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NEW DELHI, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2024; PAGES 12 & 4



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SC demolishes 'bulldozer justice'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Termining 'bulldozer justice' as illegal, the Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday laid down pan-India guidelines and said no property should be demolished without a prior show cause notice and the affected must be given 15 days to respond. The Executive cannot assume Judicial powers to punish citizens by demolishing their properties without following due process, the SC said while terming such excesses "high-handed and arbitrary" and ruling that they need to be dealt with the "heavy hand of the law", said the Bench of Justices BR Gavai



and KV Viswanathan, adding that it is "chilling" the sight of a bulldozer demolishing a building, rendering women, children and aged persons homeless overnight. The 95-page judgement written by Justice Gavai started with the famous lines of Hindi poet 'Pradeep'. "Apna ghar ho, apna aangan

ho, is khawab mein har koi jeeta hai; Insaan ke dil ki ye chahat hai ki ek ghar ka sapna kabhi naa choote' (To have one's own home, one's own courtyard - is a dream that lives in every heart. It's a longing that never fades, to never lose the dream of a home)." "This is how the importance of shelter has been described by the famous Hindi poet 'Pradeep', the Bench said. The SC warned that if these directions are flouted, the officials responsible will be liable for contempt of Court and prosecution. Such officers shall be held liable to retribute the demolished property at their own cost and also pay compensation, the top court said. The Court further made it clear that these directions do not impact action taken against illegal buildings or structures on roads, river banks etc. The Bench reiterated that such high-handed and arbitrary actions have no place in the Constitution, which rests on the foundation of the rule of law. Passing a slew of directions, the Bench made clear that they will not be applicable if there is an unauthorised structure in a public place such as road, street, footpath, abutting railway line or any river or water bodies and also in cases where there is an order for demolition made by a court of law. **Continued on page 2**



Season's signature smog has arrived

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Dense smog blanketed Delhi for the first time this season on Wednesday pulling the visibility down to zero at the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), and the lack of a strong breeze continued to prevent the dispersion of pollutants deteriorating the air quality to the top of the "severe" category at 418 AQI. Of the 36 monitoring stations in Delhi, 30 reported air quality in the 'severe' category, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The first smog of this winter season affected multiple flight operations leading to diversion and delays at Delhi airport as well as several airports in north India. Meanwhile, the Delhi BJP has asked the Delhi government to urgently close all schools up to Class 5, as the national capital has turned into a gas chamber. According to IGI airport sources, at least 10 flights were diverted from the airport. Six flights were diverted to Jaipur and one to Lucknow at 7 am due to bad weather. Zero-metre visibility was recorded at IGI airport at 8.30 am with the Runway Visual Range varying between 125 and 500 metres at different locations, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Sources added some flights have been delayed. The Vice President, Jagdeep Thakur, was unable to land in Ludhiana due to poor visibility. He was diverted to Amritsar, where he stayed for a few hours before returning. The IGI airport ranks amongst India's most frequented aviation hubs. While the airport continued operations at Delhi, flights not compliant with Category III (CAT III) landing systems, which are designed to allow landings in low-visibility conditions, were particularly affected. "Low visibility procedures" were put in place, with authorities cautioning that non-CAT III aircraft could face disruptions. As the smog worsened, the airport authorities had to issue advisories regarding potential flight delays or diversions. "Flights that are not CAT III compliant may get affected," the Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) posted on social media platform X. **Continued on page 2**



Age of marriage discussion to resume soon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A Parliamentary Standing Committee will take up the issue of the age of marriage for men and women next week as a Bill aimed at bringing uniformity in the matter has lapsed with the dissolution of the 17th Lok Sabha. The secretary of the Women and Child Development Ministry (WCD) and representatives of the National Coalition Advocating for Adolescent Concerns (NCAAC) and the Young Voices Campaign will appear before the panel at its November 22 meeting on the proposed changes in the marriage age for children and other women-related legislation. According to the agenda of the meeting, the panel on education, women, children, youth and sports headed by Congress MP Digvijaya Singh will also hear the WCD secretary on the functioning of various statutory and autonomous bodies such as the National Commission for Women, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Central Adoption Resource Authority, and the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development. The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which was introduced in the Lok Sabha in December 2021 was referred to the standing committee and got several extensions. The Bill ultimately lapsed with the dissolution of the 17th Lok Sabha. Asked about the issue being taken up even as the Bill has lapsed, a senior member of the panel said, "There is no bar on taking up the issue". The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021, aimed to amend the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, to increase the minimum age of marriage of females to 21 years. The Bill, had it been passed, would have overridden any other law, custom, or practice. **Continued on page 2**

Impressive voter turnout in Jharkhand, Wayanad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The first phase of voter turnout for the 43 Assembly Constituencies (AC) in Jharkhand recorded 64.86 per cent on Wednesday. Simultaneously, bypolls were also held peacefully in 31 Assembly Constituencies (ACs) in 10 states and in Wayanad Parliamentary Constituency of Kerala, where Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is contesting. Wayanad recorded 64.27 per cent voter turnout. In the previous election, the percentage was 72.92 per cent. Sporadic incidents of violence, including a crude bomb attack in Bhatpara near Naihati Assembly constituency that killed a local Trinamool Congress (TMC) worker, marred the West Bengal bypolls. Two Assembly constituencies in Sikkim were

uncontested. According to the Election Commission's data, a voter turnout of 64.86 per cent was recorded at the polling stations in Jharkhand which has already surpassed 63.9 per cent voting in these 43 ACs in 2019. Lohardaga district topped the list with 73.21 per cent polling while Hazaribag district recorded the lowest at 59.13. Former Chief Minister Champai Soren and ex-MP Geeta Koru were among the 683 candidates in fray in the first phase. "Today is the first round of voting in Jharkhand Assembly elections. I urge all voters to vote with full enthusiasm in this festival of democracy. On this occasion, my heartiest congratulations to all my young friends who are going to vote for the first time! Remember - first vote, then refreshment!" Prime Minister Narendra Modi



wrote on X. Jharkhand Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar cast his vote at the ATI polling booth in Ranchi. "Today is the first phase of voting for the Jharkhand Assembly elections. I urge all

voters to exercise their constitutional right to vote. Remember, first vote and then refreshment!" Gangwar said. Chief Minister Hemant Soren sought people's support in the elections. In a post on X, he said, "If you like our work, please support us. I promise that I will do 10 years of work in the next 5 years so that no one can stop our pace of progress." Unfazed by threats and boycott calls from Maoists, people in Left Wing Extremism-affected areas in Jharkhand turned out in impressive numbers to vote. In Budha Pahad area in Garhwa district, once considered a stronghold of extremists, long queues, and peaceful polling at Hesatu Polling station signalled the deep penetration of democratic ethos. **Continued on page 2**

No more false advertising, CCPA tells coaching centres

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant move to protect the rights of consumers and maintain transparency in the coaching sector, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has issued comprehensive guidelines to address the issue of misleading advertisements in the coaching sector. The CCPA has also taken suo moto action against 45 coaching centres and imposed penalty of Rs. 54,60,000 on 18 coaching institutes for misleading advertisements. 'Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisement in Coaching Sector, 2024,' aim to

safeguard students and the public from deceptive marketing practices commonly employed by coaching centres, shared Nidhi Khare, Chief Commissioner CCPA and Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India while interacting with media on the subject here on Wednesday. These guidelines were drafted in the wake of growing concerns about false/misleading claims, exaggerated success rates, and unfair contracts that coaching institutes often impose on students. Such practices have been found to mislead students, influencing their

decisions by concealing important information and giving false guarantees. The guidelines will apply to every person engaged in coaching, meaning not just the coaching centres, but also any endorsers or public figures promoting their services through advertisements. Endorsers, who lend their name or reputation to coaching centres, will now be responsible for ensuring that the claims they endorse are accurate and truthful. Endorsers who endorse coaching institutes must verify the claims they are promoting. If they support false success rates or misleading guarantees, they will be held accountable alongside the coaching centres. The guidelines explicitly prohibit coaching institutes from making false claims related to the courses offered, their duration, faculty qualifications, fees, and refund policies. Selection rates, success stories, exam rankings, and job security promises. **Continued on page 2**

Trade Fair's unfair traffic scene

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

While the wedding season, which began on Tuesday, has already added to the National Capital's traffic woes, more awaits the city, especially Central Delhi which will likely remain choked from Thursday as the India International Trade Fair (IITF) at Pragati Maidan will add to the misery of the commuters amid traffic restriction being imposed in different areas for the event which will continue for a fortnight. It is expected that around 60,000 visitors will visit the fair on each day with the number going as high as 1.5 lakh per day during weekend and holidays leading to massive traffic jams along Mathura Road, Bhairon Marg, Ring Road, Shershah Road and Purana Quila Road. These important passages, which already see a rush of vehicles during peak hours, will further be packed with extra commuters trying to make their way to the IITF, resulting in choke points and traffic snarls. The Delhi Traffic Police Department has requested people not visiting the trade fair to avoid or bypass these roads to ensure hassle-free journey. But



office-goers and commuters who take the same route everyday will have to take the pain of going through diversions and leaving early for at least 14 days to avoid any delay. "While travelling from Mayur Vihar to Bhagwan Dass road, which is usually my route every day, I'll have to now take alternative routes which will cost me extra time and fuel, that too for about 14 days when there is already wedding season disrupting traffic flow every now

and then," said a 49-year-old working professional. Only business visitors will be allowed into the IITF from November 14 to 18, while the fair will be open for the general public from November 19 to 27 at 9.30 am to 07.30 pm. In light of this, to ensure smooth traffic management in the vicinity of Pragati Maidan, the traffic police said that no vehicle will be allowed to halt or park anywhere along Mathura Road and Bhairon Marg. "No vehicles will be allowed to be parked on Sher Shah Road, Purana Quila Road, Bhagwan Dass Road and Tilak Marg. Vehicles found parked on the above roads shall be towed away and prosecuted for improper parking and disobedience of lawful instructions. Towed vehicles would be parked in National Stadium parking at Gate No. 5," the traffic department stated. Even as there will be heavy pedestrian movement on Mathura Road and heavy traffic is also expected to ply on this road throughout the day, the police asked people to use the foot-over bridge on Mathura Road. **Continued on page 2**

Government doctor stabbed in Chennai by patient's son

PTI ■ CHENNAI

A medical oncologist at the Kalaignar Centenary Super Speciality Hospital here was stabbed multiple times on Wednesday by the son of a patient allegedly over grievances regarding the treatment of his mother at the same facility, a hospital official said. The man assaulted the doctor inside the outpatient room during a conversation regarding his mother's treatment. He was immediately apprehended by the hospital staff and handed over to the police, and he was arrested. The doctor is being treated, and he is stable, the official said. The attack led to an outrage and doctors and nurses gathered in front of the hospital entrance to mark

their strong protest. "We do not have safety while doing our duty," one of the protesting KCSSH doctors said. Government doctors announced a strike and Health Minister Ma Subramanian is set to hold talks with them. Expressing shock, Chief Minister MK Stalin said the assailant had been arrested and that he had ordered a detailed probe. All steps will be taken to prevent the recurrence of such incidents in the future, the CM said. All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) chief Edappadi K Palaniswami said there was no security for a government doctor in a government hospital, and it showed the status of the law and order situation. **Continued on page 2**

Try to stand on your own legs, Ajit Pawar gets pro-tip from SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday advised the Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) faction to try standing on its own legs and asked it to use the picture of Sharad Pawar in poll campaigning with whom the party has "ideological differences". A Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan also asked both factions of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) led by Sharad Pawar and his nephew Ajit Pawar to focus on the "battlefield" (Maharashtra Assembly elections) instead of doing rounds of the courts. "Tell your party functionaries that they will not use old or new video clips or use the photographs of Sharad Pawar with whom your party is having ideological differences.



You try to stand on your legs," the Bench told senior advocate Balibir Singh, appearing for the Ajit Pawar-led faction. It asked the Ajit Pawar faction to circulate an online circular among its leaders, party workers and representatives associated with the Assembly elections that they will not use the picture or video/audio clip of Sharad Pawar, whether it is old or new. "People of India are very intelligent and they have a fair idea about who Sharad Pawar and Ajit Pawar are. They cannot be fooled so easily," the

Bench told senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Sharad Pawar group after he complained that an MLC from Ajit Pawar faction had circulated a video clip of Sharad Pawar to showcase his support. The Bench said though people are intelligent enough to differentiate between both Ajit Pawar faction and Sharad Pawar faction but they may be confused for a short while in this era of Artificial Intelligence, where voice and pictures of leaders can be misused. The court was hearing a plea of Sharad Pawar alleging misuse of the 'clock' symbol and his picture by the Ajit Pawar-led group. The SC listed the matter for further hearing on Tuesday. Polling for 288 Assembly seats in Maharashtra will be held on November 20 and the counting of votes will take place on November 23.

JHUKI JHUKI SI NAZAR...



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar took everyone by surprise at an event in Darbhanga when he tried to touch Prime Minister Narendra Modi's feet. In a video that has gone viral on social media, Nitish Kumar, 73, walked towards PM Modi, 74, with folded hands and bowed to touch his feet in a third such instance this year. However, PM Modi quickly stops the JD(U) leader from touching his feet and is seen shaking his hands. Another video that has gone viral from the same event shows Modi pulling Nitish Kumar to his side as party workers garland the Prime Minister. PTI

LG reinstates civil volunteers to mitigate pollution woes

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant move aimed at augmenting the efforts to mitigate the existing air pollution crisis in the National Capital, Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has approved the deployment of Civil Defence Volunteers (CDVs) for a period of four-months beginning November one till February 28 next year. Their services were terminated at the behest of the then Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal in November last year. Raj Niwas said here on Wednesday. Approving the proposal of the Government, delayed by about 12 days after he initially passed directions to this effect, Saxena has once again urged the Government to take concrete steps on formulating a scheme for bus marshals separately, as he had



directed in his letter to the Chief Minister on October 12 and reiterated in another letter dated November two, it said. The LG in his note to the Chief Minister, has asked for this scheme to clearly define roles of bus marshals, their rationale and service conditions to be approved by

the Cabinet and directed for immediate steps to be taken for creation of posts and making budgetary provisions for the same to bring the issue of bus marshals to a logical conclusion. The LG's note to the Chief Minister said "It may be recalled that your predecessor, Shri Arvind

Kejriwal, had recommended to me in October 2023, that the services of CDVs be terminated till a number is determined through a proper exercise. While responding to his note, I had suggested that a core strength of CDVs be retained in the revenue department (i.e. districts and headquarter) for the purpose of disaster related work, and had also raised the issue of livelihood concerns of CDVs who come from a humble background and had asked the government to give it serious attention. However, no proposal for deployment of CDVs had been received till September, 2024." The note said "In a DDMA meeting dated 24.10.2024, DPCC presented a grim prognosis of air quality this winter. The issue of lack of manpower for enforcement of mitigation measures was also

flagged. A decision was taken to call out CDVs specifically those who were deployed as on 31.10.2023 and engage them for air pollution mitigation activities. This measure shall serve the twin objective of providing relief to these families who were misled into being engaged for non-existent jobs, and also mitigating the impact of the disaster of air pollution in Delhi. Meanwhile, the Chief Minister Atishi placed an official note before Saxena recommending reinstatement of Bus Marshals. "It has been made amply clear by ACS Transport that the issue of bus marshals falls under the purview of LG," she said. She stated that till the formulation of a scheme, bus marshals be reinstated immediately in the same way as it was before October 31.

High stakes Delhi mayoral election scheduled today

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



The stage is set for a high-stakes mayoral election on Thursday, as BJP councillor and former East Delhi mayor Satya Sharma has been reappointed as the presiding officer. Sharma, who also presided over the previous mayoral polls in December 2022, will again oversee the proceedings, officials said. This year's contest pits AAP's Mahesh Khichi, the Devnagar councillor, against BJP's Kishan Lal from Shakurpur for the mayoral seat, with AAP's Ravinder Bhardwaj from Aman Vihar and BJP's Nita Bisht from Sadatpur competing for deputy mayor. The new mayor, a Dalit candidate, will serve a truncated five-month term due to political infighting. Since the last election, the AAP's count in the 250-member MCD House has

dropped to 125, just below the majority mark, while the BJP's tally has risen to 113. The Congress holds eight seats and three are held by independents. In the previous elections, the AAP secured 134 out of 250 seats ending the BJP's 15-year rule over the MCD. The previous election, where AAP's Shelly Oberoi won the

mayoral post, was marked by high drama, with a ruckus erupting over the lieutenant governor's nomination of 10 aldermen, which the AAP criticised as favouring the BJP. Amid escalating tensions, the swearing-in of the councillors was delayed and Oberoi took office only in February. With Sharma returning to oversee Thursday's elections, both the AAP and BJP are prepared for what could be another eventful session in the House. The elections will be held at 2 pm on Thursday following a seven-month delay, triggered by repeated disruptions in the MCD House and a stand-off between the AAP and the BJP. The process was further delayed as then-Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was in judicial custody in the excise policy case, which stalled the necessary sign-off, pushing the elections originally planned for April.

Four lakh challans issued for improper parking at and around metro stations



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Traffic Police has issued more than four lakh challans for improper parking at and around metro stations till October 22, which was over 21 per cent as compare to the corresponding period last year. According to official data, a total of 4.46 lakh challans were issued this year, while then number was 3.61 lakh in 2023 till October 22. Police had issued a total of 4.70 lakh challans in 2023. Similarly, police issued 9.26 lakh notices this year and the number was 10.86 lakh in 2023 till December 31, the data showed. According to the police, challans are issued by the traffic personnel on-site, while notices are generated online through the traffic violation detection cameras. Police also towed away 1.58 lakh vehicles in 2024 till October 22 and 1.60 lakh in 2023 till December 31. On the other hand, police have issued 94,186 challans for driving against flow of

traffic till October 22 this year which was over 65 per cent higher than 2023 when 47,828 challans were issued, the data stated. During the same period, police issued 1.28 lakh challans in 2024 and 1.09 lakh challans in 2023. Police said that the improper parking of vehicles and driving against the flow of traffic, hindrance by e-rickshaws, gramin sewa, autos at and around metro stations are amongst the major factors for traffic congestions like-wise other congested areas. The police stated that adequate traffic staff has been deployed around all metro stations and regular drives against improper parking are being conducted on regular basis at around all metro stations. "Special drives are also conducted time to time against improper parking, driving against the flow of traffic and those e-rickshaws, gramin sewa, two-wheelers and other vehicles found creating hindrance in smooth movement of traffic," police said.

Trade fair tickets available at select Delhi metro stations

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

People wanting to visit the India International Trade Fair (IITF), starting from Thursday, can avail its tickets hassle free from Delhi metro's customer care and ticket counters on 55 stations. In a statement, the corporation said, "Delhi metro, in its continued pursuit for enhanced passenger initiatives in terms of services offered, will be selling tickets starting from November 14 at Bharat Mandapam Complex- in both offline as well as online mode for the first time ever." It added that tickets will be sold till the last day of trade fair on November 27. "In addition, Delhi Metro has already started selling tickets online from November 11 wherein anyone can purchase QR tickets from its only official App- DMRC Momentum 2.0 App. One person can book 10 tickets per day through the App," it said, adding that the bookings through app also have the option to book 8-seater golf carts (with a driver) for transportation within the Bharat Mandapam premises. "These golf carts will operate in two time slots: 10:00 am to

2:00 pm and 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm. These carts will be available for four hours duration per slot," it said. On the Red Line, tickets will be available at Shaheed Sthal (New Bus Adda), Dilshad Garden, Shahdara, Inderlok, Netaji Subhash Place, Rohini West, and Riethala metro station. Tickets will be available on Samaypur Badli, Jahangir Puri, Azadpur, Guru Teg Bahadur Nagar, New Delhi, Rajiv Chowk, Central Secretariat, Delhi Haat INA, Saket, Sikanderpur, Millennium City Centre Gurugram on Yellow Line. People can avail the facility in Noida Electronic City, Sector-52 Noida, Noida City Centre, Indraprastha, Mandi House, Barakhamba, Karol Bagh, Kirti Nagar, Rajouri Garden, Uttam Nagar East, Dwarka Mor, Dwarka, Vaishali, Anand Vihar ISBT, Karkarduma and Laxmi Nagar metro station on the blue line. Punjabi Bagh, Mundka and Brig, Hoshiar Singh metro station on Green line and Kashmere Gate, Delhi Gate, I.T.O, Lajpat Nagar, Kalkaji Mandir, Badarpur Border, Raja Nahar Singh (Ballabhgarh) on Violet line will also provide the tickets.



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PM Modi lays foundation stone for AIIMS Darbhanga, showers praise on Nitish

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
DARBHANGA (BIHAR)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday showered accolades on Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, praising the alliance partner for bringing in good governance in a state which was previously reeling under "jungle raj".

Modi made a veiled attack on the Congress-RJD combine—without mentioning it by name—at a function in Darbhanga, a town in north Bihar, where he laid the foundation stone for an AIIMS and inaugurated projects worth more than Rs 12,000 crore.

In the course of his address, which lasted around 40 minutes, the Prime Minister referred to Kumar, whose JD(U) played a crucial role in enabling the NDA's return to power in the parliamentary elections earlier this year, as

"lokpriya mukhyamantri" (popular chief minister). Modi said, "Nitish babu has set up a model of sushasan (good governance)." He added, "No praise is too high for him (jitni saraahna ki jaae kam hai) for his contribution in pulling Bihar out of the era of jungle raj."

Now, under the NDA's double engine government, the state is making rapid, all-round progress."

Earlier, Kumar had thanked the Prime Minister for AIIMS, Darbhanga, even as he recalled having first made request for the super speciality hospital in the north Bihar town with late BJP leader Arun Jaitley.



The Prime Minister began his speech with a reference to the assembly polls underway in Jharkhand, which was carved out of Bihar two-and-a-half decades ago, and hoped that people in the tribal state would come out to vote in large numbers.

Modi asserted that his government worked with a "holistic approach" towards healthcare and five other such facilities elsewhere in the country".

He also spoke of other steps taken by the Centre to promote Bihar's cultural heritage like giving classical language status to Pali.

Modi also underscored that his government's policies would give a boost to export of freshwater fish and foxnuts (makhana), which are produced in abundance in Mithila region.

He also paid tributes to folk singer Sharda Sinha, who hailed from Supaul district in Mithila and passed away last week.

The Prime Minister also recalled the contributions of late Kameshwar Singh, a renowned philanthropist who was the last ruler of the princely state of Darbhanga, and remarked "even in my parliamentary constituency (Varanasi) people keep talking of his generosity".

Modi said projects like AIIMS Darbhanga will enable the people of not just Bihar but neighbouring areas in West Bengal and Nepal to avail quality medical service "instead of making a beeline to Mumbai and Delhi".

The Prime Minister also touched upon the problem of floods that ravage the Kosi-Mithila region every year, saying his government was making "honest" (imaandaar) efforts to solve the problem by holding necessary discussions with Nepal, besides drawing a detailed plan involving Rs 11,000 crore to tackle the calamity.

Others who were present at the function in Darbhanga included Governor Rajendra Arlekar, Union ministers Chirag Paswan and Nityanand Rai and Deputy Chief Ministers Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha.

India supports early ceasefire in Gaza: Jaishankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

India supports an early ceasefire in Gaza and it has consistently stood for resolution of the Palestinian issue through a two-state solution.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said here on Wednesday.

In his opening remarks at a meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Jaishankar said the situation in West Asia is a matter of "deep concern", particularly the conflict in Gaza.

The external affairs minister described Saudi Arabia as an important force for stability in the region.

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for the industries of the two sides to build new partnerships.

"Trade and investment are important pillars of our partnership, and we are strengthening our collaboration in new areas including technology, energy, renewable energy including green hydrogen, connectivity, health and education," he said.

Al Saud is on a two-day visit to India.

On the situation in Gaza, Jaishankar said any response

We support an early ceasefire," Jaishankar said. "India has consistently stood for resolution of the Palestinian issue through a two-state solution. We have also contributed to the building of Palestinian institutions and capacities," he added.

Delving into India-Saudi Arabia ties, the external affairs minister said both sides maintained a good tempo of high level engagements and coordination across multilateral fora.

"Our defence partnership has witnessed several 'firsts' over the past few years including the first ever land forces joint exercise 2024; and two editions of our joint naval exercises," he said.

"We had regular exchanges on training and capacity building. And our cooperation has now expanded in the field of defence industry and exports as well," he said.

Jaishankar also noted steady growth of security cooperation between the two sides. "We are collaborating in counter-terrorism, combat-

Defence Space Agency conducts maiden three day exercise Antariksha Abhyas successfully

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Defence Space Agency has successfully conducted maiden three-day Exercise 'Antariksha Abhyas' to enhance strategic readiness in space warfare, defence ministry said here on Wednesday.

Giving details, officials said Defence Space Agency of Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff successfully conducted the Space Table Top Exercise Antariksha Abhyas-2024 from November 11 - 13, a significant milestone aimed at bolstering the strategic readiness of the Indian Armed Forces in the domain of space warfare.

This pioneering event marked a crucial step in strengthening India's space based operational capabilities, enhancing tri-services integration for space security.

Key components of the exercise included focused discussions on emerging space technologies, space situational awareness and India's space programmes.



The discussions highlighted the importance of monitoring and protecting critical assets and maintaining situational awareness in the increasingly contested space environment. Throughout the three-day event, participants engaged in scenario based exercises, facilitated by subject experts from various Ministries and Departments of the Government of India, besides military, scientific and academia.

The experts provided valuable insights into the present and future landscape of military space capabilities and technologies, elucidating specific challenges faced in defence space operations and also the evolving nature of space safety, security, and international space laws.

Antariksha Abhyas 2024 successfully met its objectives of improving interoperability, fostering mutual understanding and enhancing cohesion between the tri-services and Defence Space Agency.

All-women CISF battalion will protect airports, metros, provide VIP security: Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said the soon to be raised all-woman battalion of the CISF will shoulder the responsibility of protecting the nation's critical infrastructure, like airports and metro rails, and provide security to VIPs as commandos.

A first-ever all-woman battalion of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) comprising more than 1,000 personnel was sanctioned by the Union government on Monday keeping in mind the burgeoning duties of the force.



"In a firm step towards realizing Modi Ji's vision of enhancing women's participation in every field of nation-building, the Modi government has approved the establishment of the first all-women battalion of the CISF.

"To be raised as an elite troop, the Mahila Battalion will shoulder

der the responsibility of protecting the nation's critical infrastructure, like airports and metro rails, and providing VIP security as commandos," Shah said in a social media post.

The home minister said the decision will certainly fulfil the aspirations of more women to participate in the crucial task of protecting the nation. Women personnel constitute more than seven per cent of the CISF whose present strength is about 1.80 lakh.

One of the central armed police forces in India, the CISF was set up in 1969 and is tasked with the security of vital government and industrial buildings.

Health Pavilion at IITF to centre around 'One Health' theme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry's Health Pavilion at the 43rd India International Trade Fair (IITF) here beginning November 14 will be centred around the theme of 'One Health', a comprehensive approach emphasising the interconnectedness of human, animal, plant and ecosystem health.

By recognising these interdependencies, 'One Health' seeks to mobilise various sectors, disciplines and communities to promote well-being and effectively address health and environmental challenges, the health ministry said in a statement. Dr V K



Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, will inaugurate the Health Pavilion on November 14 at Bharat Mandapam.

Through 39 informative stalls, the pavilion will present the ministry's major accomplishments in healthcare, with highlights on programmes and initiatives that span every stage of life.

From birth-focused initiatives like the newly launched U-WIN App, which facilitates free vaccination for pregnant women and children, to the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya

Jojana (AB-PMJAY), which now includes senior citizens over 70 years with an additional Rs 5 lakh top-up cover, the pavilion will illustrate India's efforts to provide accessible and quality healthcare for all.

Visitors will have the opportunity to participate in screenings and counselling sessions for HIV, diabetes, hypertension and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The pavilion will also feature innovative installations like the BHISHM Cube, indigenous mobile hospital showcasing its design and utility in real-world settings, the ministry statement said.

The pavilion is designed not only to be educational but also engaging for visitors of all ages.

Daily street plays, competitions and games will captivate the audience while delivering essential health messages. A specially curated kids zone will feature virtual reality games that combine fun with learning, allowing children to explore healthcare in a playful and interactive environment.

Through this immersive pavilion, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare aims to spread awareness and understanding of the 'One Health' approach, ultimately fostering a holistic view of health that integrates human, animal and environmental well-being, the statement said.

Pan-India coastal defence exercise 'Sea Vigil' to be held on November 20-21: Navy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

A pan-India coastal defence exercise aimed at assessing the current preparedness of all maritime security agencies, identifying their strengths and weaknesses and enhancing the nation's overall maritime defence framework is set to be conducted on November 20-21, the Navy said on Wednesday.

Originally conceptualised in 2018, 'Exercise Sea Vigil' was designed to validate and enhance measures adopted to bolster coastal defence post the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

"This year, participation by other Services (the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force), and planned deployment of a large number of ships and aircraft have enhanced the tempo of the exercise," according to a statement issued by the Indian Navy.

The Navy leads this exercise whose fourth edition, to be held on November 20-21, will span an "unprecedented scale", both in terms of geographical reach and the magnitude of participation, with the involvement of six ministries and 21



organisations and agencies, it said.

While coastal security exercises are conducted by individual coastal states and maritime security agencies regularly, 'Exercise Sea Vigil' coordinated by the Indian Navy stands out as a national-level initiative that provides a holistic appraisal of India's maritime defence and security capabilities.

"The exercise offers a significant opportunity to assess the current preparedness of all maritime security agencies, identify their strengths and weaknesses and enhance the nation's overall maritime defence framework," the Navy said.

The Coastal Defence and Security Readiness Evaluation

landing points and critical coastal infrastructure including the coastal population.

"Encompassing the entire 11,098-km coastline and vast Exclusive Economic Zone of 2.4 million square kilometres, this comprehensive exercise will engage complete coastal security infrastructure and all maritime stakeholders, including the fishing community and coastal populace, simultaneously," it said.

One of the aims of the exercise is to raise awareness among coastal communities about maritime security, and the involvement of fishing communities, coastal populace and students from the National Cadet Corps (NCC) and the Bharat Scouts and Guides will add to the fervour of the endeavour, the Navy said.

Serving as a precursor to the Theatre Level Readiness Operational Exercise (TROPEX), conducted biennially by the Indian Navy, 'Exercise Sea Vigil' will serve as an essential measure in reinforcing India's commitment to safeguarding its maritime boundaries and ensuring coordinated efforts among all stakeholders in coastal defence, it added.

US delegation visits Sulabh School in city

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Senior representatives from the US government and aircraft major Boeing visited Sulabh campus in the national Capital on Tuesday.

This visit underscored the impactful collaboration between Sulabh and Boeing in empowering children, with a strong emphasis on educational advancement and community development.

Among the delegation were Nancy Jackson, Deputy Assistant Secretary, US Government, Salil Gupte, President, Boeing India & South Asia, Philip M Cummings, Deputy Minister Counselor - Economic Section, US Embassy of India, Praveena Yagnambhat, Chief of Staff & BGE Lead Boeing India and South Asia.

Nancy praised Sulabh's initia-

Three-day national conference VIVIBHA 2024 to be held from November 15

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

A three-day national conference of research scholars with the objective of fostering research culture among the youth by integrating India's cultural heritage with modern methodologies will be held from November 15.

The conference "Vision for Viksit Bharat - VIVIBHA 2024" organised by RSS affiliate Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal at SGT University, Gurugram, will be inaugurated by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat.

"As part of VIVIBHA 2024, the karyakartas of Bharatiya Shiksha Mandal, reached out to more than one million students and researchers, over one lakh teachers and more than 10,000 educational institutions.

"The submitted research papers were evaluated by panel of subject experts from across the country and the selected researchers will have the opportunity to present their work at the conference," Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal national president Sachchidanand Joshi said at a press conference here.

"The Bharat-centric research initiatives will enhance the research quality and foster a spirit of learning, writing skills and a research aptitude among the youth. Vivibha will motivate the young researchers to conduct studies focused on rural development and preservation of Indian Knowledge System, which is essential of realising the dream of Viksit Bharat," he added.

As part of VIVIBHA, an exhibition is also being set up using artificial intelligence, focusing on the theme of "Research to Realisation" and Indian Knowledge System.

"The exhibition will showcase India's contributions in knowledge and science, spanning from the pioneering insights of ancient sages to groundbreaking innovations of modern scientists of India," said Joshi.

"This exhibition will offer insights into the future of education and provide young students and researchers an immersive experience of indigenous teaching methods, key reforms and technological advancements, inspiring them to contribute to a developed, superior and self-reliant India," he added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

High stakes battle

Jharkhand election is a crucial test for the ruling coalition as well as for the BJP, which seeks to reclaim its hold

The Jharkhand Assembly elections commenced with the first phase of voting on November 13, with 43 seats across 15 districts up for grabs. This election marks a pivotal moment in the state's political landscape, where two key coalitions—the BJP and the INDIA bloc led by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and Congress—are locked in a fierce battle for control of the Assembly. With high-profile candidates, pressing issues and a focus on tribal constituencies, the stakes are incredibly high for both camps. Jharkhand, carved out of Bihar in 2000, has been a battleground for various political parties, with the BJP historically dominating the state. However, in the last Assembly elections in 2019, the BJP lost power, managing to secure only 25 seats out of the total 81. The JMM emerged as the largest party, winning 30 seats and subsequently forming a coalition government with the Congress, which won 16 seats and the RJD, which held one. This alliance brought Hemant Soren of the JMM into the Chief Minister's seat,



where he has served for the last five years. Hemant Soren's tenure, however, has faced turbulence, including a brief removal from office after his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in a corruption case. Despite these setbacks, Soren has returned to the political stage with a renewed campaign to lead the INDIA bloc's bid for re-election.

The election campaign has highlighted multiple contentious issues. One of the most polarising topics has been "Bangladeshi infiltration." Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is spearheading the BJP's campaign in Jharkhand, has accused the Hemant Soren-led administration of facilitating illegal migration

from Bangladesh for political benefits. Soren, in response, has accused the BJP of sowing communal discord in the state, with support from Congress's national leadership. His counter-campaign has focused on emphasising the BJP's alleged divisive politics and positioning the JMM-led INDIA bloc as a safeguard for Jharkhand's communal harmony and tribal rights. The first phase features several high-stakes contests with major political figures. Among these is the Seraikella seat, where former Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren, who recently left the JMM after four decades to join the BJP, will contest. In Jamshedpur East, Congress's Ajoy Kumar faces off against BJP's Purnima Das Sahu. In Jamshedpur West, Congress Health Minister Banna Gupta is up against JD(U) leader Saryu Roy, who gained fame after defeating Raghuraj Das in 2019 when Das was the sitting Chief Minister. For the BJP, regaining control in Jharkhand is crucial in their larger national strategy to consolidate power in eastern India, especially given their historical dominance in the state. The INDIA bloc, however, views retaining Jharkhand as a cornerstone for strengthening their coalition at a national level. Ultimately, it is the voter sentiment on the ground and the influence of tribal constituencies which are likely to play decisive roles in Jharkhand elections.

PICTALK



Young men play cricket as dark clouds hover in the sky at the Marina Beach, in Chennai

India's tax overhaul: Why simplification is the key



SUBHASH CHANDRA AGRAWAL

There is an urgent need for structural reform, streamlining tax rates and enhanced digital transaction incentives to bring clarity, efficiency and fairness to tax regime

The Indian tax system is notoriously complex and outdated, rooted in the six-decade-old Income Tax Act of 1961, which has undergone numerous amendments. These frequent, piecemeal adjustments have created a convoluted tax structure, leaving both taxpayers and administrators struggling with a lack of clarity. Similarly, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) system, introduced in 2017 as a landmark reform to streamline indirect taxes, has also accumulated a variety of confusing provisions and multiple tax rates, making compliance challenging and costly for businesses. This layering of amendments and patchwork reforms in both direct and indirect tax regimes highlights the need for a comprehensive overhaul that simplifies the tax structure.

A unified, streamlined tax regime should be introduced, minimising the countless exemptions that are prone to misuse. Implementing the recommendations of the Raja Chelliah Committee to cap the highest income tax rate at 30 per cent in alignment with global norms had previously succeeded in reducing black money transactions. However, with the reintroduction of additional surcharges and cess, this advantage has largely been negated. Restoring the 30 per cent cap on the highest tax slab would encourage more individuals to report their income accurately, avoiding tax evasion. An alternative solution could be to establish a permanent Voluntary Disclosure Scheme (VDS). Such a system would bring informal transactions, especially in high-value sectors like real estate, into the official economy if accompanied by a reduction in property registration fees to around 3 per cent. To foster transparency and discourage tax evasion, names of taxpayers disclosing income under this scheme could be made public on a government website. Rationalising income tax exemptions would also help simplify the tax landscape. The baseline exemption limit should be set at Rs 5 lakh, removing exemptions for charitable donations, political contributions and even agricul-



tural income, which are often exploited by high-net-worth individuals and celebrities to channel unaccounted income under the guise of agricultural profits. Farmers typically do not earn over Rs 5 lakh annually, so a limit based on this threshold could curtail abuse. Income between Rs5-10 lakh could be taxed at 10 per cent and income between Rs10-15 lakh at 20 per cent, with income above Rs 15 lakh subject to the 30 per cent rate. Additionally, adopting the recommendation of the LK Jha Committee to shift the financial year from April-March to the calendar year would align India's practices with international standards, further streamlining the tax system.

One glaring inefficiency in the tax system is the reliance on cash transactions, particularly for smaller amounts. All transactions above Rs10,000 should be conducted through banks. To encourage this, transaction fees on credit card payments should be reduced to 0.5 per cent-exempt from GST- and absorbed by the central government, which would also discontinue incentives for credit card purchases. This reduced fee would significantly increase credit card usage and thus bring more transactions into the formal economy. Currently, the high 2 per cent transaction fee often deters traders from using cards, especially in sectors with low profit margins, leading to extra charges for customers. Increased credit card usage would generate substantial tax revenue and boost the income



A SIMPLIFIED GST STRUCTURE WITH JUST THREE TAX SLABS-6 PER CENT, 12 PER CENT AND 30 PER CENT -WOULD BE FAR MORE MANAGEABLE THAN THE CURRENT SYSTEM WITH MULTIPLE RATES. INDIA REMAINS ONE OF THE FEW COUNTRIES WITH SUCH A FRAGMENTED GST SYSTEM, WHICH IS OFTEN BEWILDERING FOR BUSINESSES

of banks issuing cards, despite the lower transaction fee. To facilitate smooth payments, every GST-registered dealer should maintain at least two card-swiping machines and those refusing to accept cards should face strict penalties. Another significant concern is the Input Tax Credit (ITC) mechanism in the GST regime, which has become a hotbed for tax evasion, especially in manufacturing. Unsold GST invoices are often purchased by manufacturers seeking ITC, who then receive cash back from sellers. This practice has exacerbated the currency-in-circulation issue that demonetization sought to address. To prevent misuse, an annual forensic audit could be mandated for all ITC claims. An even better solution might be to eliminate the 18 per cent GST slab and restrict ITC eligibility to specific sectors like tradable goods, which would streamline GST compliance for manufacturers and reduce tax evasion. A simplified GST structure with just three tax slabs-6 per cent, 12 per cent and 30 per cent-would be far more manageable than the current system with multiple rates. India remains one of the few countries with such a fragmented GST system, which is often bewildering for businesses. Over time, the 6 per cent and 12 per cent slabs could be consolidated into a single 10 per cent rate. Essential raw materials such as agricultural products, fish and cotton yarn, which require further processing, could remain

exempt. High-value items like cars, appliances, and electronics should fall under the 30 per cent GST bracket, while parts for these items could be taxed at 12 per cent. The existing system, which categorises similar items under different rates, such as clutch plates at 18 per cent and clutch bearings at 28 per cent, causes unnecessary confusion. Similarly, edible items sold by confectioners are subject to different rates, with sweets, biscuits and snacks varying between 5 per cent and 28 per cent.

Jewelry is another area that could benefit from rationalisation. The GST on gold jewelry could be split into two parts-one for the metal content and the other for making charges. Cess on luxury items could be replaced with additional GST slabs, ideally bringing petroleum products under the GST regime to standardise fuel prices nationwide. Further reforms should address inconsistencies in applying GST to government transactions, postal services, and foreign mail tariffs. It is counterintuitive for government payments to incur GST, as this creates unnecessary accounting complexities, merely transferring funds between government departments. Similarly, postal rates, both domestic and international, require a more logical pricing structure with consistent increments.

(The writer is Guinness World Record holder and RTI Consultant; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

YUNUS FACES CHALLENGES

Madam— Bangladesh's interim government led by Muhammad Yunus, which has shown very few signs of effectively tackling major problems confronting the country, intends to approach Interpol to arrest and bring back former premier Sheikh Hasina and other members of her administration. The people in Bangladesh remain concerned about the high cost of living, law and order and the return of Islamist forces suppressed under Hasina. The world community has its concerns about violence against minority communities, especially Hindus, who make up 8 per cent of the country's population. The Yunus-led setup needs to rethink its priorities if it wants a healthy electoral democracy for Bangladesh, especially at a time when members of the caretaker administration appear to be working at cross purposes.

The Yunus government is also seeking to impose a ban on the Awami League. An election without the Awami League will be a sham; it will be the same kind of controlled democracy Hasina imposed on Bangladesh to prevent her rivals from participating in electoral politics. Yunus, an unelected caretaker, should provide the healing touch of reconciliation rather than letting radical colleagues, some with dubious antecedents, dictate the politics of revenge. At the same time, Yunus should not let political chaos return to Bangladesh, harming relations with neighbours and derailing the positive economic path the country had been pursuing.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Washington

ARAB LEADERS UNITE

Madam— Arab and Muslim leaders gathered in Saudi Arabia for a summit to address Israel's conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon. The summit, organised by the Saudi Foreign Ministry, comes a year after a similar meeting condemned Israel's actions in Gaza. Leaders are expected to discuss ongoing violence and regional developments, as well as call for an end

Health risks of tattooing



The growing trend of tattooing, which has become a widespread fashion among people of all ages, including celebrities and common individuals. However, this practice often continues without consideration of its harmful health impacts. The increase in tat-

toeing has been linked to the spread of serious diseases. For instance, in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, 60 women were diagnosed with an AIDS-like disease due to the repeated use of a single, HIV-infected needle.

Such unsafe practices pose a significant threat, leading to the spread of diseases like HIV and hepatitis. Additionally, reports warn of a potential risk of skin cancer from tattoo inks containing harmful chemicals such as polyethylene glycol. These findings emphasise the urgent need for awareness and caution. It is crucial for individuals to ensure that tattoo parlours use sterilised needles and safe, approved inks. Consulting a doctor before getting a tattoo can also help mitigate health risks. Public health authorities should conduct awareness campaigns to educate people about these dangers.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

increase military equipment with immediate effect.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

RENEW CRICKET TIES

Madam— It will be nice if the BCCI reconsiders its decision of not sending the Indian cricket team to Pakistan to participate in the Champions Trophy to be held there next year.

Unlike politics, sports enable people to channel emotional impulses through victory and defeat, which may help explain why some key India-Pakistan cricket games have helped both nations move closer diplomatically in tense geopolitical environments. Through phased timelines and subnational trust-based initiatives, India and Pakistan can certainly resume cricketing ties and normalise their political relations. The Champions Trophy 2025 provides a great opportunity to realise the same.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Diverse, climate-responsive design is key to net-zero goals

As cities push toward net-zero targets, it is crucial to consider how climate-responsive design can drive a sustainable future

Diversity is the rule of nature. Unfortunately, globalisation has made uniformity a common rule of thumb. This uniform culture not only erodes the cultural diversity we used to observe in every corner of the world but also harms the environment. It is imperative to look closely at how building architecture contributes to the stability of the environment.

The universalisation of building architecture poses a significant challenge to achieving net-zero targets. Though widely adopted for efficiency and branding purposes, this "one-size-fits-all" approach may ultimately hinder the push for sustainable, regionally adaptable and carbon-neutral construction. Different regions possess unique climatic and environmental conditions, from the humidity of tropical areas to the aridity of deserts and the chill of temperate zones. The universal approach to architecture fails to acknowledge these variations, leading to buildings that are fundamentally out of sync with their surroundings. For example, glass buildings are highly



energy-intensive in hot climates, requiring powerful air conditioning to maintain comfort levels. Traditional architecture provides a blueprint for climate-responsive design. Indigenous buildings reflect local knowledge of materials and climate, demonstrating how structures can achieve comfort with minimal energy input. For example, the traditional architecture of Kerala, the nalukettu style (four-sided structure with a central open courtyard), an ettukettu (eight-sided) or even a pathinarukettu (sixteen-sided) layout brings in natural light and ventilation, creating a cooling effect within the home. The steep, sloping roofs of clay tiles that usual-

ly adorn the traditional architecture allow rainwater to run off efficiently during Kerala's monsoon season. This roof style not only serves to prevent waterlogging but also helps keep the interiors cool.

Similarly, the thatched houses made from palm leaves, straw, or reeds provide excellent thermal insulation, making the interiors naturally cool. These traditional designs, often overlooked or deemed "outdated," hold valuable lessons for sustainable construction. These structures rely heavily on artificial heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems by ignoring local environmental factors, resulting in increased energy consumption and carbon emissions. Incorporating regional adaptations into building codes can encourage architects and developers to consider climate-responsive designs. Municipalities and urban planners play a critical role by mandating energy-efficient designs aligned with the local environment. Additionally, incentive structures—such as tax breaks or subsidies for buildings that achieve high

environmental ratings using regional materials—could drive more developers toward climate-responsive practices. Achieving net zero requires a fundamental shift in how we conceive, design, and construct buildings. Global architectural firms and developers must recognise that regional adaptation is not a limitation but an opportunity for innovation.

A glass-and-steel tower may look sleek, but its environmental footprint should be minimised by integrating green roofs, indigenous materials, and passive climate strategies. Ultimately, the transition to net zero requires a new paradigm where buildings are no longer static, universal symbols of modernity but dynamic, responsive structures that work with—rather than against—their environment. Embracing diversity in architecture is not just about aesthetics or cultural representation; it is an essential strategy for sustainable living in a warming world.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN



FIRST COLUMN

MAKE A HABIT OF PRAYING

Praying is the easiest and best way to take shelter from God



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We, souls, are intrinsically small, quite ignorant, unsafe and mostly helpless. God is omnipotent, omniscient and controller. God is quite prepared to guide and help, but we have to pray for His guidance and help. God won't do it on His own, because that will encroach upon our free will. So, what is the wise thing to do? Just pray. It is as simple as that. Not praying is not really an option. Otherwise, we will begin to speculate and, yes, worry. Why does one not pray? There are two main reasons.

One is ignorance about its benefits. The other is a feeling that one doesn't need God's help; I can manage. We don't till we get in trouble. We can pray anytime; God doesn't mind. Strangely, we request favours from so many, but not from God, who is the source of everything. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 10.41) Praying is a positive act. This is linked with our desires, which define us. Did you not know that all worship is praying only? All schools worldwide start with prayers. Prayers are of three types. One is for what we feel we need. (9.22) The second is for the protection of what we have like health. (9.22) The third and most important is to protect us when there are good times.

Lord Krishna has commended those who can tolerate 'sukha' just as one tolerates 'duhkha' (2.14, 2.38 and 12.13) Because all big mistakes are generally made in happy times only when one feels that one cannot do any wrong. This is when lust raises its ugly head the most. The mind becomes super active prodded by senses. (15.7) God can



help as only He can. But before doing that ego has to be curbed. We have to accept that someone can be superior to us and to such an extent that we must take His shelter. This is how we get started. You begin praying and start becoming deserving of favours by God, because praying is a spiritual act, as it links us with God. Does being connected with the rich and powerful not bring some benefits? Then, God owns all that we see.

Yes, it is all His; we get it to use for a limited period only. Then, we are relocated. Now I will list what all we can pray for. This is not an exhaustive list, but it will be a good beginning. The first must be for guidance because direction is all important. Who is better placed than God, who is omniscient and knows past, present and future also. The second on my list is help from God. Who again is better placed than God – the omnipotent?

Don't we get in trouble helplessly? God can help. (18.58) The third must be for 'shakti' (strength) of five kinds, which are inner strength (Atma Bala), intellectual strength, mental strength, physical strength and strength to be able to tolerate. We need all of them, especially the toleration part because we must tolerate what cannot be avoided. (2.10) Aren't we living in 'duhkhalaya' (place of miseries) (8.15) Material wealth is on everyone's list. This is possible if we remain in contact with God. (18.78) Not only wealth but success is there to be had if we pray and pray sincerely for all our 'dharma' (according to 'dharma') activities. (18.78)

The conclusion is that praying is the easiest and best way to take shelter from God. And as we receive what we crave for, and we can thank gratefully. What this will do is make us deserving of more rewards from God. Life will be nicely set. Keep praying.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

Are e-commerce giants violating FDI norms?



UTTAM GUPTA

As policymakers consider future regulatory steps, the ongoing ED investigation may serve as a pivotal moment in clarifying the regulatory framework for e-commerce operations in India



Reportedly, on October 7, 2024, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) raided the offices of half a dozen sellers operating on the e-commerce platforms of Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart for alleged violations of Foreign Investment norms and Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The intent behind the searches was to gather evidence on complaints that these sellers have been importing products from China but routing them through other locations to avoid paying higher import duties and longer time in getting the consignment cleared at the ports (that would be the case if the products were imported directly from China involving higher import tariff and more security-related checks).

The agency also wanted to verify if the firms had indulged in 'under-invoicing', a practice that involves understatement of the true value of goods to save on payment of import duty. Establishing such violations will be less of a headache for the enforcement authorities although proving them in the court will remain a challenge apart from the process being long drawn. However, the big headache relates to proving violations of the norms relating to foreign direct investment (FDI). E-commerce, put simply, is the practice of buying and selling goods or services using the Internet. Amazon and Flipkart essentially operate the "market-place" model of e-commerce – a special dispensation carved out by the Narendra Modi Government under which 100 per cent FDI is permitted.

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade or DPIIT in the Ministry of Commerce and Industries issued a Press Note (PN) in 2016 detailing the guidelines in this regard. The "market-place" is a platform where vendors sell their products to consumers even as its owner (say, Amazon) merely acts as a facilitator. The marketplace owner books orders, raises invoices, arranges deliveries, accepts payments, handles rejections, warehousing and so on. But, he can't own and control the inventory of goods and undertake "direct selling" to the consumer. But, this is happening.

The charge has been levelled by none other than the Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal. At the launch of the Pahl India Foundation's report 'Net Impact



AMAZON IS SELLING PRODUCTS ON ITS E-COMMERCE PLATFORM AT UNREALISTICALLY LOW PRICES WHICH RESULTS IN HEAVY LOSSES ESTIMATED TO BE ABOUT A BILLION DOLLARS ANNUALLY

of E-Commerce on Employment and Consumer Welfare in India' on August 21, 2024, Goyal took a shot at Amazon, for selling products directly to consumers and indulging in "predatory pricing". That could lead to massive growth of e-commerce capturing half of the Indian retail market ten years from now. This would adversely impact an estimated 100 million small retailers across the country. Predatory pricing involves setting prices for a product at an unrealistically low level to undercut the competition and gain market share. Generally practised by a new player, predatory pricing violates antitrust laws even as it seeks to create a monopoly. Goyal opines that Amazon is selling products on its e-commerce platform at unrealistically low prices which results in heavy losses estimated to be about a billion dollars annually. To fund these losses, it brings the money from its parent but camouflages it as FDI. Pertinently, he levelled these charges in 2020 also.

Apart from the top brass in the political establishment being fully seized of the matter, it has engaged the attention of the judiciary up to the level of the country's top court. In 2019, Delhi Vyapar Mahasangh (DVM) complained to the Competition Commission of India (CCI) alleging anti-competitive behaviour by Amazon Seller Services (ASS) and Flipkart Internet Private Limited (FIPL).

It argued that ASS and FIPL had entered into exclusive sales agreements with smartphone makers to sell certain phones through a small number of preferred sellers and offering to pay for part of the discount that such sellers would offer during key sales periods such as Flipkart's big billion day and Amazon's Prime Day. Prima facie, the CCI agreed with DVM's contention and ordered a probe by the Director General (DG) – Investigation. ASS and

FIPL went up to the Supreme Court (SC) to get the order quashed. In August 2021, dismissing their appeal, the SC ordered "the CCI – DG will complete the probe. In its recent findings, the CCI-DG has charged ASS and FIPL with indulging in 'predatory pricing' and violation of antitrust laws. Has Amazon/Flipkart violated FDI norms also?"

To answer this let us look at the fine print. While allowing 100 per cent FDI in a market-place model of e-commerce, the PN (2016) had prescribed two main riders viz., (i) the entity can't permit more than 25 per cent of total sales on its platform from one vendor or its group companies". (ii) it can't directly or indirectly influence the sale price. The first condition didn't specify that a firm connected with the owner of "market-place" (say its subsidiary or its joint venture or JV with an Indian company) couldn't be a vendor. Thus, contrary to the real intent of the policy which disallowed the e-commerce platform owners from direct selling to individual consumers, the fine print permitted them to do so. Putting a cap of 25 per cent on each such entity led to a bizarre scenario whereby four JVs or subsidiaries of Amazon could control all of the sales on its platform.

And, having permitted it as a direct seller, you can't prevent him from deciding/influencing the price. Thus, the second condition becomes redundant. Meanwhile, the extant policy permits FDI in business-to-business or B2B segments in physical/offline format. This has enabled Amazon and Flipkart to set up offline stores. From these stores, they sell products to sellers (many of such entities are the darlings of the duo or JVs set up in collaboration with them), who in turn, sell those products on their marketplace platform.

So, it was a well-crafted policy framework intended to enable e-commerce majors to do all that is necessary to control inventory and undertake direct selling to consumers on their own marketplace platform. Meanwhile, in a note issued on December 26, 2018, the DPIIT clarified that "the owner of the marketplace or its subsidiary or its JV with Indian company can't have ownership of the seller." Further, "a seller on the platform can't source more than 25 per cent of its inventory from a firm connected with the latter. The above clarification has prompted e-commerce majors to rework strategies in a manner such that their links with the 'preferred' sellers are not clearly visible.

Meanwhile, the enforcement agencies are in full action mode raiding the latter's premises, looking at the documents with the intent to identify and expose such links. But, this won't lead them anywhere. The government should face the facts head-on. If, its original intent was to ensure that the marketplace can't have any connection whatsoever with the seller whether by way of ownership or sourcing of the latter's inventory, that should have been mentioned in the guidelines issued in 2016. Anything done subsequently even if it comes by way of a clarification will be considered a retrospective change of policy and send a wrong signal. Instead of going back, the government should clearly say '100 per cent FDI is permitted in direct selling to consumers alongside running a marketplace model. It should also allow 100 per cent FDI in retail in all forms, single-brand or multi-brand retail (MBR), online or offline sans any riders. All these distinctions should go. This will enable millions of Indian retailers to have 'unrestrained' access to foreign capital thereby ensuring a level playing field.

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

Taiwan and India: A partnership in climate action and sustainable development

This partnership is poised to make meaningful contributions to net-zero transitions, green finance and climate adaptation, paving the way for a resilient future

As climate change reshapes our world, Taiwan and India, like many other nations, find themselves grappling with the profound challenges it brings. As major economies in the Indo-Pacific, Taiwan and India not only bear responsibility for their environmental welfare but also share a commitment to addressing the global climate crisis.

Our cooperation on climate change holds immense potential, as Taiwan and India pursue a shared vision of green growth, innovation and sustainable development. In recent years, Taiwan has faced severe impacts from climate change, including the worst drought in a century, unprecedented rainfall and powerful typhoons. Under the leader-



BAUSHUAN GER

ship of President Lai Ching-te, Taiwan has outlined a comprehensive strategy for achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

This vision includes advancing a second energy transition, accelerating the development of geothermal, hydrogen, biomass, solar and ocean energy, fostering a dual digital and green transformation of industries, and promoting sustainable lifestyles. Taiwan's

net-zero journey prioritises fairness, ensuring that every individual benefits from this transformative process. In June, Taiwan established the National Climate Change Committee under the Office of the President. This high-level initiative strengthens Taiwan's efforts with global climate goals.

With a focus on seven key areas—including pathways to net-zero, diverse carbon reduction technologies, green finance and sustainable living—the committee provides a solid foundation for both domestic and international climate action. Taiwan's commitment to climate governance offers an opportunity for new collaborations with

India on issues of mutual interest. India has demonstrated its ambition to become a global leader in clean energy, possessing rich resources for renewable energy development.

Taiwan, a world leader in green technology, climate adaptation and low-carbon innovation, complements India's strengths, allowing both countries to accelerate their sustainable development goals. Taiwan has integrated its 2050 net-zero target into the Climate Change Response Act and will implement a carbon fee system starting in 2025.

This initial carbon fee of approximately USD 10 per ton of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) will gradually increase, aligning with inter-



national standards of USD 40 to USD 60 per tCO₂e by 2030. Additionally, Taiwan plans to introduce an emissions trading system within the next four years, enhancing its role in the global carbon market. This framework presents a robust platform for cooperation in carbon markets, policy exchanges, and technology sharing. Taiwan is launching three major funds to

boost the growth of green industries, including the NT\$10 billion Green Growth Fund to support emerging net-zero industries domestically. Additionally, long-term investments in energy-saving, circular economy, and net-zero sectors will be supported by the Green Finance Innovation Fund, backed by the insurance and finance sectors.

The Taiwan Net-Zero Fund will collaborate with high-emission industries, venture capital, and financial institutions to invest in advanced carbon reduction technologies. These initiatives align with Article 9 of the Paris Agreement, which calls for mobilising climate finance from various sources to support global climate actions.

Taiwan's efforts will attract greater green investment, strengthen international competitiveness and deepen its climate partnership with India. In the realm of climate adaptation, Taiwan released its latest National Climate Change Science Report in May.

This report provides essential scientific data to assist local governments in planning effective short- and medium-term adaptation measures, enhancing urban resilience. It underscores the need for early-warning systems and disaster prevention mechanisms that integrate prediction, response and recovery. Taiwan's adaptation initiatives align with Article 7 of the Paris Agreement and we see

great potential for Taiwan and India to collaborate on early-warning technologies, disaster prevention and resilience-building, strengthening both nations' ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Taiwan and India share a clear goal in climate action. Bilateral cooperation will promote green growth and jointly confront the global climate crisis. As Taiwan advances carbon pricing and green technologies, we look forward to deepening cooperation with India in renewable energy, net-zero transition, and technological innovation, contributing together to global climate governance.

(The writer is Taiwan's Representative to India; views are personal)

Judge delays ruling on Trump's conviction

AP NEW YORK

A judge on Tuesday postponed a decision on whether to undo President-elect Donald Trump's conviction in his hush money case as prosecutors consider how to proceed in light of last week's election and his lawyers argue for dismissal so he can run the country.

court. He said prosecutors need to consider how to balance the "competing interests" of the jury's verdict and the presidency. Trump lawyer Emil Bove, meanwhile, argued the case must be thrown out altogether "to avoid unconstitutional impediments to President Trump's ability to govern."

Steven Cheung heralded the delay. He said in a statement that the president-elect's win makes it abundantly clear that Americans want an immediate end to the weaponisation of our justice system, including this case, which should have never been filed".

the Supreme Court ruled that ex-presidents can't be prosecuted for actions they took in the course of running the country, and prosecutors can't cite those actions even to bolster a case centered on purely personal conduct.

fronted the money. He later recouped it through a series of payments that Trump's company logged as legal expenses. Trump, by then in the White House, signed most of the checks himself.

Russia launches first missile attack on Kyiv in months as NKorean troops fight in Kursk

AP KYIV

Russia attacked the Ukrainian capital Kyiv with a sophisticated combination of missiles and drones for the first time in 73 days on Wednesday, authorities reported, as the Pentagon said most of the North Korean troops sent to help Moscow's war effort are fighting to drive Ukraine's army off Russian soil in the Kursk border region.

skills and basic infantry operations, including trench clearing, Pentagon deputy spokesman Vedant Patel told a briefing Tuesday. The cooperation faces challenges, according to the Pentagon, including how to achieve military interoperability and overcoming the language barrier.

Table for SANEH INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENTS LIMITED. Includes financial results for the quarter and half year ended September 30, 2024. Columns include Standalone and Consolidated figures for various quarters.

Table for SUPERIOR FINLEASE LIMITED. Includes financial results for the quarter and half year ended 30th September, 2024. Columns include Quarter ended, Half Year ended, and Year ended figures.

Table for UNITED LEASING AND INDUSTRIES LIMITED. Includes financial results for the quarter ended on 30th September, 2024. Columns include Sr. No., Particulars, Quarter ended, Preceding 3 Months ended, Corresponding 3 months ended, Current Year ended.

Table for RenServ Global Private Limited. Includes financial results for the quarter and half year ended 30 September 2024. Columns include Particulars, Quarter ended, Half Year ended, and Year ended figures.

Table for PRAKASH WOOLLEN & SYNTHETIC MILLS LIMITED. Includes financial results for the quarter and half year ended 30/09/2024. Columns include Particulars, 3 months ended, Preceding 3 months ended, Corresponding 3 months ended, Year to date, Previous year ended.

China holds combat drills at disputed Scarborough Shoal

AP BEIJING

China held sea and air combat drills Wednesday at the disputed Scarborough Shoal, an area of reefs and rocks the Philippines also claims in the South China Sea.

"This is a patrol and guard activity carried out by the theatre troops in accordance with the law," the People's Liberation Army's southern command said in a short statement.

Public Notice section containing multiple notices from various entities including Cubical Financial Services Limited, Ashwani Kumar Gupta, and Fedders Electric and Engineering Limited.

Notes section for RenServ Global Private Limited. Includes 8 numbered points detailing financial ratios, accounting principles, and regulatory compliance information.

Notes section for Prakash Woollen & Synthetic Mills Limited. Includes 5 numbered points detailing financial results, accounting practices, and regulatory compliance information.

British author Samantha Harvey wins Booker Prize

PTI ■ LONDON

British author Samantha Harvey has won the 2024 Booker Prize for her ambitious and beautiful 'Orbital', which becomes the first novel set in space to win the 50,000-pound literary prize selected from a historic shortlist that was dominated by women this year.

reflecting on the individual and collective value of every human life. "I originally thought, 'Why on earth would anybody want to hear from a woman at her desk in Wiltshire writing about space, imagining what it's like being in space when people have actually been there,'" said Harvey, who dedicated her award to everybody who "speaks for and not against the Earth."



sunrises and 16 sunsets. Everyone and no one is the subject, as six astronauts in the International Space Station circle the Earth observing the passages of weather across the fragility of borders and time zones. With her language of lyricism and acuity, Harvey makes our world strange and new for us," said artist-author Edmund de Waal, chair of the 2024 Booker judges.

Nitin Sawhney, novelist Sara Collins, fiction editor of 'The Guardian' newspaper Justine Jordan and Chinese American writer and professor Yiyun Li. The female-dominated shortlist this year included American author Rachel Kushner for the spy thriller 'Creation Lake', Canadian Anne Michaels for her familial tale 'Held', Australian Charlotte Wood for her philosophical 'Stone Yard Devotional' and Yael van der Woude, the first Dutch author to be shortlisted, for her debut novel 'The Safekeep'.

a dramatic increase in global sales and a career transformed overnight. The Booker Prize 2023 was won by Paul Lynch with 'Prophet Song', which saw a 1,500 per cent increase in sales in the week after its win. In the year since, sales of the English-language edition of his book have increased by more than half a million copies, with sales across all formats now totalling more than 560,000 worldwide.

Stage set for parliamentary polls in Sri Lanka today

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka is set to hold on Thursday its snap parliamentary election — first after the 2022 economic crisis — amid deployment of nearly 90,000 security personnel across the country. Voting will take place at over 3,314 polling stations across the country, from 7 am to 4 pm local time with over 17 million voters from the island's 21 million population eligible to vote for the 225 member parliament for a five-year term.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout programme. The country is still in the process of recovering from its worst economic crisis in history as the Dissanayake government faces the challenge of meeting the IMF targets on revenue in the third review of the USD 2.9 billion programme. On Thursday, the western province district of Gampaha would elect the highest number of Members of Parliament — 19 with the capital district of Colombo from the same province electing 18 MPs. The eastern province district of Trincomalee will elect the lowest number — just 4 MPs.

Olaf Scholz to seek trust vote in Dec

AP ■ BERLIN

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has announced that he will ask for a vote of confidence on December 16, paving the way forward for an early parliamentary election in February. Scholz declared his plans for a vote of confidence during a speech in parliament on Wednesday, one week after his three-party coalition government collapsed.

Amsterdam warns of new calls for unrest

AP ■ AMSTERDAM

A senior police officer warned Tuesday of calls for more rioting in Amsterdam, after dozens of people armed with sticks and firecrackers set a tram on fire Monday night and the city faces tensions following violence last week targeting fans of an Israeli soccer club.

outlining what happened last week, including new details about actions by Maccabi Tel Aviv fans ahead of the Maccabi Tel Aviv-Ajax soccer match. Local authorities had decided against banning the game, but beefed up security. Pro-Palestinian demonstrators were banned by local authorities from gathering outside the stadium.

Dubai approves first aerial taxi vertiport, set for 2026 launch

PTI ■ DUBAI

Dubai has approved the construction of its first aerial taxi vertiport near Dubai International Airport, marking a major step towards becoming the first city to offer urban aerial transport. The vertiport, designed to blend seamlessly with Dubai's skyline, will provide passengers a unique, efficient, and comfortable travel experience in the skies.

carry out rehearsals from 7 am on Wednesday," Ratnayaka said. Thursday's vote would be the first major test of the popularity of the ruling party, National People's Power, led by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake. Having failed to secure 50 per cent of the vote at the September 21 presidential election, Dissanayake is pleading for a stronger parliament with well over a simple majority of 113 seats in order to implement his anti-corruption accountability reformist programme. This will be the first parliamentary election since Sri Lanka plunged into an economic crisis when the island nation declared sovereign default in mid-April of 2022, its first since gaining independence from Britain in 1948.

My Client Sh. Prafull Kumar Thakur S/O Sh. Sachidanand Thakur & Smt. Vrinda Devi W/o Sh. Prafull Kumar Thakur both R/o E-71, Gali No.3, Savitrida Enclave, Bagpura Vihar, Delhi - 110043 has served all their relations with their son & daughter-in-law namely Vicky Kumar Thakur & Nisha Mishra and also debar them from their all moveable/immovable properties due to their misconduct.

Public Notice: My Client Sh. Prafull Kumar Thakur S/O Sh. Sachidanand Thakur & Smt. Vrinda Devi W/o Sh. Prafull Kumar Thakur both R/o E-71, Gali No.3, Savitrida Enclave, Bagpura Vihar, Delhi - 110043 has served all their relations with their son & daughter-in-law namely Vicky Kumar Thakur & Nisha Mishra and also debar them from their all moveable/immovable properties due to their misconduct.

Table for Rungta Irrigation Limited financial results. Includes columns for Particulars, For the Quarter Ended (30/09/2024, 30/06/2024, 30/09/2023), For the Half Year Ended (30/09/2024, 30/09/2023), and Year Ended (31/03/2024, Audited).

Public Notice: Since Mr. Shiv Sankar seeking a home loan from Aditya Birla Housing Finance Ltd. for the property i.e. Property Bearing No. E-12, area measuring 294.86 sq. mtrs. situated in Sector-2, Residential Colony known as Rajendra Nagar, Ghaziabad, Tehsil & District Ghaziabad, U.P.

Table for RLF LIMITED financial results. Includes columns for Sr. No., Particulars, Quarter ended (30/06/2024), Preceding 3 Months ended (31Mar2024), Corresponding 3 months ended in the previous year (30 Jun2023), and Current Year ended (31Mar 2024).

Notes: The above Financial Results were reviewed by the Members of Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors at their respective Meeting held on 12th November, 2024. The Statutory Auditors of the company have carried out a Limited Review of the Financial Results for these financials.

Under the instructions from my client BEENA RANI W/o Hari Singh resident of Flat no. 8, Pocket C, Dillshad Garden, Delhi 110095, it is hereby notified to the general public that henceforth my above-named client has ceased all her relations with Mrs. Komal wife of their deceased son Deepak Kumar and her kids master Krishna Singh and miss Yashika completely and forever and further my client doesn't show their after said daughter in law and her kids. It is hereby clarified that henceforth the said daughter-in-law and her kids of my client shall not accede any of their property assets movable and immovable as legal heirs at any point of time and any person dealing with her may deal with her at his/her own risk and responsibility for which my client shall not be held responsible.

Public Notice: Rec. Entire First Floor without roof rights, having covered area 116.94 sq. mtrs. (i.e. 6 b/s of the said floor), built on Plot No. 77/0, measuring 168.32 sq. mtrs., situated in Sector-2, Residential Colony known as Rajendra Nagar, Ghaziabad, Tehsil & District Ghaziabad, U.P.

ACT women's hockey: India look to work on finer points against Thailand

PTI ■ RAJGIR (BIHAR)
 Buoyed by back-to-back victories in as many games, hosts India will look to work on the finer points of the game with an aim to thrash minnows Thailand in the women's Asian Champions Trophy here on Thursday.
 Both India and reigning Olympic silver medallist China are unbeaten so far from two matches but the hosts have an inferior goal difference.
 China are atop the points table with a goal difference of 20, while India have a goal difference of five and a handsome victory on Thursday will only help their cause ahead of final two round robin matches against China and Japan.
 Japan are placed third in the points table ahead of Korea. The top four sides from the round robin stage will qualify for the semifinals of the six-team continental tournament.
 In both the matches India created plenty of scoring chances but failed to score the amount of goals they would have liked.
 While India defeated Malaysia 4-0 in their tournament opener, they scored a late goal to eke out a narrow 3-2 win over South Korea. The Indian players were guilty of rushing and faltered in choices once inside the opposition circle, a



fact which chief coach Harendra Singh admitted. "We could have scored more goals. We were guilty of rushing and did not look for the right choices," Harendra said after Tuesday's match. "We will watch clippings of the match and analyse where we went wrong and work on the finer points," he added. Another factor which would be a

cause of concern for Harendra is the team's poor penalty corner conversion rate.
 Against Malaysia India secured as many as 11 penalty corners but utilised just three and that to from indirect attempts.
 If that was not enough, India failed to make use of eight set pieces they managed to earn against Korea on Tuesday.
 The bright spot for India has been the performances of forwards Sangita Kumari and Deepika, both scoring three goals apiece.
 Sangita specially has been a livewire upfront with her deft stick work, but the likes of Sharmila Devi, Preeti Dubey, Beauty Dung Dung need to share more responsibility.
 Skipper Salima Tete and her deputy Navneet Kaur too need to pull up their socks in the midfield.
 A win on Thursday will virtually seal India's place in the semifinals before tough matches against China and Japan.
 Going by rankings, ninth placed India are the second best side in the tournament after world no.6 China. And Thailand, who are ranked 29th in the world, should be an easy outing for the Indians.
 Meanwhile in other matches of the day, Korea will take on Malaysia while China will be up against Japan.



Spain-Poland tie in Billie Jean King Cup Finals postponed

AP ■ MALAGA (SPAIN)
 The first tie of the Billie Jean King Cup Finals between Spain and Poland was postponed on Wednesday because of a severe weather alert in the Malaga region. Organizers said the "decision has been made based on the guidance from the relevant authorities to ensure the health and safety of all participants and attendees."
 The first-round tie will now be played on Friday when Germany will also face Britain. Two ties are scheduled for Thursday: Japan-Romania and Slovakia-United States.
 Both the Billie Jean King Cup Finals and the Davis Cup Finals are taking place in the southern Spanish city, with the men's competition beginning next week. The women's event is taking place after a powerful storm caused flash floods that killed more than 200 people in the Valencia region, east of Malaga, about two weeks ago. The International Tennis Federation recently announced a donation to the Spanish Red Cross to support relief and recovery efforts in the region and Spanish player Paula Badosa said she will donate half of her prize money to help the victims.

Aishwary-Sanjeeta strike gold in World University Shooting

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
 Olympic Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar and Sanjeeta Das combined to give India a gold medal in the 10m air rifle mixed team event as the hosts claimed their third top-podium finish at the World University Shooting Championship here on Wednesday.
 Aishwary, following the disappointment of finishing fifth in men's 10m air rifle and having to settle for silver in 50m rifle 3-positions, finally came up with a gold-winning effort, combining with Sanjeeta, to overcome a strong challenge from the South Korean pair of Kim Hyobeen and Lee Junhwan 17-15.
 The Polish team of Julia Piotrowska and Maciej



Kowalewicz defeated the Indian duo of Manini Kaushik and Umamahesh Maddineni 16-0 in the bronze-medal clash. Sanjeeta (316.8) and Aishwary (316.2) had earlier aggregated 633.0 to top the qualification round and move into the final, where they faced Korea who were second with an aggregate of 631.7.

The top two teams in the event fight for the gold, while the third and fourth-placed pair compete for the bronze.
 Manini and Umamahesh were placed fourth at the end of the qualification round with an aggregate of 628.7 and faced third-placed Poland, who totalled 629.8.
 On Tuesday, young Indian skeet shooter Bhavtegh Singh Gill had won the country's second gold medal, while the air pistol mixed team of Palak Gulia and Amit Sharma had struck the first gold on Sunday.
 As many as 220 shooters from across 23 countries are competing in the championship. The event is being hosted by Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies.



FIFA workshop essential for strengthening our governance framework: AIFF secretary general

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
 All India Football Federation (AIFF) secretary general, Anilkumar, who attended the FIFA Financial Governance Workshop in Sri Lanka recently, said such events would go a long way in improving and strengthening the financial management of the member associations.
 The workshop was held in Colombo on November 6 and 7, with the participation of general secretaries and finance directors from the member associations of India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
 "Attending the FIFA Financial Governance Workshop has been an invaluable experience. The insights shared on transparency, accountability and best practices in financial management are essential for strengthening our governance framework," said Anilkumar.
 FIFA's commitment to develop football around the world depends on sound financial management to ensure that member associations get the best value for money for the funding distributed through the FIFA Forward programme.
 As part of its effort to ensure this happens, FIFA has been holding regular workshops around the world to enhance financial governance and capacity development within the MAs.
 The event was held under the banner of the newly established FIFA Campus, which serves as the central football learning hub for all FIFA capacity development and education initiatives for member associations.
 Starting with a presentation of the Financial Governance Guide, the workshop included discussion, group work and case sessions on topics such as conflict of interest, planning and budgeting and procurement process, as well as the importance of having adequate supporting documentation.
 The sessions emphasised the importance of accountability, transparency, and responsible financial management within the context of the FIFA Forward programme.
 The FIFA Forward programme was introduced in 2016 to provide funding for tailor-made projects in each of the 211 FIFA member associations.
 In the first two cycles, between 2016 and 2022, more than USD 2.8 billion was committed to a diverse array of projects to provide football infrastructure and competitions, and to promote and advance women's football.
 The four-year cycle of FIFA Forward 3.0, from 2023 to 2026, represents an increase in investment of almost 30 per cent and is a direct consequence of the reinforced governance and financial situation of the new FIFA since 2016.

Amandeep Johl appointed CEO of Professional Golf Tour of India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
 The Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) on Wednesday announced the appointment of Amandeep Johl as its new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) from January 2025.
 A respected name in Indian golf, Johl brings extensive experience to his new role.
 The appointment comes alongside another recent significant leadership addition, with the legendary cricketer Kapil Dev assuming the role of PGTI President in June this year.
 Johl replaces Uttam Singh Mundy, who has essayed a key role in the organisation since its inception.
 Johl, who until recently was on the PGTI board, will take



charge from January 1. In the interim period until December 31, he will be assisting Mundy in completing the handover process.
 Welcoming Johl's elevation to CEO, Kapil Dev said: "Amandeep has been on the Indian and Asian golf circuit for nearly 34 years and it is just apt that somebody who is so entrenched in the sport leads the PGTI.

"These are exciting times for golf in India and with Amandeep at the helm, the PGTI looks forward to strengthening its presence, in India and around the world."
 The legendary all-rounder hailed the outgoing CEO for his contribution to PGTI and Indian golf.
 "Uttam Mundy's commitment and vision have been instrumental in establishing PGTI as the premier professional golf tour in India, and his contributions are deeply appreciated," he said.
 Johl, who holds a degree in mechanical engineering, has been an integral part of Indian golf since making it to the junior Indian team in 1985 and four years later emerging as the National amateur champion in 1989.
 Since then, he has worn various hats, be it as a professional player on the Asian and European Tours, national coach, a board member of the PGTI and also as a founding member of the Asian Tour (2004).
 "I am thrilled and thank the PGTI for entrusting me with this huge responsibility," remarked the 55-year-old Johl.
 "It is probably the most important role of my golfing career," he said, adding, "I have big shoes to fill thanks to my dear friend, Uttam Mundy, who has been instrumental in laying a strong foundation for the PGTI with his untiring efforts."

Gurpreet backs Manolo, says Asian Cup qualification is India's 'minimum goal'

PTI ■ HYDERABAD
 India may still be searching for their first win under Manolo Marquez nearly four months into his tenure but goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu on Wednesday backed the head coach and said qualifying for the next AFC Asian Cup is the team's "minimum" target.
 The Indian football team's last victory was a 1-0 win against Kuwait in the World Cup Qualifiers on November 16 last year. Since then, the side has struggled, losing seven of its last 11 matches and falling in FIFA rankings from a sub-100 position in July 2023 to 125.
 "The past is past; we can't change it. As a team, we always want to win," said Gurpreet ahead of their home friendly against Malaysia here on November 18.
 "Phases like this happen -- there was a phase when we were winning and not losing,

"It's about how you handle it and not getting bogged down by it. We're lucky to get opportunities to do well again and again. We need to use the games we've played against good opposition as stepping stones."
 "The (1-1) Vietnam draw was a good test for us, and we need to carry the same understanding and energy into the next game," he added.
 After a disastrous 2023 Asian Cup outing, previous head coach Igor Stimac was replaced in July this year by Marquez, who is also managing ISL franchise FC Goa.
 Under Marquez, India drew with Mauritius and Vietnam and suffered a 0-3 loss to Syria.
 The transition has been marked by the retirement of star forward Sunil Chhetri.
 "A transition like this is always difficult. Everything would feel perfect if we



started winning games right away, but the important thing to remember is that we've played very competitive teams since the coach (Manolo Marquez) took over. "He's trying to instill his philosophy, and that's going to take time. In every camp,

we're getting closer to what he wants from us as a team. With time, training, and the level of coaching he has, I have no doubt we'll be a strong team in the qualifiers. "Qualifying for the Asian Cup is something we should strive for every single time, as we've done in the last two editions. That should be minimum for us. It should be a no-brainer for us as a team." Sandesh is a once-in-a-generation defender.
 The upcoming match will mark the comeback of India's defensive mainstay Sandesh

Jhingan. He is returning after recovering from a knee injury he sustained in a match against Syria earlier this year.
 "I'm very happy to have Sandesh back in the squad. Since taking over as India's No. 1 goalkeeper from Subrata Paul, Gurpreet has been a key figure in the national team.
 The experienced goalkeeper emphasised the importance of team unity and healthy competition as India prepare for the upcoming Asian Cup Qualifiers.
 "I don't think it's been a long time; in my opinion, it's probably been a short time (as No. 1 goalkeeper) in my experience," he said reflecting on his journey.
 "I would love to play for the national team -- it comes with a lot of responsibility. I know the importance of it, and as long as I give my 100 per cent, I'm satisfied. As for who plays or not, that's not my decision; it's up to the

coaches, and we have to respect that."
 He also praised the competition within the squad, singling out the talented Vishal Kaith and Amrinder Singh.
 "Vishal is a great keeper, a very talented player. I'm very happy for him. It's a pleasure to have him in the team, knowing there's someone who can push me just like Amrinder did.
 "If our roles were reversed, I'd do the same for him. It's all about being in the team. It's not about who plays or time; it's about achieving our goal for the Indian team. "For me, it's important to do what I've learned from Sunil bhai. He always gives 100 percent, keeps a positive and competitive environment, and ensures the mood is good. We're all working towards one aim right now, which is to qualify for the Asian Cup," he signed off.

Work on technique and hit the reset button: Brett Lee's advice to Rohit, Kohli



Parthiv Patel joins Gujarat Titans' support staff as batting and assistant coach

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Gujarat Titans have entrusted former India keeper-batter Parthiv Patel with the dual responsibility of serving as their assistant and batting coach in the upcoming IPL, the franchise said on Wednesday. Parthiv will perform the dual role in the support staff led by head coach Ashish Nehra. "The Gujarat Titans are pleased to announce the appointment of Parthiv Patel as their new assistant and batting coach. With a distinguished 17-year career as a former Indian wicketkeeper-batter, Parthiv brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the team," the franchise said in a statement.

"As the Titans prepare for the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) season, Parthiv's insights into batting techniques and strategies will play a crucial role in enhancing the players' skills. "Parthiv, who is known for his sharp cricketing acumen and ability to mentor young talent, will strengthen the coaching staff and contribute to player development and performance," GT added in the statement. This is the first coaching role in the IPL for Parthiv, who retired in 2020. Right after his retirement, he served as talent scout for Mumbai Indians for three seasons until 2023, and also the batting coach for MI Emirates in the inaugural season of ILT20.



Kohli with the new ball, and their batting. their technique, freshen up, much as they can and then get away from cricket for as hit the ground running when

they go to Australia because I can promise you the Australian fast bowlers will be attacking Rohit Sharma with that brand-new ball," he added. Rohit has managed 588 runs in 11 Tests at an average of just 29.40 this year, while Kohli has accumulated 250 runs in six Test at an average of 22.72. Lee felt the tendency of the two batter to be too aggressive might have resulted in their poor show so far this year. "It's hard to put your finger on why they (Rohit and Kohli) failed. If you first look at the way that Rohit Sharma got out, a lot to the quicks. "So, I can't say there's a technical fault there because I've seen him play for the last decade. I still believe he's one of the best players of the pull shot in world cricket, but maybe he's a little bit too aggressive. "Maybe there were a couple of shots... Was there a technique issue? Was his bat leaving his pad a bit too early? Was he getting that far forward or not enough forward? Or, was he sort of being a little bit hesitant?" Lee wondered.

PTI ■ SYDNEY
Former Australian pacer Brett Lee has advised India skipper Rohit Sharma and star batter Virat Kohli to hit the "reset button", work on their technique and hit the ground running in the five-Test series against Australia, beginning in Perth in less than 10 days' time. The two batting stalwarts will be keenly observed during the Border-Gavaskar series. Down Under following their underwhelming performance in the 0-3 Test whitewash by New Zealand recently. "When you have a couple of bad runs back to back, that's when the pressure gets set in. So, I guess the thing now is that someone like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, they've just got to go back to the drawing board," Lee said on his YouTube channel. "They are champions because they do the basics better than anybody else. Then, just hit the reset button, almost." Lee also warned that the Australian pacers would be aiming to attack Rohit and



I've found ways and means to break it down: Ashwin on Smith's batting

PTI ■ CHENNAI
Senior India off-spinner R Ashwin says he has figured out ways to tackle Australian batting mainstay Steve Smith in the upcoming five-match Test series, extending their fascinating, decade-old rivalry in top-flight cricket. The two seasoned campaigners would face off during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy starting November 22 in Perth. They have in the past spent time together at IPL franchises Rising Pune Supergiant and Delhi Capitals, helping Ashwin to "break down the game plans" of Smith. "Steve Smith is especially fascinating as a player against spin. He has a unique technique, even playing fast bowling," Ashwin said in an interview with "Cricket". "But with spin, I think he came in with sound game plans and sound



preparations, and yeah, he used to execute it come what may. And over the years, I've found ways and means to break it down. "His time at Delhi Capitals, his time at RPSG, all these net sessions that I've seen him go about his business gave me an insight as to how he prepares and what he likes and doesn't like." Ashwin, who first bowled to Smith during India's 2013/14 tour of Australia, lauded his fierce rival for being a "thinking cricketer", who has so far scored 348 runs in 570 balls while facing the ace spinner. Smith has got out to Ashwin three times. "He's a very thinking cricketer as well.

He wants to get one up on you all the time. But, he's got unique ways of practising and battling out with you in the middle. "And sometimes, as a bowler, when you're watching a batter go through his process, you do identify whether you have him or not. And several times in these years of having played with Steve Smith, I've felt he has me. "But several times, much later, when I think I've figured out what he does or how he bats, I've had an edge over him. I've had the wood over him." A modern-day batting great, Smith will be desperate to play some big knocks following his subdued stint as an opener after the retirement of David Warner, managing only 171 runs in four Tests at an average of 28.50. Ashwin is the third-highest Test wicket-taker for India in Australia with 38 scalps, behind Anil Kumble (49) and Kapil Dev (51).

Ponting, Langer could skip Perth Test commentary gig due to IPL auction

PTI ■ MELBOURNE
Former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting and his longtime teammate Justin Langer could potentially miss out commenting on the opening Test against India at Perth, starting November 22, due to commitments with their respective IPL teams for the mega auctions in Saudi Arabia's Jeddah on November 24 and 25. According to Australian newspaper "The Age", "Channel Seven could be without Ricky Ponting and Justin Langer for parts of the Perth Test due to a clash of commitments, and Australia may lose a vital backroom coach for the start of the blockbuster Border-Gavaskar series in a potential stand-off with Indian cricket."

Ponting, who has been appointed the head coach of Punjab Kings and Langer, who will be in his second season with Lucknow Super Giants, could be present at the IPL auction table for their respective franchises along with Australian team assistant coach Daniel Vettori, who is in-charge of Sunrisers Hyderabad. "Unless (Channel) Seven and Cricket Australia can protect their interests against powerful cricket authorities in India, Ponting, Langer and Australia assistant coach Dan Vettori will likely be in Saudi Arabia holding a paddle at the IPL's mega player auction in Jeddah instead of being at Optus Stadium when the first Test reaches its conclusion," the paper reported. "Seven" has a seven-year AUD

Gambhir is prickly character, never took dig at Kohli: Ponting

PTI ■ MELBOURNE
Responding to Gautam Gambhir's ribbe at him, former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting on Wednesday said the India head coach was a "prickly character" and insisted that his comments on Virat Kohli should not be construed as a dig on the star batter, who himself would be worried about his prolonged lean patch. Ponting, in an interview to ICC, had said that Kohli's poor form would be a concern and any other international player would have

struggle to keep his spot in the Test side with just two hundreds in five years. He though had also spoken highly of Kohli's ability to bounce back. Gambhir, when asked about Ponting's comments, said the Australian legend needn't be concerned about Indian cricket. "I was surprised to read the reaction but knowing the coach, Gautam Gambhir ... He's quite a prickly character, so I'm not surprised it was him who said something back," Ponting told 7News when asked about Gambhir's comments.



"If he comes my way, yeah, I don't expect him to. We have got quite a bit of history, against each other. I have actually coached him at Delhi Capitals and he is quite a prickly character," Ponting said in jest when

the anchor asked if he would shake hands with Gambhir if they cross path. One of the greatest batters of his time, Ponting then explained what he meant and felt that things were taken out of context. "In no way was it a dig at him (Kohli). I actually followed it up by saying he's played well in Australia and he'll be keen to bounce back over here...If you ask Virat, I'm sure he would be a little bit concerned that he hasn't been able to make the same amount of hundreds as he has in previous years," he said.

Indian batters 'can't stand up' to Aussie pacers: Haddin

PTI ■ SYDNEY
Former captain Aaron Finch believes Rishabh Pant and Alex Carey will be crucial in determining the outcome of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, while retired wicketkeeper Brad Haddin predicts that Indian batters will struggle against the Australian pacers. Finch feels the two wicketkeepers have the ability to shift the momentum in their team's favour in the event of a top-order collapse. "I think the key could be Alex Carey and Rishabh Pant. The two wicketkeepers are going to be so important," Finch said on "Willow Talk Podcast" when asked where this series is going to be won or lost. "A time or other in series the top order will get knocked over as

both fast bowling attacks are so good and they will get on a roll. For me, it is that really crucial role of Alex at number seven and Rishabh at number six likely." Both Pant, who played a key role in India's series victory last time, and Carey are known for their aggressive brand of cricket. "Carey is aggressive, Rishabh is aggressive. The game is going to go one or two ways really quick. And I think that will be so important. "Maybe when you are five down and the second new ball comes just before stumps and they take it for 50 that 10 overs before stumps, that changes the momentum of the game." Finch feels both side's bowling units are at par which each other, while their batters haven't been at their best recently. India head to the marquee series on the back of an embarrassing 0-3 home



series defeat to New Zealand. "It's so important that the number 7 has the impact on the game. In my opinion both fast bowling attacks cancel each other out Nathan Lyon and Ashwin or Jadeja cancel each other out, Lyon has the slight advantage of it being Australia. "Both batting line ups haven't been at their best for a little while so that's why the keepers are important." Indian batters to struggle against Australian pacers Haddin reckons the fast-bowling trio of Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood would trouble the Indian batters on bouncy pitches. "I don't think that the Indian batters are going to stand up to our quicks," Haddin. India are likely be without the services of skipper Rohit Sharma

in the series opener at Perth, starting November 22. In Rohit's absence, either KL Rahul or Abhimanyu Easwaran will open the innings alongside Yashasvi Jaiswal, who will be playing his first series in Australia. Jaiswal has quickly established himself as one of the fiercest Test openers in recent times. In just 14 games, he has amassed 1,407 runs at an impressive average of 56.28, including three centuries, eight fifties, and a highest score of 214 not out. But Haddin is not sure how the youngster would negotiate the bouncy track that awaits India at Perth. "I know Jaiswal is a really good player, but he hasn't come out and seen Australia before, so I'm not sure whether he is going to handle the bounce. Opening in Perth is hard work," Haddin said.