully devoted to him," she adds. Although she holds a master's degree, she chose to be housewife to support her son. "Who is his idol? "He absolutely loves watching GothamChess on YouTube, but his real hero is none other than Magnus Carlsen," his mother signs off with a smile. Barua, meanwhile, mentioned that they are trying to put him in the field of the upcoming Tata Steel Kolkata Chess where Carlsen has confirmed his participation.