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WORLD 9
THOUSANDS CROWD NEW ZEALAND'S PARLIAMENT GROUNDS IN SUPPORT OF MAORI RIGHTS

HAZE STAYS, IDEAS FLOAT

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

As the National Capital's air pollution crisis has reached an alarming level, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) consistently in the "severe plus" category on Tuesday, the Delhi government is now pressing for cloud seeding to artificially induce rain to dissipate the thick layer of smog, work from home facilities and considering bringing odd even scheme, that could help combat the worsening air quality. The Delhi government has also sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention in tackling the issue of air pollution.

Amid Delhi's worsening air quality, which has plunged into the "severe plus" category with an AQI consistently above 460, Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai addressed a press conference accusing the Centre of not acting on their repeated request to allow artificial rain in the national capital. He said that he had written to Union government Bhopender Yadav for the fourth time seeking a joint meeting with stakeholders to get clearances for artificial rain to disperse Delhi's high pollution.

"Despite repeated requests through letters on August 30, October 10, and October 23, the Union Environment Minister has not taken cognisance of the situation or responded to the Delhi government's appeals," Rai said in his latest letter. He alleged that despite repeated reminders and requests, the Centre was yet to call a meeting to discuss the



option. Rai said while the GRAP-IV restrictions are being enforced to tackle the alarming levels of pollution, the thick smog layer engulfing the city can only be broken by wind or rain.

In his letter, Rai proposed that this meeting include the Delhi Government, experts from IIT Kanpur who have conducted research on artificial rain, and key Central Government ministries such as such as the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Ministry of Defence along with other relevant departments. Artificial rain is needed in Delhi as an emergency measure to reduce pollution and help citizens at this juncture. While the Delhi Government is willing to initiate the emergency measure, it needs a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from Centre's Directorate

General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), and Defence Ministry among other agencies.

"After consulting several experts, we believe the time has come to use artificial rain to break this layer of smog in Delhi," he said. "Delhi cannot get relief from pollution unless we break the smog layer. Cloud seeding can help mitigate the crisis and provide immediate relief to citizens," Rai said. Emphasising the urgency of the current situation, Rai said in his letter, "I request the Union Environment Minister to convene an emergency meeting with all stakeholders, including IIT Kanpur and relevant central agencies, to fast-track the clearances required for artificial rain." This cloud seeding technique, which involves the aerial dispersion of salt particles like silver iodide or chloride into clouds to induce rain, is being

considered as a potential solution to the city's dire air quality issues. While the concept of cloud seeding is not new, its effectiveness in combating air pollution remains a subject of debate among experts. The method's success hinges on optimal atmospheric conditions, including adequate moisture and humidity in the clouds, and the presence of specific cloud types that grow vertically.

The high cost and uncertainty of outcomes also raise questions about the viability of this approach as a sustainable solution to air pollution. Additionally, concerns have been raised about the potential environmental impacts of altering natural processes through cloud seeding. Experts emphasise the need for more research to understand the long-term effects of this intervention and call for a multi-disciplinary

approach to policy formulation in this area. He also said that the government is in talks with experts to enforce emergency measures like odd-even and work-from-home options if the pollution levels in Delhi continue to remain in the severe-plus zone-above 450 in the coming days. Delhi is not new to the odd-even vehicle rationing scheme. First implemented in 2016, the AAP government's initiative aimed to control vehicular emissions in the city by only allowing private vehicles whose registration number ends with an odd number to ply on odd dates and even registration numbers to ply on even dates. Vehicles with registration numbers ending in even digits (0, 2, 4, 6, 8) are allowed on the roads on even dates, while those with registration numbers ending in odd digits (1, 3, 5, 7, 9) are permitted on odd dates.

"A decision on implementing work-from-home measures and the odd-even scheme will be taken soon to tackle the city's worsening air quality," Rai said. He said, "People, including children and senior citizens, are struggling to breathe and we deeply regret this situation." On the possibility of implementing work-from-home measures, Rai stated, "We will take a decision on this soon." The minister added that the government has already imposed significant restrictions on vehicles under GRAP-IV. "We are analysing the impact of these measures. If the analysis shows a positive outcome, we will take further decisions accordingly," he said.



CJI asks judges to allow virtual hearings

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice Sanjay Khanna on Tuesday said all judges have been asked to allow virtual hearings wherever possible in view of the severe pollution levels in the National Capital Region. As soon as the Bench comprising the CJI and Justice Sanjay Kumar assembled, lawyers, including Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president Kapil Sibal, referred to the worsening pollution in Delhi and NCR and sought immediate measures to deal with it. "We have told all the judges to allow virtual hearings wherever possible," the CJI said.

The CJI, however, did not allow the submissions that the SC should go online and reiterated that the lawyers have the option to appear online. Sibal said a message is needed to be sent to other courts and tribunals in the national capital in this regard as the "pollution is getting out of control." He was supported by various lawyers that also included Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and Gopal Sankaranarayanan.

On poll eve Vinod Tawde's 'cashgate'



T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In what came as a major embarrassment for the ruling MahaYuti on the eve of the Maharashtra Assembly polls, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national general secretary Vinod Tawde found himself in a fierce controversy over the alleged distribution of cash to some people, following the claims by Bahujan Vikas Aghadi (BVA) that it had caught him red-handed in the act.

The controversy erupted after BVA founder and six-time Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Vasai, Hitendra Thakur and his son Kshitij Thakur, a three-time MLA from Nalasopara, alleged that their party colleagues and workers had seen Tawde distributing money to people. They alleged that Tawde had arrived with Rs 5 Crore for giving it to BJP candidate Rajan Naik for distribution to people in Vasai-Virar area of Palghar district. Cashing in on the allegations, leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi of the Congress singled out Prime Minister Narendra Modi for an attack "Modiji, from whose safe did these Rs 5 Crore come? Who looted the public's money and sent you in the tempo?" Rahul asked.

Congress general secretary in-charge of Maharashtra Ramesh Chennithala demanded the arrest of Tawde. A BJP general secretary, Tawde has been caught red-handed while distributing money in Vasai-Virar. The allegation against him is that Tawde distributed Rs 5 Crore among people on the eve of elections. That being the case, Tawde should be arrested immediately," Chennithala said.

The controversy broke out when BJP's Tawde had gone to the deluxe Le Vivanta Hotel at Virar (East). The BVA leaders alleged that he was carrying Rs 5 Crore cash, along with some diaries. The drama that unfolded in the morning lasted for more than eight hours.

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EAM meets Chinese counterpart

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/RIO DE JANEIRO

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi deliberated on the next steps in India-China ties at a meeting in Rio de Janeiro, in the first high-level engagement since the militaries of the two sides disengaged from Demchok and Depsang at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. The two leaders held the delegation-level talks on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro late on Monday.

The EAM said in a social media post both sides noted the progress in the recent disengagement of the border areas and exchanged views on the next steps in the bilateral ties. It is learnt that both sides are in the process of reviving various dialogue mechanisms including the special representatives talks on the boundary question as decided at a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in the Russian city of Kazan last month.

Days after the two sides reached an agreement on October 21 on disengagement in Demchok and Depsang, Indian and Chinese militaries completed the process marking a virtual end to over four-year standoff in the two



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in a meeting with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro

friction points. The two sides also resumed patrolling activities in these areas after a gap of almost four-and-a-half years. "On the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Rio, met CPC Politburo member and FM Wang Yi of China," Jaishankar said, adding, "We noted the progress in the recent disengagement in the India-China border areas. And exchanged views on the next steps in our bilateral ties. "Also discussed the global situation." In his opening remarks at the talks, Jaishankar referred to the meeting between PM Modi and President Xi on October 23 on the sidelines of

the BRICS summit. "In Kazan, our leaders reached a consensus on taking the next steps in our relationship, bearing in mind the understanding of October 21. I am glad to note that on the ground, the implementation of that understanding has proceeded as planned," he said.

"Our leaders have directed that the Foreign Ministers and the Special Representatives should meet at an early date. Some progress, some discussions have happened in that direction," he said. Jaishankar and Wang discussed the next steps in the meeting.

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Russian President Vladimir Putin likely to visit India soon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Russian President Vladimir Putin is likely to visit India next year as part of a laid down structure between the two countries for reciprocal annual visits by their leaders, diplomatic sources said on Tuesday. The two sides are looking at the possibility of the visit but nothing has been finalised yet, they said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited the Russian President to visit India when the two leaders held summit talks in Moscow in July. Prime Minister Modi visited Kazan in Russia last month to attend the BRICS summit. Earlier on Tuesday, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov in a video interaction with senior Indian Editors referred to the strong bilateral relationship between India and Russia, and added Putin's visit is on the cards. He did not give any specific dates or make a definitive announcement of the visit. The interaction was organised by the Russian state-owned Sputnik news agency.

"We are looking forward to the visit. The dates will be mutually worked out soon," Peskov said. "Specific dates of President Vladimir Putin's visit to India will soon be announced and Russia will begin preparing for it," he said.

"I hope soon we'll work out the precise dates of his visit... Of course, after two visits of Prime Minister Modi to Russia, now we have a visit of the President to India, so we're looking forward to it," he added.

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End of the road for Himachal Bhawan?

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ SHIMLA/NEW DELHI

The Himachal Pradesh High Court has ordered the attachment of Himachal Bhawan located in Delhi for the recovery of Rs 150 Crore owed by the state government to Seli Hydropower Electrical Company following an arbitration ruling in favour of the power firm.

Passing the order on Monday, a single-judge bench of Justice Ajay Mohan Goel said the company may take appropriate steps for the auction of Himachal Bhawan located in central Delhi's Mandi House area thereof.

Advocate General Anup Rattan said the Himachal Pradesh government has filed an appeal against the initial HC order and it is likely to come up for hearing this month. The case pertains to the 340 MW Seli Hydropower Electric Project on the Chenab River in Lahaul and Spiti district.

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Vintage cars not to be scrapped: LG

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amidst the crackdown on vehicles falling under scrap years, vintage car aficionados heaved a sigh of relief as Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena came to their rescue, directing the Delhi Transport Department that there should be no coercive action on the registered vintage vehicles. However, this has come with a rider that they are not to be driven on roads or used for commercial purposes. There are around 10,000 registered vintage cars in India.

LG Saxena has directed that bona fide vintage vehicles will no longer face coercive action by the Transport Department and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). According to Raj Niwas, the LG has asked the Commissioner Transport and Commissioner (MCD) to ensure that their enforcement wings desist from coercive action in case of such bona fide vehicles.

Acting on a representation made by the Heritage Motoring Club of India, highlighting that their vehicles are being impounded by the authorities and requesting for clarificatory orders in this regard, the LG had asked his Secretariat to issue appropriate directions. The transport department's data shows there are 60,14,493 such vehicles in



Former Union Minister Vijay Goel with one his coveted vintage cars which he used to take out as part of the exhibition he started to mark the birthday of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Delhi. The enforcement teams of the Transport Department and Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) impounded diesel vehicles older than 10 years and petrol vehicles older than 15 years for scrapping. The Supreme Court in its order in 2019, banned plying of such end-of-life vehicles in Delhi.

"The LG has taken note of harassment being faced by the vintage car owners and directed the Transport and MCD to desist from impounding bona fide vintage vehicles for scrapping," said the note. The notification issued by

MoRTH on July 15, 2021, has enabled provision for the registration of vehicles that are 50 years old or more as vintage vehicles, the LG secretariat said. Based on the notification of MoRTH, the Transport Department of Delhi government on December 2, 2021, ordered for allotment of common series "DLVA" "DLVA" for vintage vehicles. In further orders, the department specified the procedure for application and issuance of a certificate of registration as a vintage motor vehicle.

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"Put up a board, Ganga is not fit to bathe in," NGT to Varanasi DM

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ VARANASI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) expressed strong displeasure over the administration's failure to maintain the cleanliness of the Ganga in Varanasi. In a scathing rebuke, the tribunal even suggested that a board be put up on the banks of the river, stating that Ganga water in the city is not safe for bathing.

The reprimand came during a hearing regarding the slow progress of the restoration of Asi and Varuna, two important tributaries of the Ganges. The NGT bench, led by Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and Dr. A Santhil Vel, asked Varanasi District Magistrate

(DM) S Rajlingam whether the water of the Ganga in Varanasi was fit for drinking or bathing. When the DM remained silent, the tribunal remarked sharply, "If this is the case, why not place boards along the riverbank stating that the Ganga water in Varanasi is not suitable for bathing or drinking?" In response, DM Rajlingam said, "It's not within my jurisdiction. The District Magistrate acts in accordance with government directives."

The NGT bench, unimpressed by the DM's reply, reminded him of the considerable power vested in his office, urging him not to appear "helpless" in the face of the situation. The tribunal

then directed the government's advocate to submit an affidavit detailing the current status of the restoration of Asi and Varuna and the condition of the Ganga by the next hearing, which is scheduled for December 13.

This marks the second time in recent months that the NGT has expressed its dissatisfaction with the Varanasi administration's efforts. Three months ago, the tribunal imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on the DM for failing to comply with its orders concerning the Ganga's restoration.

During the hearing, petitioner Saurabh Tiwari highlighted that despite repeated meetings and official



discussions, no tangible progress had been made on the ground in terms of cleaning the Ganga and restoring the tributaries. The NGT was informed that the restoration of the Asi and Varuna rivers was moving at a slow pace, with 40 meetings

having taken place, but no visible work was evident. The bench questioned DM Rajlingam about his efforts since taking office in Varanasi in November 2022 and asked what measures had been implemented during his tenure. The tribunal also

noted that the renovation of the tributaries was meant to be completed within a 12-month deadline, set by the NGT in 2021. However, more than 33 months have passed, and the situation remains largely unchanged.

The government's lawyer, Bhanwar Pal Jadoun, presented the state's efforts, including the Pollution Control Board's initiatives to clean the Ganga. However, the bench found the explanations unsatisfactory, emphasizing the need for concrete actions.

The petition, filed on August 4, 2024, highlighted the slow progress of the restoration work for Asi and Varuna. The NGT had originally set a five-year deadline for the

completion of the restoration in 2021, but after over three years, little on-the-ground action has been seen. The restoration process officially began after a meeting of the Supervisory and Execution Committees in November 2021, but as per the petitioner, the project remains confined to bureaucratic processes, with no substantial work visible in the river areas.

As the December 13 hearing approaches, all eyes are now on the state government and district administration to provide accountability for the lack of progress and to step up efforts to restore the Ganga and its tributaries, which are crucial for the ecological balance of the region.

Ongoing protest by contractual DTC workers disrupts public transportation

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The ongoing protest by Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) contractual bus drivers and conductors continues to disrupt public transportation amid worsening air quality in Delhi on Tuesday. A major inconvenience for public bus commuters was aggravated on Tuesday, forcing them to take cabs and bike taxis, as a strike by the DTC contractual bus drivers and conductors demanding equal pay and better working conditions led to a disruption in public transportation. Some commuters left clueless as they do

not have idea about the strike. Meanwhile, several social media users expressed anger towards the disruption in the public transport system in the national capital. A few netizens slammed the Delhi government to intervene in the matter and "rise above politics" while some seeking action against the protesting bus conductors and drivers. Responding to the development, Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai requested the DTC employees to work together, citing a medical emergency 'due to pollution. "I am in touch with those people (DTC employees), and I want to request that they



know that this is a medical emergency and we all need to work together," Rai said. Taking cognisance of the protesting workers, the Delhi Transport Corporation formed a committee of officers to consider the demands and grievances of the contractual employees. The DTC also requested the DTC Karmachari Ekta Union to provide a letter related to the demands or grievances of the contractual employees at the earliest for presenting it before the committee. The strike came as a response to growing dissatisfaction among DTC's contractual employees. The situation

escalated over the weekend when female employees at the newly inaugurated all-women 'Sakhi Bus Depot' in Sarojini Nagar initiated a protest, demanding equal pay and job security. Their grievances highlighted the stark wage disparities between permanent and contractual staff. The protest gained momentum as male employees joined in, amplifying the call for better working conditions and fair treatment. Protesters are demanding that the government address their key issues, including regularisation of their jobs, implementation of equal pay for equal work, and basic salary

plus dearness allowance (DA) adjustments. Additionally, they are asking for job security measures to prevent arbitrary transfers to distant locations, which place an extra burden on contractual employees. A few commuters expressed their anger over the Delhi bus strike on X and urged the Delhi government to take immediate action in the matter. "How commuters r forced to strand in midroads by some contractual workers of DTC is a little glance of picture . On part of admn. nobody is bothered abt the harassment of public transport users [sic]" read another post on X.

Worsening air quality leading to decline in market footfalls: Trader's associations

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's worsening air quality has led to sharp decline in market footfall, significantly impacting businesses, according to several trader associations. Rakesh Yadav, president of the Sadar Bazar Traders Association, said that there is a 15 percent decline in footfall in the Sadar market compared to usual days. "There's a noticeable decrease in the number of people visiting Sadar Bazar, especially customers from other states who typically come for wholesale shopping. Many are now placing orders online instead of travelling here due to the severe air pollution," Yadav said. Similarly, Sanjeev Mehra, president of the Khan Market Traders Association, said that there has been a sharp drop of 60 percent in footfall since the implementation of Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP). "Foot traffic in Khan Market has fallen drastically, and it's impacting traders, especially small shop owners. These measures are hitting the pockets of small traders,"



Mehra added. Delhi's air quality reached the 'severe plus' category on Sunday, leading to rigorous pollution control measures under GRAP Stage IV on Monday morning. These measures include restrictions on truck entry, allowing only those carrying essential goods or using clean fuels like LNG, CNG, BS-VI diesel, or electricity, with an additional ban on construction and demolition activities along with the closure of schools. Sanjeev Aneja, vice president of the Kailash Colony Market Association, observed fewer people on the area's weekly off, i.e

on Tuesdays. "Despite it being a weekly off day, there are fewer people around compared to other Tuesdays," he said. Rajeev Gandhi, convener of the 'Save Our City' campaign, a collective of Residents' Welfare Associations (RWAs) said that many people have stopped coming to the parks as well. "Once lively Parks are now empty as fewer people come there. Children's laughter and play have been replaced by silence. This shows how deeply pollution has affected people, keeping them indoors," he added. Praveen Khandelwal, MP

Chandni Chowk and secretary general of the Confederation of All India Traders said in a statement that air pollution and related restrictions have severely impacted Delhi's trade sector, causing an estimated 20 percent business loss. According to Chandni Chowk MP Praveen Khandelwal, who is also Secretary General, Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), the restrictions imposed to control are bound to cause adverse impact creating an estimated loss of business to the tune of almost 20%, which is a substantial trade loss to Delhi trading community. Small and medium enterprises, especially in markets like Chandni Chowk, Karol Bagh, and Lajpat Nagar, Connaught Place, South Extension, Sadar Bazar, Kamla Nagar, Pitampura etc experience sharp revenue declines due to reduced customer visits and supply chain issues whereas seasonal businesses, particularly those relying on festivals and weddings face heavy losses as pollution curbs often coincide with peak sales periods.

Deteriorating AQI: JNU, JMI, DU decide to conduct all classes online

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the deteriorating air quality in the national capital, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) and Delhi University have decided to conduct all classes online till November 22 and 23, respectively. This decision comes as pollution levels in Delhi and the surrounding NCR region have reached hazardous levels, with the air quality index (AQI) marking severe plus categories, reaching 460, raising concerns about health risks for students and residents. According to Swiss group IQAir, Delhi's air quality was a "hazardous" 489 on Tuesday, making it the most polluted city in the world. However, this is a significant improvement from Monday's 1,900 reading. The Delhi government's health department on Tuesday directed all its hospitals to constitute teams of specialists to tackle patients with respiratory ailments linked to severe air pollution in the city.



The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a yellow alert for moderate-to-dense fog conditions in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR). The visibility over the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport was 600 metres as of 7 am. Several trains and flights have been delayed or cancelled as the visibility plunged due to the toxic smog in India's capital. At least 22 trains were delayed and eight flights were diverted on Tuesday morning. Jamia Millia Islamia has announced the shift to online

classes for all students, including those enrolled in its schools, until November 23, due to the deteriorating air quality in the national capital. The decision was made in view of the severe air pollution levels, with the city's 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) recorded at 460, placing it in the 'severe plus' category. In a notification, the university said that regular physical classes would resume on November 25, prioritising the health and well-being of students. The administration also directed the heads of all its schools

to suspend physical classes until further notice and conduct classes online. On Monday, both Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University announced similar measures, shifting to online classes until November 23 and November 22, respectively. However, the schedule for exams and interviews at both universities will remain unchanged, as said in their notifications. Several schools and colleges in the region have already transitioned to online classes in response to the worsening air quality. According to the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR) data, Delhi's overall Air Quality Index (AQI) was 494 at 6 am. Of the 35 monitoring stations in the national capital, most recorded an AQI of 500. Of the 35 monitoring stations in the national capital, most recorded an AQI of 500. The lowest AQI of 480 was recorded at NSIT Dwarka, the real-time data showed.

BJP stages protest against AAP Government over its failure to address alarming pollution levels

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP on Tuesday staged protests near Anand Vihar bus station and ITO, targeting the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government over its failure to address the alarming pollution levels in the city and also alleged corruption in the green cess, collected by city dispensation. The demonstration at Anand Vihar bus station, led by Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva and East Delhi MLA Harsh Malhotra saw party workers chanting slogans against AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal and Atishi government and accusing them of years of neglect and corrup-

tion leading to worsening Delhi's air quality. While a protest at ITO led by former Union Minister Vijay Goel where he along with the party workers distributed masks and raised slogans against AAP government. During an awareness-cum-mask distribution programme at Anand Vihar, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva slammed Aam Aadmi Party supremo Arvind Kejriwal and Chief Minister Atishi, alleging the government's inaction in addressing the pollution crisis. Delhi BJP further accused the AAP of failing to repair roads, address vehicular pollution, or fix potholes. "The Centre has provided thousands of

projects like the Yamuna Expressway and the Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways to reduce vehicular traffic in Delhi. If these projects hadn't been implemented, Delhi's condition would have been far worse. Kejriwal should stop shifting blame and take responsibility for destroying Delhi," he said. He also pointed to stubble burning in Punjab as a major contributor to the crisis. "On Monday alone, there were 1,251 incidents of stubble burning in Punjab, governed by AAP, compared to 48 in Haryana and 130 in Uttar Pradesh. This negligence by the Punjab government is criminal, and Delhi is paying



the price," Sachdeva added. Echoing Sachdeva's sentiments, Harsh Malhotra commended the Centre's initiatives to curb pollution and slammed the AAP government for its inaction. Malhotra accused the AAP of using the green cess funds for corrupt practices and false promises. "The public is determined to eliminate this pollution -- AAP itself. If this government continues, people will have to live with masks permanently," he said. Former Union Minister Vijay Goel staged a protest at ITO, and alleged that the AAP government in Delhi has failed to help the people struggling against the persisting hazardous air in the

city. Goel questioned how many more years it will take for Kejriwal to address Delhi's pollution effectively, and charged that over the past 10 years AAP government has relied on rhetoric than serious measures to tackle the issue of air pollution in winters. He said that the Air Quality Index (AQI) in parts of Delhi has touched 500, and in some places even reached 1133. The AAP government has turned Delhi into a gas chamber and people in the city can not go out for morning walk because of pollution, he added. BJP Lok Sabha MP Manoj Tiwari distributed masks to people in New Delhi's

Connaught Place on Tuesday as air pollution in the National Capital Region (NCR) reached alarming levels. Tiwari accused the AAP government of evading responsibility and blamed them for pointing fingers at the Centre and BJP-ruled states over stubble burning. "What could be more irresponsible? The AAP governs Delhi; its leader is the Chief Minister, and the pollution control boards fall under their administration. Yet, they are blaming the Centre," he said. NDMC Vice Chairperson Kuljeet Singh Chahal, who accompanied Tiwari in distributing masks, also shared his concerns.

Metro records highest-ever daily ridership of 78.67 lakhs on Nov 18

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the severe pollution gripping the national capital, Delhi Metro recorded its highest-ever daily ridership on November 18, with a staggering 78.67 lakh passenger journeys. According to Delhi Metro's data, this figure exceeded the previous high of 77.49 lakh passengers on August 20 of this year. On November 18, the Yellow Line, which connects Millennium City Centre in Gurugram to Samaypur Badli in Delhi, saw the highest passenger traffic, with a record 20.99 lakh commuters. The Blue Line followed closely with 20.80 lakh passengers, while the Red Line recorded 8.56 lakh commuters, 8.15 lakh in Pink Line and 7.93 lakh in Violet Line. The Magenta Line saw 6.19 lakh passengers, followed by the Green Line with 4.12 lakh commuters, 81,985 in Airport Line, 57,701 in Rapid Metro, and 50,128, in the Grey Line, as per the data. Thick grey haze continued to choke Delhi for the third consecutive day on Tuesday, with pollution levels remaining alarmingly high at 488 in the 'severe plus' category. To encourage more people to use the metro in this scenario, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) is running 60 extra trips on week-



days, offering more capacity than usual, an official statement said. The DMRC has recorded its 25 highest passenger journeys since August this year, the statement added. It emphasised that the more people opt for the metro over private vehicles, the greater the reduction in vehicular emissions, which will help improve the air quality of the city and its surrounding areas. In addition, the DMRC has introduced several measures to make travel more convenient for passengers, the statement read. These include the ability to book single or multiple journey tickets through various digital platforms, allowing

passengers to plan their journeys anytime and anywhere without the need to stand in queues at the station. Furthermore, partnerships with organisations such as IRCTC, NCRTC, ITPO, and others have made it easier for people to not only travel by metro but also access interconnected travel options, along with various offers and events, all with seamless ease, the statement said. The DMRC also stated that it is one of the most environmentally friendly transport options and the first metro system in the world to be registered for carbon credits with the United Nations for its environmental measures.

Delhi Metro expanded 1.5 times faster under AAP Govt: CM Atishi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Atishi on Tuesday said the Metro train network in Delhi has expanded one and half times faster as compared to 10 years of AAP government and added that work on Lajpat Nagar-Saket and Indraprastha-Inder Lok lines will begin soon. The chief minister visited first set of trains of Phase IV of the Delhi Metro at Mukundpur depot earlier in the day. Addressing a press conference, she said these driverless trains are among the most sophisticated in the world and will become operational within the next three to four months. With the expansion of Metro network, the daily ridership of the train service has increased from 24 lakh in 2014 to 60 lakh in the current year. A record was set on Monday when Metro ridership soared to 78 lakh commuters, she said. "Under the leadership of Arvind Kejriwal, the Metro expansion has been 1.5 times faster in last 10 years as compared to pre-2014 years," she said. Earlier in a post on X, Atishi described it as a proud moment for Delhi. "The first train, consisting of six coaches for the Phase 4 expansion of Delhi Metro, has arrived at Mukundpur Depot. "Today, I had the opportunity to inspect this state-of-the-art driverless train, which



will soon join the Magenta Line, reaffirming Delhi Metro's position as India's only metro system with driverless technology," the chief minister said.

"Under Arvind Kejriwal's visionary leadership, Delhi Metro continues to drive rapid progress across Delhi. This milestone marks yet another step in the city's jour-

ney toward a smarter and more expansive metro network," she said. Since the beginning of work in 1998 to 2014, a total 193 kms of lines were construct-

ed. After the AAP came to power, the network expanded by 200 Kms in 2014-2024, the chief minister said. The number of Metro stations in 2014 was 143 that has now gone up to 288, she added. Currently, construction is underway on three Phase IV lines -- Tuhalaqabad-Aerocity, RK Ashram-Janakpuri West, and Mukundpur-Maujpur Ext. The tendering process for two other lines - Lajpat Nagar to Saket and Indraprastha to Inder Lok is in progress and the work will begin soon, she said. The chief minister said that the Metro network expansion has not only given boost to the economy of the city but also helped in checking pollution. The driverless train, currently stationed at Delhi Metro's Mukundpur depot, arrived in Delhi on Friday. It will undergo a series of tests required for its statutory certification before it can begin revenue service, in line with the established rules and protocols. Under the RS-17 contract, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) will receive a total of 52 trains for Phase IV priority corridors, including Majlis Park to Maujpur, Janakpuri West to RK Ashram Marg, and Tughlakabad to Delhi Aerocity, according to officials. These trains will be delivered in phases over the coming days.

Modi pays tributes to former PM Indira Gandhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tributes to former prime minister Indira Gandhi on her birth anniversary on Tuesday. Born on November 19, 1917, Indira Gandhi served as the prime minister from 1966 to 1977 and then again from 1980 until her assassination on October 31, 1984.

"Tributes to our former Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi ji on her birth anniversary," Modi said in a social media post. The Congress paid rich tributes to the former prime minister with Rahul Gandhi saying that it is from his grandmother that he learnt that real strength is to fearlessly walk on the path of national interest. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and



Rahul Gandhi paid floral tributes to Indira Gandhi at her memorial 'Shakti Stal' here. Rahul Gandhi also paid floral tributes at the Indira Gandhi Memorial at 1, Safdarjung Road. Sharing a quote by Indira Gandhi in a social media post, Kharge said crores of Indians shall continue to draw inspiration from the life of the 'Iron Lady of India' for she was the epitome of lifelong

struggle, courage and dynamic leadership who selflessly contributed to nation building. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said, "My grandmother, Indira Gandhi ji always started her election campaign from Nandurbar in Maharashtra. She believed that the culture of the tribal society is the best and unique because it respects and protects nature."

Congress writes to President over deteriorating situation in Manipur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Tuesday wrote to President Droupadi Murmu over the deteriorating situation in Manipur and has urged her immediate intervention to ensure that people of the state live peacefully in their homes with dignity. In his two-page letter to the President, party chief Mallikarjun Kharge highlighted the "failure" of the Manipur government and the Centre in ensuring law and order and the safety of people in Manipur for the last 18 months.

Congress also took a swipe at the BJP over some MLAs of the ruling NDA skipping a meeting called by Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh, saying the writing on the wall is clear and asked whether Home Minister Amit Shah is reading it. Congress general secretary incharge communications Jairam Ramesh also asked how long will the



"excruciating agony" of the people of Manipur continue like this.

Kharge said the violence in Manipur has taken more than 300 human lives, including women, children and even small babies. He said the "deteriorating law and order in Manipur has internally displaced nearly a lakh of human population rendering them homeless and forcing them to live in different relief camps". The agony of the people continues unabated, he said. "I consider that it has become constitutionally imperative on the part of yourself, Hon'ble

Madam, as the President of the Republic of India and the custodian of our Constitution to uphold the constitutional propriety and immediately intervene to ensure the protection of lives and properties of our own citizens in Manipur, as enshrined in the Constitution. "I am confident that, through your intervention of your esteemed Office, the people of Manipur will again live peacefully in their homes in security with dignity," Kharge wrote to the President. Later in the day Ramesh along with Manipur Congress chief K Meghachandra Singh, AICC in-charge of state Girish Chodankar, Inner Manipur MP A Bimol Akojiam and former Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Nabam Tuki met Kharge, appraising him of the situation in the violence-hit state and deliberated on ways to bring peace in the state. Ramesh said INDIA bloc would raise the issue in Parliament and take up this matter collectively.

ICG conducts 136th meet of Offshore Security Coordination Committee

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



All aspects of offshore security were reviewed on Tuesday during the 136th meeting of the Offshore Security Coordination Committee (OSCC) in Hyderabad, Indian Coast Guard (ICG) said here. Giving details, officials said ICG chief S Paramesh chaired the meeting which took stock of the preparedness and effectiveness of the security of India's offshore installations. The meeting was attended by members and participants from concerned ministries and agencies including

Indian Coast Guard, Indian Navy, IAF, ONGC, DGH, and DG Shipping. Addressing the committee, the ICG chief underlined the importance of energy security, and thus insisted on taking all possible measures to ensure security of the offshore assets. The Offshore Security Coordination Committee was constituted in 1978 to ensure effective functioning of offshore security arrangements. The committee has since then contributed effectively in framing policies and providing guidance and resolution to related issues.

Indian Navy rescues woman who suffered grievous injury

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A woman, who suffered a grievous injury after a speedboat collision in Mahanadi river near the Bali Yatra maritime trade fair ground in Odisha, has been rescued from the waters, the Navy said here on Tuesday. The Yatra celebrates the rich maritime history of Odisha. "While conducting reconnaissance for Bali Yatra 2024 preparations, the diving team, deployed by the Eastern Naval Command, observed the accident and promptly intervened," a spokesperson of the Navy said. The injured woman was rescued from the waters and carried over a kilometer to the nearest police help center using the 'buddy carry' technique. In armed forces parlance, a 'buddy carry' technique refers to a personnel carrying someone on his back in case of need. "With no ambulance available,

the team further transported her to SCB Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack, in an autorickshaw, ensuring she received timely medical care," the statement added. This timely rescue and subsequent action towards ensuring timely medical attention reflects the dedication and unwavering commitment of the Indian Navy towards service and public welfare, the naval force said. The week-long Bali Yatra festival started on November 15 and will continue till November 22 at Cuttack. "Bali Jatra (Voyage to Bali) celebrates the rich maritime history of Odisha and commemorates India's historical and civilisational links with Southeast Asia and wider Indo-Pacific that have evolved through the maritime journeys undertaken by the Indian seafarers over thousands of years," according to a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs on November 15.

Ceremony organised at Akashwani Rang Bhawan in remembrance of Debroy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A solemn ceremony was organised at Akashwani Rang Bhawan on Monday evening to remember the life and work of Padma Shri Bibek Debroy, Chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM), who passed on the November 1. Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Dr P. K. Mishra remembered his old days while working with him on policies, discussing various issues of economy and how they could be addressed. The ceremony, drew wide participation from eminent economists, Sanskrit scholars, colleagues and public policy theorists and practitioners alike. Speaking at the function, Mishra said that Debroy was a formidable personality whose intellectual pursuits ranged from economic to Sanskrit literature to history and so on. He also mentioned that Debroy was always polite and very



understanding during his interactions with him when the latter was a member of the DPIO and subsequently chairman of the PM's Economic Advisory Council. Speaking on the occasion, Member (EAC-PM), Dr. Shamika Ravi noted that Bibek Debroy was like a mentor and a guide who always encouraged exploring new dimensions of work. Sanjiv Sanyal, Member (EAC-PM) fondly recalled his long conversations with Debroy and how he always supported independent thinking.

Recalling his impressive body of work on English translations of various Sanskrit epics, Prof. Shrinivasa Varakhedi, Vice Chancellor, Central Sanskrit University, informed that Debroy was the second person to translate the Ramayana and the Mahabharata from their original Sanskrit texts. Eminent economist, Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, spoke about the rich and varied legacy that Debroy leaves behind - whether it is his policy work or his work on the epics.

Indian Army successfully conducts HADR Exercise Sanyukt Vimochan 2024

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Army successfully conducted the Multilateral Annual Joint Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise, 'Sanyukt Vimochan 2024' at Ahmedabad and Porbandar on November 18-19. Army chief General Uday Deshpande attended this significant event which showcased India's disaster response readiness. The inaugural event of the exercise at Ahmedabad on Tuesday, featured a Table Top Exercise, focusing on the theme of 'Cyclone in Coastal Region of Gujarat', army said here on Tuesday. Representatives from National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority (GSDMA), Meteorological Department and FICCI attended the event along with Indian Armed Forces officials.



The second day witnessed Multi-Agency Capability Demonstration held at Chowpatty Beach at Porbandar. The Multi-Agency Capability Demonstration featured various agencies practicing coordinated logistics, rapid response and effective disaster management strategies in a simulated cyclone scenario. This event highlighted the collaborative efforts of the Indian Army, Indian Navy, Indian Air Force, Indian Coast Guard, National Disaster Response Force, State Disaster Response Force and other Central and State Agencies in addressing natural disasters. The demonstration started with Requisition for the Armed Forces from civil administration. Multi Agency reconnaissance surveillance was carried out of the affected area, post which personnel were inserted for carrying out rescue operations. Casualty evacuation was demonstrated with assistance from the assets fielded during the exercise. The demonstration culminated with 'Resuscitation and Rehabilitation' of affected citizens.

NABH inks pact with RSSDI to advance diabetes care in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH), a constituent body of Quality Council of India (QCI), on Tuesday inked a pact with the Research Society for the Study of Diabetes in India (RSSDI), to advance quality and consistency of diabetes care in India through the use of robust clinical and digital health standards. RSSDI is India's largest professional body representing over 12,000 diabetes care providers across the country.

According to a statement from the Government, the MoU will leverage the distinctive capabilities of NABH to drive national quality certification and accreditation programs and RSSDI's expertise in developing best practice clinical guidelines for diabetes management and research. "Accredited diabetes clinics will maintain high standards of care for diabetes treatment which also involves education, research, and guideline-directed care programs. These clinics will blend modern technology with personal care delivered by trained teams ensuring patients meet their



recommended target goals," as per the statement here. Under the MoU, NABH and RSSDI will collaborate closely to enhance NABH's Accreditation Standards for Allopathic Clinics for specific needs of diabetes care, and develop digital health standards for Clinic Management Systems (CMS) for better management of diabetes care. The RSSDI will actively promote certification of NABH's Allopathic Clinic Accreditation Standards across its member base, resulting in better and standardised diabetes care across the country, and help in

decreasing morbidity and complications resulting from diabetes. Emphasizing the need for quality at the foundational level, Rizwan Koita, Chairperson of NABH said, "Diabetes impacts over 250 million people across India, and better management of diabetes is critical for the overall healthcare ecosystem. NABH can play a key role in driving standardised care and evidence-based guidelines for diabetes management. We are also excited to roll-out digital health standards for clinics, which will enable use of the latest technologies by both doctors and patients."

Study links maternal exposure to chemicals in lotions, shampoos with asthma in kids



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

If you're pregnant or know someone who will be a mom and uses personal care products or cleaning items, it's important to be cautious. A recent study from Kumamoto University suggests that exposure to chemicals commonly found in items like lotions and shampoos, such as butylparaben, may increase the risk of asthma in your child. Analysing data from over 3,500 mother-child pairs, the research revealed that high levels of butylparaben and 4-nonylphenol—chemicals found in personal care and cleaning products—were associated with higher odds of asthma development. The research, thus highlights the need for pregnant women to be aware of potential chemical exposures given their impact on both maternal and child health. Notably, the effect of 4-nonylphenol was gender-specific, significantly affecting boys but not girls. "Boys born to mothers exposed to this chemical had 2.09 times higher odds of developing asthma, while no such association were observed in girls," said the study. The researchers have called for better understanding and regulation of chemical exposures during pregnancy to protect maternal and child health. Phenols, including parabens and alkylphenols, are widely used in consumer products

for their preservative and antimicrobial properties, noted the study. While their use is considered safe in small amounts, their potential as endocrine disruptors raises concerns about long-term health effects, such as the recent increase in allergic diseases such as asthma, particularly during sensitive periods like pregnancy. Led by Dr Shohei Kuraoka and his team at Southern Kyushu and Okinawa Unit Center of Japan Environment and Children's Study, researchers measured 24 types of phenols in urine samples collected from pregnant women. They then tracked the health of their children until the age of four. The findings highlight the importance of understanding how everyday chemical exposures might contribute to respiratory and allergic conditions in children. The study has shown implications on the health. "These results emphasise the need for careful evaluation of chemical exposure during pregnancy," said Dr Kuraoka. "Understanding these risks allows us to develop better guidelines to protect maternal and child health." While the study provides groundbreaking insights, the researchers acknowledged limitations, such as not measuring phenol levels in children directly. They said that future studies will aim to explore these mechanisms further and establish safe exposure thresholds.

Health Ministry joins hands with John Hopkins University to end TB among children below 15 years of age in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As India aims to eliminate TB by 2025, five years ahead of the global target, the Union Health Ministry and Johns Hopkins University have joined hands, accelerating efforts to end the infectious disease particularly among kids below 15 years old in the country. Johns Hopkins researchers launched the TB-Free Schools Initiative to address the increasing number of TB cases reported among children younger than 15 years in the country. The initiative, also in collaboration with the Serum Institute of India and AIIMS Gorakhpur, is based on the success of a cost-effective project in Himachal Pradesh. The pilot showed an 87 per cent reduction in TB cases in residential schools. The initiative will be rolled out to Pune and Satara in Maharashtra, Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh, and Chennai in Tamil Nadu. It will focus on preventing, diagnosing, and treating active and latent cases of TB



among students. It will also provide linkage to care, education, and counselling. "Addressing childhood TB is critical for eliminating tuberculosis in India," said Dr. Urvasi B. Singh, Deputy Director General, Central Tuberculosis Division, Union Health Ministry. She noted that the initiatives will provide "cost-effective screening methods that can be deployed in schools nationwide". In addition, the JHU also launched an initiative to promote gender equality in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics,

and medicine) in India. The initiative in partnership with the US Department of State will train and mentor 40 early-career women for senior roles in its pilot edition. "India is a place of tremendous talent and opportunity, and Johns Hopkins values its enduring collaborations in India and their impact. We are excited to launch these two initiatives that reflect our shared commitment to innovation and human flourishing," said Ronald J. Daniels, President, Johns Hopkins University. India has one of the largest populations of children under

15 in the world, and childhood TB accounts for an estimated 10% of all TB cases in the country. However, only 6% of reported TB cases are among children, according to the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP). According to the reports, children are particularly vulnerable to TB, with young children at higher risk of severe disease. It remains the leading cause of infectious disease death among children globally. In India, the case fatality rate for children under five with TB is 43%. Many childhood TB cases go unreported, especially since a significant number are diagnosed and treated by private practitioners, who often do not report cases to the government program. This lack of data makes it difficult to accurately assess the true burden of childhood TB in India, say health experts. The widespread pollution in many Indian cities further exacerbates the risk, as TB is an airborne disease, and poor air quality can increase exposure to the bacteria.

Rajnath Singh addresses Air Force Commanders' conference



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday here and exhorted IAF Commanders and senior officials of the Ministry of Defence to look at means to make the process of capability and capacity building more efficient and effective, in keeping with our national aims and aspirations. He made these assertions in his address at the ongoing Air Force Commanders' conference. The defence minister also commended the force for its dedication and professionalism in safeguarding the nation's sovereignty. He expressed confidence in the IAF's ability to adapt to evolving challenges. The conference was attended by Chief of Defence Staff

(CDS), General Anil Chauhan, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, Secretary (DDR&D) and Chairman DRDO Dr. Samir V. Kamat, Secretary (Defence Production) Sanjay Kumar and senior commanders of the Indian Air Force (IAF). The ongoing conference has witnessed in-depth discussions on key operational, administrative, and strategic issues. The apex leadership also interacted with the CDS, Chief of the Army Staff and Chief of the Naval Staff to foster synergy. This conference serves as a vital platform for the IAF's senior leadership to deliberate on current challenges and strategize future actions to maintain operational excellence and Atmanirbharta in defence capabilities.

70 per cent reduced violence in disturbed areas: HM Amit Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ GANDHINAGAR

Union Minister of Home Affairs, Amit Shah, on Tuesday said the BJP-led government at the Centre has successfully brought down violence in Jammu and Kashmir (J and K), North-East and Naxal-hit areas by 70 per cent in the last 10 years. Making this assertion at the inaugural event of the 50th All India Police Science Conference (AIPSC) at the Rashtriya Raksha University in Gandhinagar, he expressed confidence that the coming decade will make the Indian criminal justice system the most scientific and fastest in the world.

"For years, three regions were considered very disturbed-Kashmir, North-East, and Naxalite-affected areas. We have made significant improvements in the security of all these three regions. Comparing the data of the last 10 years with the period before that shows that we have been successful in reducing violence by 70 per cent," Shah said. "I believe this is a very big achievement. A large number of people have wholeheartedly supported the government's efforts to reduce this (violence)," he said.

Even in terms of controlling the narcotics trade, the seizure of drugs has increased six times in the last 10 years as compared to what it was a decade ago, he said. Shah said that following the implementation of three new criminal laws this year, justice will be delivered to people from the Supreme Court (SC) level within three years from the date of registration of an

FIR. "The coming 10 years is the time to make India's criminal justice system the most modern, most scientific and fastest. Ever since I was born, I have heard taunts that one gets delayed justice from the court. I want to assure you that after the implementation of the three new criminal laws, one will get justice from the SC within three years of the FIR registration at any police station in the country," he said.

The three new criminal laws - Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) -- came into force on July 1, 2024, replacing the British-era Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Indian Evidence Act, respectively. India became the fifth largest economy from the 11th a decade ago, Shah said, adding that he was confident of India becoming the third largest economy before April 1, 2028. According to him, in the last 10 years, India progressed to lead the world in every area, whether in terms of economy, technology, security, education, research and development, or infrastructure and trade, and the progress has only increased the country's challenges.

He said that India conducted its elections smoothly and handled the COVID-19 pandemic well to the surprise of the world. "When the world recognises our strengths, our challenges grow. And we will have to prepare ourselves by keeping these challenges in mind," he said.



Space X launches ISRO satellite

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The country's latest communication satellite, GSAT-N2 was successfully launched by billionaire Elon Musk-founded SpaceX from Cape Canaveral in the US, ISRO's commercial arm, NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) has said.

The communication satellite will enhance broadband services and in-flight connectivity across the Indian region, NSIL said. As the satellite was heavier than ISRO's current launch capabilities, it had to opt for a

foreign launch vehicle, top space scientists and former chiefs of the country's space agency said.

K Sivan, former ISRO chairperson said, "The satellite was a heavier one beyond the capability of ISRO launch vehicles. That is why it has gone outside."

The 4,700kg GSAT-N2 High-Throughput Satellite (HTS) onboard a Falcon 9 rocket was injected into the desired orbit. "NSIL's GSAT-N2 HTS communication satellite successfully launched from Cape Canaveral, USA on 19th November 2024."

GSAT-N2 weighing 4700 kg has been injected into the desired Geo-synchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) and ISRO's Master Control Facility (MCF) has taken control of the satellite. Preliminary data indicates satellite in good health," NSIL posted on X.

The second Demand Driven satellite of NSIL, GSAT-N2 is a Ka-band HTS that will enhance broadband services and in-flight connectivity across the Indian region, NSIL said. GSAT-24 was NSIL's first demand driven satellite and launched from

Kourou, French Guiana on June 23, 2022. "This satellite (GSAT-N2) featuring multiple spot beams and wideband Ka x Ka transponders, aims to support a large subscriber base with small user terminals, boosting system throughput through its multi-beam architecture which allows frequency reuse," NSIL said.

The satellite has a mission life of 14 years and is equipped with 32 user beams, comprising eight narrow spot beams over the Northeast region and 24 wide spot beams over the rest of India.

Divisions lead to defeat: Rajnath Singh



PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Rajnath Singh, defence minister, stressed the importance of unity in the country, saying divisions have always led to defeat. He also asserted that securing the country's culture is as important as keeping the borders safe. "Whenever our unity has weakened, invaders have tried their best to destroy our civilisation and our culture," Singh said.

Therefore, a pledge of unity should be taken by learning from history, he added. "Those who divide, they try to divide in many ways, including into different religions, castes and sects," the minister said.

"But, you should not get divided. You should neither divide nor divide others, the whole country has to stay together. We have to stay united. If we avoid division, we will move towards development and build a developed and strong India," Singh said.

He was speaking at 'Koti Deepotsavam', an event of mass lighting of 'Deepam' during the Hindu month of Kartik organised by a private TV channel here Monday night. Quoting from ancient scriptures, he said unity is the

strength of society. By ensuring unity, the light should be spread not just in the country but the whole world as India sees the entire world as one family, Singh said.

"The government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also focused on cultural revival. Cultural development is also important for a country along with political, economic and social development, he said. If a nation loses its culture, then that country suffers, Singh added.

"As the defence minister, it is my responsibility to ensure that the country's borders remain safe under our leadership. But, in my view, keeping the country's culture safe is as important as ensuring the safety of the borders," he said.

India is not just a political entity but it also has a cultural identity of thousands of years due to which we are known and accepted all over the world, the Defence Minister said.

No country is made up of just a piece of land and its people, rather a nation is made up of its culture, he said. "If hatred is filled among the people of a country towards their culture, that country would get divided at some point in time," he said.

Bihar government seeks classical status for Maithili

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ GANDHINAGAR

The Nitish Kumar government in Bihar has written to Union home minister Amit Shah seeking the grant of classical language status to Maithili. The letter by state education minister Sunil Kumar, dated November 18, was shared on X by Janara Dal (United) (JD(U)) working president Sanjay Kumar Jha, a close aide of the Bihar chief minister. "I thank Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on behalf of residents of Mithila region for the formal request made by the Bihar education department, to the Centre, for grant of classical language (shastriya bhasha) status to Maithili," Jha wrote on the micro-blogging site.

The Rajya Sabha MP disclosed that he had broached the issue last month, with officials of the Union Ministry for Culture.

Giriraj Singh echoes BJP dog whistles in poll bound Jharkhand



PTI ■ BENGALURU

Attacking the ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-Congress coalition in Jharkhand, Giriraj Singh, Union textiles minister, on Tuesday claimed that Chief Minister Hemant Soren wants to turn the state capital, Ranchi, into Karachi.

Speaking to reporters in Patna, Singh urged the people of Jharkhand to vote for the safety of women. "Hemant Soren and Congress

want to turn Ranchi into Karachi, and Dumka, Deoogarh and Sahibganj districts into Bangladesh. The Congress and its allies want to divide us. I urge people, a day before the final phase of polling in Jharkhand, to vote for the safety of their bahu-beti," he said. Polling for 38 Assembly seats in the second phase will be held in Jharkhand on Wednesday. Accusing the Congress and its allies of dividing the people, Singh said, "They are talking

about vote-jihad. Their basic motive is to divide the votes of the majority community. People must not allow this to happen."

Asked about Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge likening the BJP and RSS to poison, he said, "Although he is a puppet in the Congress, he should not use such unparliamentary and derogatory words. In fact, Congress leaders use poisonous words in their speeches with a motive to divide the voters into communal lines."

Addressing a rally in Sangli in Maharashtra on Sunday, Kharge said, "If there is anything which is politically the most dangerous in India, it is the BJP and RSS. They are like poison. If a snake bites the person (who is bitten) dies, such a poisonous snake should be killed."

On the allegations of religious conversions in Buxar, Motihari, Begusarai and Lakhisarai districts of Bihar, Singh said strict action must be taken against preachers indulging in such activities.

SP writes to ECI over burqa checks

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

A day before polling begins for nine assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh, the Samajwadi Party (SP) has written to the Election Commission (EC), raising concerns over alleged misuse of power by police officials during past elections. The party has demanded that Muslim women voters not be subjected to burqa removal during the voting process.

The letter, submitted by the SP on Monday, requested the EC to issue a written directive to Returning Officers, District Magistrates, General Observers, and police officials to ensure that police personnel refrain from verifying voter ID cards on polling day. According to the SP, this responsibility lies solely with polling officers.

The SP alleged that during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, police officers at polling stations intimidated Muslim women voters by forcing them to remove their burqas for identification. The party claims this led to many voters leaving without casting their ballots, significantly reducing voter turnout in affected areas.



The by-election is being viewed as a battle of prestige for both the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the opposition SP. While the results will not impact the formation or collapse of the government, their political significance is immense. This is the first major electoral test for the BJP after the SP-Congress alliance inflicted a blow to the NDA in Uttar Pradesh during the general elections.

Campaigning for the nine assembly seats ended at 5 p.m. on Monday. Voting will take place on Wednesday,

November 20, from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. These by-elections were necessitated by various reasons, and the notification for them was issued on October 18.

Despite the official announcement a month ago, all parties had been preparing for the contest for several months. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has actively overseen the BJP's campaign, delegating seat-wise responsibilities to ministers as early as July. The BJP has fielded candidates on eight of the nine seats, while its NDA ally Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD)

is contesting the Meerapur seat. The BJP has anchored its campaign on development and Hindutva, projecting its governance track record and ideological commitments. In contrast, the SP has focused on consolidating its PDA alliance, which targets backward classes, Dalits, and minorities.

As the state braces for polling day, political observers anticipate that the by-election results will carry significant implications for the BJP and SP ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections.

Punjab by-poll a litmus test for sitting MPs, wives and AAP government

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab's ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) would like to register victories after its dismal performance in the Lok Sabha election while the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are also going all out for triumph in the by-elections to four assembly segments going to polls on Wednesday.

By-polls to the four Assembly segments -- Gidderbaha, Dera Baba Nanak, Chabbewal and Barnala -- will take place on November 20 from 7 am to 6 pm and counting will be held on November 23.

By-polls were necessitated after MLAs representing them were elected to the Lok Sabha. Of the four Assembly segments, Gidderbaha, Dera Baba Nanak and Chabbewal were earlier held by the Congress, and the Barnala seat by the AAP.

45 candidates, including three women, are in the fray for the by-polls and 6.96 lakh voters are eligible to exercise their

franchise at 831 polling stations. More than 6,400 Punjab Police personnel and 17 companies of the Central Armed Police Forces have been deployed for peaceful elections, they said, adding that there will be 100 per cent webcasting of all polling stations.

Campaigning for the by-polls to four Assembly segments ended on Monday evening. The bypolls will decide the fate of key contestants, including Manpreet Singh Badal, BJP nominee and former Punjab finance minister, Congress' Amrita Warring, Jatinder Kaur, AAP's Hardeep Singh Dimpy Dhillon, Dr Ishank Kumar Chabbewal and BJP's Kewal Singh Dhillon, Sohan Singh Thandal and Ravikaran Singh Kahlon.

Amrita Warring is the wife of Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, Punjab Congress chief and Ludhiana MP while Jatinder Kaur is the spouse of Gurdaspur MP and former



Punjab deputy chief minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa. The Gidderbaha constituency in Muktsar district is set to see a fierce three-cornered fight. The seat fell vacant after Raja Warring, who was a Congress MLA, was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Ludhiana seat in the 2024 Parliamentary elections. Congress' Amrita Warring, who is contesting

for the first time, BJP's Manpreet Singh Badal and AAP's Hardeep Singh Dimpy Dhillon are in the fray. Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar) (SAD) has also fielded Sukhraj Singh, son of one of the 2015 Behbal Kalan police firing victims. Raja Warring was elected Gidderbaha MLA in 2012, 2017 and 2022.

Manpreet Singh, who earlier represented this seat four times on SAD tickets, is looking to wrest this Assembly segment for BJP this time, after 12 years. His uncle and five-time Punjab chief minister late Parkash Singh Badal had represented Gidderbaha five times. Similarly, Hardeep Dhillon, who lost this seat twice to

Warring in 2017 and 2022, would also want to register victory. He had joined the AAP after quitting the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) in August.

The Barnala seat will see a multi-cornered contest with the AAP fielding Harinder Singh Dhaliwal, Congress nominating Kuldeep Singh Dhillon and BJP Kewal Singh Dhillon. Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar) has fielded Govind Singh Mann, who is the maternal grandson of former MP and party chief Simranjit Singh Mann, while AAP rebel Gurdeep Singh Bath is fighting as an independent candidate. This seat fell vacant after Gurmeet Singh Hayer, who was an AAP MLA, was elected from the Sangrur Lok Sabha seat. He had won the Barnala seat in 2017 and 2022 assembly polls.

In the Chabbewal reserve Assembly segment, the AAP has fielded Dr Ishank Kumar Chabbewal, the son of AAP's Hoshiarpur MP Raj Kumar

Chabbewal. The BJP has fielded former Akali MLA and former minister Sohan Singh Thandal, who quit the SAD last month, while the Congress named Ranjit Kumar, who had unsuccessfully contested the 2024 Lok Sabha polls from Hoshiarpur as a Bahujan Samaj Party candidate.

The Chabbewal by-election was necessitated after Raj Kumar Chabbewal, who was a Congress MLA but later joined the AAP, was elected to the Lok Sabha from Hoshiarpur.

The Dera Baba Nanak seat will witness a three-cornered fight with Congress' Jatinder Kaur, the wife of Gurdaspur MP Sukhjinder Randhawa, AAP nominee Gurdeep Singh Randhawa and BJP's Ravikaran Singh Kahlon, who switched over from the SAD, in the fray.

The Dera Baba Nanak is considered a Congress bastion as Sukhjinder Randhawa represented this seat in 2002, 2012, 2017 and

2022. The seat fell vacant after Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, who was the Congress MLA from here, was elected from the Gurdaspur parliamentary seat.

The SAD has opted to stay away from the by-polls. The party took the decision not to participate in the by-polls after Sukhbir Singh Badal, who has now resigned as the SAD president, failed to get any temporary relief from the Akal Takht, which declared him 'tankhaiya' (person guilty of religious misconduct), for the 'mistakes' committed by his party and government from 2007 to 2017.

The by-polls are being seen as a litmus test for Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann whose government has completed a two-and-half-year term.

The victory will be important for Mann given his party's dismal performance in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls in which it could win just three of 13 Parliamentary constituencies.



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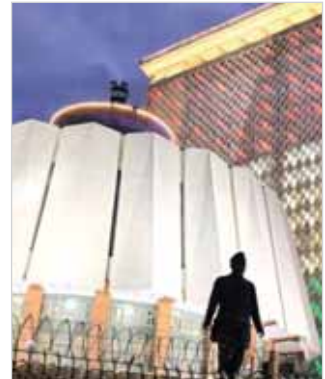
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PAPER WITH PASSION

Time for reckoning

Today Maharashtra will vote to decide its future leadership and political trajectory

Maharashtra, one of India's most politically significant states, votes for all 288 Assembly seats today. This election comes at a time of heightened political fragmentation and social unrest, making its outcome crucial for both state and national politics. A key issue in this election is the split within the Shiv Sena, a party long associated with Maharashtra's regional pride. The party is now divided into two factions: one led by Uddhav Thackeray, aligned with the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Congress, and the other by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, supported by the BJP. This division has significantly eroded the party's traditional voter base, creating uncertainty about its performance in this election. Adding to the complexity is the Maratha reservation demand. The Maratha community, constituting about 30 per cent of the state's population, is pushing for inclusion in the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category to access job and educational quotas. Protests, led by figures like Manoj Jarange Patil, have brought this issue to the forefront, with the ruling BJP-Shiv Sena alliance attempting to address it through policy measures. However, the unresolved tensions could influence voter sentiment, especially in rural areas.



The BJP-led alliance faces further challenges from agrarian distress in regions like Vidarbha and Marathwada. Falling crop prices for key produce such as cotton and onions have caused financial strain on farmers, traditionally a significant voting bloc. The MVA has capitalised on this dissatisfaction,

highlighting the BJP's failure to protect Maharashtra's economic interests, including the recent relocation of major industrial projects to Gujarat. This election also reflects national-level dynamics. The results will test the BJP's ability to maintain its dominance amid growing opposition unity and could signal the strength of the Congress and its allies. A victory for the MVA might energise the national opposition, while a BJP win could consolidate its position. With a fragmented political landscape, Maharashtra's election promises to be closely contested. Its outcome will likely shape not only the state's future but also set the tone for national politics in the coming years. The political landscape of the state stands at a crossroads today. With a deeply fragmented Shiv Sena, intense debates over Maratha reservations, and agrarian distress weighing on rural voters, this election carries stakes far beyond the state's borders. The outcome would indeed be a pointer to the prowess of the BJP at the national level and the resilience of the INDI alliance. Besides the state is an economic powerhouse and whosoever rules the state also enjoys the support of corporate world to keep its momentum going.

PICTALK



Folk dancers perform during the celebration of the 297th foundation day of 'Pink City', Jaipur

PTI

Buddhas in the boardroom: How meditation can counter burnout

Meditation, once reserved for monks, is emerging as a transformative practice for professionals, helping them fight burnout

With increased screen time, back-to-back meetings and the constant scramble of the hustle culture, we need to consider — whether we are running the show, or just running. Workplace burnout is the price often paid for juggling high expectations, tight deadlines and the need to be available for work all the time — while disregarding personal health and wellbeing.

Understanding workplace burnout: Burnout is beyond the feeling of tiredness at the end of a busy day. It's a state of chronic physical and emotional exhaustion, coupled with detachment, cynicism and reduced performance. The WHO officially recognised burnout as an occupational phenomenon, signifying its critical impact on modern work-life. It affects mental clarity and emotional resilience and can even have physiological repercussions on heart health and sleep patterns.

Why meditation: Amid the workday, meditation offers an oasis — a moment to pause, reflect, and realign. The practice, often associated with



monks and mountain retreats, is now being rediscovered in the boardroom. The reason is simple: meditation fosters the ability to be present, grounded and conscious of one's thoughts and actions. Research has shown that regular meditation can alter brain activity, shifting it from the limbic system (responsible for our fight-or-flight responses) to the prefrontal cortex (the centre for rational thinking and calmness). This neurological shift translates to a greater sense of control over stress, enabling clearer decision-making and enhancing focus. Yoga emphasises how yogic, breathing and meditation techniques can lead to transformative wellbeing. Studies on Yoga have reported a positive impact on holistic wellbeing, with participants reporting reductions in anx-

ety, stress, and burnout by 72-82 per cent. This makes it an effective, research-backed solution for integrating meditation into workplace wellness.

Transforming work culture through yogic practices

The tangible benefits of meditation go beyond stress relief. In practice, this means a more focused team, resilient in the face of challenges, and more open to collaboration. Some organisations are already creating environments where wellness isn't a perk but a pillar of their work culture. We need Buddhas in the boardroom. **How meditation rewrites your life script:** Meditation is more than sitting in silence; it's about training the mind to be resilient. Techniques such as deep breathing, guided protocols and visualisation help individuals develop a heightened state of non-judgemental awareness, balance emotions, and build a strong mental framework to manage stress effectively. One standout programme is YOI, which has garnered attention for its multifaceted approach to wellbeing. Imagine being able to handle feedback with-

out feeling criticised or meeting a deadline without feeling panic — meditation offers a gateway to equanimity. As game-changers in the corporate world, meditative practices build the mental stamina to bounce back from setbacks, maintain composure under pressure, and approach situations with a growth mindset.

Meditation at work Meditation in the workplace doesn't require a meditation mat or a designated room; it just requires an integration of intention, emotion and awareness. Here are some strategies to help you get started: A few minutes of breathing or focusing on your senses can help reset your mental state. Begin your meetings with a minute of silence or guided breathing. It helps everyone clear their minds and be more present. As the world continues to spin, meditation serves as a reminder — that the power to pause and find a balance lies within.

(The writer is, mental health researcher and the founder of Yoga of Immortals; views are personal)



ISHAN SHIVANAND

out feeling criticised or meeting a deadline without feeling panic — meditation offers a gateway to equanimity. As game-changers in the corporate world, meditative practices build the mental stamina to bounce back from setbacks, maintain composure under pressure, and approach situations with a growth mindset.

(The writer is, mental health researcher and the founder of Yoga of Immortals; views are personal)

West Bengal's lost opportunity

Tata Nano factory's relocation from West Bengal to Gujarat is a poignant reminder of how political myopia derailed a golden opportunity for Bengal's industrial revival



ANIRBAN GANGULY

In a moving tribute to late Ratan Tata, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke of the many dimensions of the industrial icon's personality that endeared him to the people. Pursuit of excellence and empathy were among the most dominant traits in late Ratan Tata leading him to pilot the Tata conglomerate towards greater heights of success and expansion. Under his two decades of stewardship, the Tata group witnessed a phenomenal spread of its global footprints and established itself as a vibrant brand.

Perhaps like many others from West Bengal, Ratan Tata's passing brought to my mind the Singur — Tata Nano factory episode. Those dark days of lost opportunities, signified a major recal, for the hope of an industrial regeneration in the state. A party and government which had, for over three decades patronised, militant trade unionism had suddenly decided to reverse that trend. It was ironic to see it clamber for investment in a feverish pitch after having presided over the de-industrialisation of the state.

The destruction of Bengal's once formidable industrial might is a map of the CPI(M) rise in the state. Howrah, once famed as the 'Sheffield of the east', turned into West Bengal's principal industrial graveyard under the communists. As early as the 1920s Dr Ambedkar had seen through and realised the often-duplicious approach of the communist-led trade-unionism. In the pages of his Bahishkrut Bharat he wrote how communists were 'trying to capture the labour movement in the country' and that 'the main aim behind the strike' was 'not to improve the economic conditions of workers but to train them for revolution.' He could foresee the cancer that was trying to claw into India's industrial entrails.

Let us recall how then West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu had sanctioned protests against the Metro Rail project. The communist-driven frenzied trade-unionism destroyed several iconic public undertakings such as the Haringhata Milk



Dairy, set up by Dr BC Roy had created a milk supply chain across the state while generating thousands of jobs. Much like Mamata Banerjee who has refused to enlist West Bengal in the Centre's 'Aspirational District Project' and remains lukewarm to the 'Ekalavya Vidyalaya' scheme, Basu in 1986, had forbade the setting up of Navodaya Schools in the state. In 1974, three years before he came to power as Chief Minister, Basu had organised a relay protest in front of the Hongkong Bank regional office in Kolkata to stall the installation of computers. Yet ironically the same Jyoti Basu in 1994, commissioned Arthur Anderson, a multinational business consultant, to carry out a study of the chances of West Bengal's industrial revival based on foreign investment. But progress was halting, it lacked a roadmap. Thus, when Ratan Tata decided to invest in the state it was a whiff of more than fresh air, it was a long-needed gush of wind for breathing fresh life into a dying industrial ethos. A hopeful Tata had then said that he had 'scanned the country and looked at various locations before deciding to locate this rather revolution-

MUCH LIKE MAMATA BANERJEE WHO HAS REFUSED TO ENLIST WEST BENGAL IN THE CENTRE'S FLAGSHIP 'ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICT PROJECT' AND REMAINS LUKEWARM TO THE 'EKALAVYA VIDYALAYA' SCHEME, BASU IN 1986, HAD FORBADE THE SETTING UP OF NAVODAYA SCHOOLS IN THE STATE

ary project which will give India's truly people's car here in Bengal. It announced a new chapter, a historic opportunity for Bengal's industrial rejuvenation. But that did not happen. Political selfishness, and one-upmanship between the ruling CPI(M) and the opposition Trinamool Congress, leading a blind political opposition to the proposal led to its grounding. In trying to bolster her flagging political prospects, Mamata Banerjee, desperately and deliberately jettisoned the project. Her political arrogance and self-centeredness led to its sinking. In her last fifteen years at the helm, the state has failed to recover from that mindless assault and pushback. An epic opportunity was lost, with a beleaguered Tata announcing his exit from the state due to political reasons. The people of West Bengal lost out. Their hopes of a possibilities-filled future receded in a mist of uncertainty. Both the ruling dispensation then and the opposition were responsible for pushing the state into a dark alley. The alley remains dark even to this day. Ratan Tata announced that he was shifting the car plant to Gujarat's Sanand. It was a plant that would eventually

grow into a mega 1100-acre unit. Narendra Modi was then Chief Minister of Gujarat. As Tata was announcing his exit from West Bengal, Modi texted him 'Welcome', leading to the proposed Nano factory shifting to Gujarat. Modi told Tata that the project was not only his, but ours. Later he had observed, in a lighter vein, that his one-rupee SMS had brought about a major boost to Gujarat's industrial prospects. Ratan Tata later said that he would forever remain grateful to Modi for placing faith in him and inviting him to Gujarat during those difficult days. The saga of the Singur-Tata Nano factory's shift to Gujarat is a saga of petty political squabbles, acute selfishness, arrogance and lack of true commitment to West Bengal's future and progress. That mindset and outlook among the ruling dispensation in the state still dominate. It has to be thrown overboard. Only then will West Bengal's industrial rejuvenation appear to be a possibility. (The writer is chairman Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation and member National Executive Committee, BJP; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

UKRAINE TO USE LONG-RANGE MISSILES

Madam — If this news is true that finally, US President Joe Biden has given the green signal to Ukraine to use long-range American missiles against Russia, then it is very good news for Ukraine. Because for the last one and a half years, Ukrainian President Zelensky was asking for permission to use these long-range weapons. Otherwise, this weapon will remain just a showpiece and one day Russia will capture it and then it will start using it to capture some third country.

This decision is also necessary because the Biden administration is now a guest for only two months. The president who will come after him, Trump, has already announced that he will stop giving any kind of help to Ukraine. The second big reason for Biden's change of heart seems to be that with the support of Russia, about 10 thousand combat soldiers of North Korea have taken up the front against Ukraine. In such a situation, Ukraine should have gotten this permission at all costs. The news of Biden's decision came after meetings with the leaders of South Korea, Japan and China in the last two days. The inclusion of North Korean troops was the main topic of the talks, which took place during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Peru. Europe was already ready to give permission. But America was not ready. It is said that American missiles will be able to hit up to 300 kilometers inside Russia at three times the speed of sound, which even Russia's anti-missile equipment will not be able to intercept.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

VIOLENCE ESCALATES IN MANIPUR

Madam — Apropos of the headlines on Manipur violence (November 18), the resurgence of violence in Manipur goes unabated. The violence and sabotage look beyond control. The MLAs and ministers of different political parties are being attacked and their houses are ransacked. The democratic fabric in Manipur has been destroyed by the extremists and irate

India tests hypersonic missile



India's hypersonic missile technology has received a shot in the arm after a long-range hypersonic missile was tested by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). With a range exceeding 1500 km, the missile is intended to carry wide-ranging payloads for all three services of the Indian armed forces. These indigenously developed missiles are special because they travel with a speed five

times that of sound at sea level, at approximately 6200 km per hour, and at a mile per second. Hypersonic missiles are extremely difficult to detect, making enemy radars nigh impossible to spot them before they are too close for comfort.

Their maneuverability and ability to fly at lower altitudes separate them from the ballistic missiles that follow a set path. Hypersonic missiles can also be partially projected into orbit via a glide vehicle through the fractional orbital bombardment system (FOBS) unlike the ballistic missiles, though the latter can travel faster. Till now, Russia, China and the United States possess full-fledged hypersonic capabilities, while Germany, France, Japan, Australia, Iran and Israel are on course to follow suit. India has, thus, joined the elite 'hypersonic group.' Kudos to ISRO for another feather in the cap.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

mobs. Education, health, development and civic administration are in peril. The elected government has turned dysfunctional and there are threats and possibilities of destabilising the state government. It is quite apparent that the efforts of peace in the first phase of violence have failed despite the newly elected state government post-violence.

Earlier, there were reports of missionaries inciting violence in the state. The Manipur violence has affected neighbouring states of Assam, Tripura and Nagaland. In fact, the Manipur violence has a secessionist motive and the disruptive and separatist forces behind the Manipur violence are based across the borders. It is, therefore, imperative that President Rule may be imposed in the state and the assembly may be suspended till normalcy returns and the political atmosphere is congenial for restoration of the assembly and the government. The Manipur mayhem should not be taken as political mileage by the opposition parties. The India-Myanmar border should be sealed with immediate effect,

though this is practically very difficult.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

KAILASH GAHLOT QUITS AAP

Madam — Gahlot resigned from AAP, citing the party's shift from focusing on public welfare to prioritising political ambitions. In his resignation letter to AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal, Gahlot stated that instead of fighting for people's rights, the party had increasingly been focused on its own agenda. He also expressed dissatisfaction with controversies like the 'Sheeshmahal' row, questioning whether AAP still upheld its core identity as the party of the common man. AAP responded by alleging that Gahlot's resignation was influenced by pressure from central agencies investigating him, a claim Gahlot dismissed. The BJP believes that Gahlot's entry strengthens its position as it prepares to challenge AAP in the upcoming elections.

Akhilesh Krishnan | Vashi

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FIRST COLUMN

A DIET FOR PEACE:
KINDNESS OVER CRUELTY

The food we consume shapes not just our physical health but also our thoughts, actions and the world



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

It has been rightly said that we are what we eat because the kind of food that we eat has a direct impact on how we think and therefore it's crucial to what we become finally. Recent studies made by modern medical science have suggested that the human body is not naturally designed to digest and assimilate non-vegetarian food. That is why today most medical practitioners recommend a healthy vegetarian diet to their patients who are suffering from lifestyle disorders. Along with scientific studies, individual researchers made all over the world have also clearly pointed out that when an animal is killed for meat, it experiences fear, anxiety and pain. Its hormonal secretions are then passed on to its consumers.

Such a diet is therefore unhealthy both for the body and the mind. In many religions, a non-vegetarian diet is strictly forbidden not just because it causes pain and suffering to other living creatures but also because it is the source of vicious thoughts and attitudes to its consumers. In other words, non-vegetarian food is a gateway to a non-vegetarian lifestyle, a way of living where vices dwell comfortably. One must understand that human cruelty towards animals is nothing but a way of inviting cruelty onto the self. Also, the current trend of mass consumption of flesh by human beings highlights the way we look at other living beings and our desire to subjugate them.



From a broader perspective, the mass consumption of non-vegetarian food is a way of heaping sin upon the human community. No peace marches, diplomatic dialogues and conferences can bring peace to the planet when we are burdening it with the desperate cries of hapless creatures. For what we sow, so shall we reap. It is so ironic that the largely meat-eating developed countries of the world have stringent laws when it comes to treating a pet and it is ensured that if the pet is hurt, the owner can even be imprisoned. However, in these very countries, millions of animals are killed every day for food and yet no one goes to jail. Isn't it surprising that so many animal lovers continue to be non-vegetarians because they are unable to connect with the cruelty that goes behind, in the making of such food? Even more surprising was a weird recommendation to find humane methods of animal slaughter made by some so-called animal sympathisers. But the contention here is what can be more inhuman than nourishing an animal to kill it one day. It is a breach of morality by all standards. What is more cruel than subjecting generations of animals to a life of stifling captivity that only leads them to a merciless end? And what is more cruel than killing animals in front of each other? While one is bleeding to death, the other watches in horror and waits for its turn. It is a great pity that even sympathetic humans are left with such little kindness that all they can think of is designing a better way to kill. It's high time that all of us should ask ourselves a question: why does our conscience need a rational argument, sanctioned by a research institute in the West, to realise that killing other living creatures is a form of cruelty?

Why do we need facts and figures to understand that cruelty can never be a bringer of any form of health - be it mind, body or the environment & bring peace and harmony to the world? Can't we realise that a heart that heaves no sigh at the sight of violence cannot be a source of compassion for other fellow men? So how do we expect people who do not nurture the feeling of kindness for other living beings to nurture feelings of brotherhood and forgiveness for their community? Aren't we just walking on one path while seeking another's destination? Just give it a thought and then decide whether to Kill or Heal. Learn to live above self when life is precious to all. Let there be the right to live for all & not just Human Rights, then only world peace will descend.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist; views are personal)



EILIA JAFAR

overlook the factors that contribute to pollution in the long term as well. One significant factor is the dust produced during construction activities.

While the temporary suspension of construction operations following GRAP guidelines is a move in the right direction, it also underscores the urgency of implementing more environmentally friendly building

methods. Germany and Sweden serve as examples of nations that have successfully implemented construction practices.

For instance, Germany prioritises the use of low-carbon concrete, whereas Sweden focuses on promoting energy-efficient structures with improved insulation and solar innovations. India has the opportunity to implement strategies to minimise dust and emissions from construction activities and promote sustainable development.

The need for transformation in transportation is crucial to address the issue of pollution in Delhi caused by road dust and vehicle emissions. Although the metro system has advanced to some extent in Delhi, there are still areas

with connectivity that need attention.

Expanding the metro network and integrating buses can lead to a decrease in private car usage. Moreover, promoting the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) could play a role in reducing emissions. Providing benefits such as tax incentives, toll discounts, and even offering parking for EVs could potentially increase their attractiveness to commuters. Biking is becoming more popular as an eco-friendly option in Delhi; however, the city's infrastructure doesn't fully support it yet.

Although smart bikes are being introduced in some areas, which is a move forward, the absence of marked biking lanes and safety precautions deters many people from bik-



ing. Cities such as Copenhagen and Amsterdam serve as models for incorporating biking into urban environments. Delhi could take inspiration from its approach by investing in infrastructure for cyclists, such as bike lanes and bike-sharing services, to enhance the safety and convenience of cycling for its residents. Encouraging the use of sustainable building methods is crucial too!

Providing incentives for individuals who build energy-efficient houses or utilise eco-friendly materials could greatly support sustainability efforts in communities worldwide. Numerous nations offer tax advantages or financial aid to developers who embrace green building strategies. India could introduce perks like discounts on energy-saving devices, offers on solar panel setups, or financial assistance for homeowners undertaking eco-conscious improvements. These initiatives would not only lessen the burden on energy reserves but also encourage environmentally responsible construction practices.

Another helpful way to decrease the number of cars on the road is through carpooling initiatives, such as carpool

lanes and discounts for vehicles with passengers, which have proven effective in countries around the world. Introducing strategies in Delhi, such as designated carpool lanes or toll reductions for cars carrying two or more passengers, could play a role in alleviating traffic congestion and decreasing harmful emissions levels.

By implementing these measures, not only would pollution be reduced, but it would also enhance the daily commute experience for numerous residents in the area. The call for action is critical now.

The air pollution crisis in NCR intensified on November 17, 2024, as Delhi's average Air Quality Index (AQI) climbed to a hazardous 441 by 4 PM, classified as 'severe', up from

419 the previous day. The harmful pollutants are linked to health concerns, such as respiratory illnesses and cardiovascular diseases.

The Stage 4 actions outlined in the GRAP are crucial for providing relief; however, it is evident that a comprehensive long-term plan is essential to enhance the air quality in Delhi. By emphasising the enhancement of public transportation services, implementing infrastructure for cyclists, advocating for eco-friendly construction methods and encouraging carpooling, Delhi can strive to diminish pollution levels and establish a healthier and more sustainable environment for all residents.

(The writer is humanitarian and development professional; views are personal)

Delhi discoms in crisis:
Debt and regulatory gaps

UTTAM GUPTA

A convoluted tariff regime, under-recoveries, power theft, and unpaid subsidies are threatening the sustainability of the Delhi discoms



Delhi Government is looking at various options to address twin problems facing its three power distribution companies (discoms) namely BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL), discom for South & West Delhi; BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) — discom for Central & East Delhi; and Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited or TPDDL - discom for North Delhi. These are (i) "Regulatory Assets" or RAs of Rs 27,200 crore lying in the books of these discoms; (ii) an equally staggering amount of Rs 26,500 crore they owe to power generation and transmission companies viz. Indraprastha Power Generation Co. Ltd (IPGCL), Pragati Power Corporation Limited (PPCL) and Delhi Transco Limited or DTL at the end of September 2024. The discoms are expected to sell electricity to the consumers at tariffs — duly approved by the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) — that are set in a manner such that the revenue generated from sale at these tariffs fully cover the power purchase cost plus the cost of wheeling and distribution. The requirement is mandatory under the Electricity Act, of 2003. But, this is rarely complied with.

Under a highly convoluted regime, the tariff charged from households (HHs) consuming up to 200 units a month is Rs 3 per unit which is just about half of the average cost leading to an under-recovery of Rs 3 per unit. Including levies adding to 44.6 per cent, the shortfall comes to Rs 4.3 per unit (3x1.446). For HHs consuming between 201 and 400 units, the tariff is Rs 4.5 per unit implying an under-recovery of Rs 1.5 per unit. Including the levies, this comes to Rs 2.2 per unit. These under-recoveries are cross-subsidised by charging more from industries and businesses for which the tariff can go up to a high of Rs 16 per unit.

The irony is that despite charging exorbitant rates from industries and businesses, a good slice of under-recoveries from HHs consuming less than 400 units a month remains uncovered. Additionally, the Delhi government doesn't want the latter to even pay the small tariff of Rs



THE IRONY IS THAT DESPITE CHARGING EXORBITANT RATES FROM INDUSTRIES AND BUSINESSES, A GOOD SLICE OF UNDER-RECOVERIES FROM HHS CONSUMING LESS THAN 400 UNITS A MONTH REMAINS UNCOVERED

3 per unit (courtesy, of Kejriwal's freebies). Thus, discoms are told not to raise any bill on HHs consuming up to 200 units even as HHs consuming up to 400 units get a flat deduction of Rs 800 per month from the bill amount. Though the government promises to reimburse them for these subsidies from the state budget, this promise is held more in breach. This increases discoms' losses which are compounded by large-scale power theft.

Where do RAs fit in? RAs are created when state electricity regulatory commissions (in this case, DERC) accept that the tariffs don't cover discounts' purchase costs but don't raise rates. The gap between the cost and revenue generated from sales at tariffs (albeit unrevised) for supplied power, is booked by discom as receivable and classified as RA. This is contrary to the Electricity Act (2003) and the National Power Tariff Policy (NPTP) which says that "tariffs must reflect costs and regulatory assets should not be created". In December 2022, the Ministry of Power (MoP) even warned against creating a pile of RAs. But, all these regulations/warnings have fallen on deaf ears.

All losses incurred by discoms in Delhi during the last 11 years or so have been shown in their books as RAs. Regrettably, the RAs persist despite subsisting mechanisms to enable discoms to offset cost escalation by suitable increases in tariff. As per the order issued by MoP on November 9, 2021, discoms are allowed to impose a surcharge known as PPAC (Power Purchase Agreement Cost). Levied as a percentage of the 'total energy cost and fixed charge component' of the electricity bill, the surcharge is meant to compensate them for variations in the fuel and power procurement cost. Effective from July 2023, the DERC had last increased PPAC vide its order

dated June 22, 2023, by 9.42 per cent for BYPL, 6.39 per cent for BRPL and 2 per cent for TPDDL. The current PPACs for these discoms are 31.6 per cent, 27.08 per cent and 33 per cent respectively. Moreover, DERC has allowed discoms to levy a surcharge of eight per cent.

This is intended to plug any shortfall in revenue vis-à-vis the cost still left unplugged after collection of PPAC. Despite these two impositions, the discoms continue to report a substantial shortfall in their revenue from the sale of electricity which is manifest in cumulative monumental RAs of Rs 27,200 crore. It is a manifestation of several glaring pitfalls: (i) the Delhi government isn't reimbursing discoms for the subsidies they give to target consumers on its behalf; (ii) large-scale power theft continues unabated; (iii) discoms have been submitting inflated bills/claims and other financial wrongs; (iv) inefficiencies get full protection. Hesitant to sanction tariff hikes against these extra/unjustified costs, DERC chooses the easy option of putting all these under RAs.

The idea of creating RAs is flawed. When a discom petitions DERC to allow any cost increase in tariff, the latter can either reject or accept. In case of acceptance, it should take the process to its logical conclusion by sanctioning the requisite tariff hike and notifying it. It can't leave things hanging in the air by accepting but not 'approving' and 'notifying' the tariff hike. Unfortunately, this is what the DERC has been doing for over a decade. This has dangerous consequences.

First, once recorded in their books as RAs, discoms will leave no stone unturned in recovering the money say by getting sanction of a steep hike in tariff to make up for the entire cumulative deficit in revenue. Indeed, the matter had gone right up to the Supreme Court

(SC) which in an order given in early 2023 had directed the DERC to let discoms recover their RAs. This could lead to a 100 per cent hike in tariff.

So, the regulator decided to contest that order. Second, until such time the requisite tariff hike is actually sanctioned by the DERC, the RAs can't be treated as an asset. Hence, there remains every possibility of the loans taken from banks and financial institutions (FIs) for funding them becoming non-performing assets (NPAs). Moreover, the banks/FIs may not give more to discoms and their suppliers namely IPGCL/PPCL/DTL more loans. Third, the discoms can leverage the ambiguous classification (neither outright rejection of a claim for tariff hike nor approval) to present claims to the DERC which the latter may not be willing to accept.

This leads to substantial claims getting bogged down in legal disputes at the appeal level or in higher courts. To conclude, providing for RAs in the books of discoms is a bad practice. Apart from discoms, it also puts the power generators and transmission companies at serious risk. It can impair the balance sheet of banks and FIs who have given loans to them.

It could mean a steep hike in tariffs on supplies to industries/businesses besides HHs consuming more than 400 units a month. To cap it all, it provides a 'cover up' for financial irregularities and corruption. The practice must be shunned. As for the RAs already piled up, a thorough enquiry should be ordered to look into irregularities followed by recovery of money from those found guilty. The discoms should be 'unshackled' from the controls of the State government. If the latter wants to subsidise or provide free power to certain consumers, the money should be given to them directly.

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

Delhi's air quality crisis: Action taken for now, but long-term solutions are crucial

The city faces an urgent need for sustainable, long-term strategies to tackle pollution at its root

The air quality in Delhi has recently deteriorated to dangerously high levels. To address this issue swiftly and effectively, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has implemented Stage 4 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP).

This stage involves measures such as restricting bus services, pausing construction work and mining activities, and transitioning primary school classes to online learning. Although these steps are crucial in addressing the current pollution issue promptly, they alone cannot effectively address the underlying factors contributing to air pollution in the long term. It is crucial to prioritise short-term solutions for relief; however, we must not



EILIA JAFAR

overlook the factors that contribute to pollution in the long term as well. One significant factor is the dust produced during construction activities.

While the temporary suspension of construction operations following GRAP guidelines is a move in the right direction, it also underscores the urgency of implementing more environmentally friendly building

methods. Germany and Sweden serve as examples of nations that have successfully implemented construction practices.

For instance, Germany prioritises the use of low-carbon concrete, whereas Sweden focuses on promoting energy-efficient structures with improved insulation and solar innovations. India has the opportunity to implement strategies to minimise dust and emissions from construction activities and promote sustainable development.

The need for transformation in transportation is crucial to address the issue of pollution in Delhi caused by road dust and vehicle emissions. Although the metro system has advanced to some extent in Delhi, there are still areas

with connectivity that need attention.

Expanding the metro network and integrating buses can lead to a decrease in private car usage. Moreover, promoting the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) could play a role in reducing emissions. Providing benefits such as tax incentives, toll discounts, and even offering parking for EVs could potentially increase their attractiveness to commuters. Biking is becoming more popular as an eco-friendly option in Delhi; however, the city's infrastructure doesn't fully support it yet.

Although smart bikes are being introduced in some areas, which is a move forward, the absence of marked biking lanes and safety precautions deters many people from bik-



ing. Cities such as Copenhagen and Amsterdam serve as models for incorporating biking into urban environments. Delhi could take inspiration from its approach by investing in infrastructure for cyclists, such as bike lanes and bike-sharing services, to enhance the safety and convenience of cycling for its residents. Encouraging the use of sustainable building methods is crucial too!

Providing incentives for individuals who build energy-efficient houses or utilise eco-friendly materials could greatly support sustainability efforts in communities worldwide. Numerous nations offer tax advantages or financial aid to developers who embrace green building strategies. India could introduce perks like discounts on energy-saving devices, offers on solar panel setups, or financial assistance for homeowners undertaking eco-conscious improvements. These initiatives would not only lessen the burden on energy reserves but also encourage environmentally responsible construction practices.

Another helpful way to decrease the number of cars on the road is through carpooling initiatives, such as carpool

lanes and discounts for vehicles with passengers, which have proven effective in countries around the world. Introducing strategies in Delhi, such as designated carpool lanes or toll reductions for cars carrying two or more passengers, could play a role in alleviating traffic congestion and decreasing harmful emissions levels.

By implementing these measures, not only would pollution be reduced, but it would also enhance the daily commute experience for numerous residents in the area. The call for action is critical now.

The air pollution crisis in NCR intensified on November 17, 2024, as Delhi's average Air Quality Index (AQI) climbed to a hazardous 441 by 4 PM, classified as 'severe', up from

419 the previous day. The harmful pollutants are linked to health concerns, such as respiratory illnesses and cardiovascular diseases.

The Stage 4 actions outlined in the GRAP are crucial for providing relief; however, it is evident that a comprehensive long-term plan is essential to enhance the air quality in Delhi. By emphasising the enhancement of public transportation services, implementing infrastructure for cyclists, advocating for eco-friendly construction methods and encouraging carpooling, Delhi can strive to diminish pollution levels and establish a healthier and more sustainable environment for all residents.

(The writer is humanitarian and development professional; views are personal)

Agriculture Minister sounds alarm on soil degradation, calls for urgent action

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Agriculture Minister Shri Singh Chauhan on Tuesday expressed concern over soil degradation affecting 30 per cent of India's land and stressed the need for urgent measures to maintain soil quality for sustainable farming. Addressing a global conference on soil through video conferencing, Chauhan said improving soil health is crucial for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to zero hunger, climate action and life on land. "We are producing more than 330 million tonnes of foodgrains annually and exporting worth USD 50 billion.



This success however comes with concerns, especially regarding soil health," the minister said. According to Chauhan, about 30 per cent of India's land is experiencing degradation due to rising fertiliser consumption, imbalanced use of fertilisers,

exploitation of natural resources and wrong soil management practices. The minister highlighted various government initiatives, including the distribution of more than 220 million soil health cards to farmers and the promotion of micro irrigation, organic and natural farming methods. However, he emphasised that more focused efforts are needed, particularly in view of rising temperatures, erratic rainfall patterns and climate change challenges. A new programme on modern agriculture will soon be launched to bridge the gap between scientists and farmers, Chauhan added. Speaking at the event, Niti Aayog member Ramesh Chand questioned the

limited adoption of conservation agriculture and zero tillage methods in India and South Asia, despite their successful implementation in South American countries like Brazil and Argentina. While some NGOs and private companies are promoting regenerative agriculture and natural farming, these initiatives remain limited in scope, Chand told the conference, calling on the Indian Soil Scientists Society (ISSS) to spearhead larger-scale solutions. The conference was attended by ICAR Director General Himanshu Pathak, Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority Chairperson Trilochan Mohapatra, and ISSS President H Pathak.

FICCI reduces GST on EV batteries, charging services to boost affordability

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In order to keep EVs competitive there is a need to reduce GST on batteries and charging services, FICCI Electric Vehicle Committee Chair Sulajja Firodia Motwani said on Tuesday. Speaking at the sidelines of FICCI National Conference on EVs here, she also exhorted the need to enhance PM E-Drive corpus to support enhanced sales of EVs. "We would be making a recommendation to the GST council to rationalise the GST taxation on EV-related areas," Motwani said. Elaborating on the demands, she noted, "Currently the GST on charging services is still 18 per cent which we would request to bring down to 5 per cent so that charging becomes more affordable to the consumers." Secondly, the GST on batteries should also come down to 5 per cent, she added. "While EVs attract a GST of 5 per cent, GST on batteries is



18 per cent. The request is to reduce it to 5 per cent so that when consumers buy replacement batteries, it is more affordable," Motwani said. Meeting that these two reforms on GST will help a lot in making EVs more competitive for the consumers, she stated. While welcoming the PM E-Drive scheme, Motwani said that with rising demand there is a need to review the incentive amounts. "We believe that because the demand is growing, perhaps the incentive amounts have to be reviewed so that the budget under the PM E-Drive scheme

overall is enhanced to ensure that the total number of vehicles sold in the next two years are eligible for the incentive," she stated. She further said, "We do believe that PM E-Drive has great potential, and it will go a long way in further accelerating electric mobility." Motwani also emphasised that EVs should be part of priority sector lending. "We do believe there's a strong case to allow and to help having affordable financing for EVs that can make it more cost competitive for not just the classes, but for the masses," she said. FICCI President and Mahindra Group MD and CEO Anish Shah said electric four-wheelers currently have a 1.5 per cent penetration in India which indicates that "much work is needed". India has a history of leapfrogging other countries and the discussion shifts to the requirements for achieving this with EVs, he said.

Government addresses steel import issues amid rising concerns

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government is working to address the issues related to steel imports, Union Steel Minister H D Kumaraswamy said on Tuesday. The industry has apprised the ministry and it is aware of the issue, Kumaraswamy told PTI on the sidelines of FICCI's Conference - Accelerating E-mobility: Enablers and Imperative. "Some issues are there. They (steel players) are telling some substandard material is getting imported from some countries. For that we are working," he said. Domestic steel players have been consistently raising their concerns over rising cheap steel imports from select nations, affecting their competitiveness. Steel imports have risen by nearly 50 per cent in the first six months of FY25

compared to the same period last year, with China being the largest contributor, BigMint CEO Dhruv Goel said. "This surge is primarily driven by increased Chinese steel exports due to slowing domestic demand there. China's exports are projected to surpass 100 million tonnes in 2024, the highest in eight years," he said. Additionally, Vietnam has contributed significant incremental volumes to India. Exports from Vietnam benefit from the free trade agreement, which exempts them from import duties, Goel noted. According to BigMint data, India's steel imports were at 5.51 million tonnes (MnT) in April-September 2024-25, higher from 3.66 MnT in the year-ago period. Imports from China have surged to 1.85 MnT during that period from 1.02 MnT in April-September period of financial year 2023-24.

CCPA to bring regulatory framework for diamond industry to protect consumers interest

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) will soon release guidelines on diamond sector to ensure explicit labelling and certification of all diamonds and prohibit the use of misleading terms in trade. The CCPA has organised a stakeholder consultation on consumer protection in the diamond sector to deliberate on the use of appropriate terminology for diamonds, an official statement said on Tuesday. The consultation, chaired by Nidhi Khare, Chief Commissioner, Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), brought together key industry stakeholders and experts. "The CCPA will soon release a robust framework to ensure transparency, accountability, and consumer protection across the diamond industry," the statement said. The meeting addressed critical concerns regarding



the lack of standardised terminology and inadequate disclosure practices in the diamond sector. "These gaps have resulted in consumer confusion and misleading practices, especially concerning the differentiation between natural diamonds and lab-grown diamonds," it pointed out. Industry consensus emphasised the need for ethical marketing practices and consistent terminology to enhance consumer protection.

"Comprehensive guidelines were proposed to mandate: Explicit labelling and certification of all diamonds, specifying their origin and production method; prohibition of misleading terms like 'natural' or 'genuine' for lab-grown products; accreditation systems to regulate and standardise diamond testing laboratories, curbing the rise of unregulated entities," the statement said. The consultation was a significant step toward building a transparent and

consumer-centric diamond market. During the consultation, the broad key aspects and prevailing Legal and Regulatory frameworks were discussed in detail. Citing an example, the CCPA said that The Legal Metrology Act, 2009, under Section 12, provides the unit of mass for diamonds, pearls, and precious stones as the carat (symbol: c), equivalent to 200 milligrams or one five-thousandth of a kilogram, ensuring standardised measurements for consistency in commercial transactions across the diamond industry. The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) Standard IS 15766:2007 mandates that the term "diamond" alone must exclusively refer to natural diamonds. Synthetic diamonds cannot be labelled as "diamond" without qualification and must be explicitly referred to as "synthetic diamonds," irrespective of the production method or

material used. To maintain market clarity, synthetic diamonds are also prohibited from being graded alongside natural diamonds. Under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, a robust legal framework to safeguard consumer interests by preventing unfair trade practices and ensuring transparent labelling in the diamond industry is provided. This prohibits misleading descriptions or omissions that may confuse consumers. Further, Central Board of Direct Taxes and Custom (CBIC) reinforced these measures, mandating the explicit declaration of whether a diamond is natural or lab-grown, and if lab-grown, the production method—Chemical Vapor Deposition (CVD), High Pressure High Temperature (HPHT), or others—must be specified to ensure transparency and accountability in the diamond sector.

'Her Comfort' campaign to promote menstrual health awareness

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ GURUGRAM

Artemis Health Sciences Foundation (AHSF), in partnership with Pinkish Foundation, launched the 'Her Comfort' campaign to promote menstrual health awareness among adolescent girls in underserved areas of Gurugram. The initiative, launched at Govt. Senior Secondary School, Basai, aims to benefit 1,500 girls by providing hygiene kits and education to combat stigma and promote menstrual health. The kits include sanitary pads, undergarments, and educational materials for six months. Workshops will dispel myths and empower girls to manage their health confidently.

Coal India Ltd receives Green World Awards 2024



Vinay Ranjan, Director, Coal India Limited (CIL), on Monday received the Green World Awards 2024 during much-awaited presentation ceremony at The Orangery, Kensington Palace, London today. The award was given by The Green Organisation, which began in 1994 and is an independent, non-political, non-profit environment group. Vinay Ranjan said that let's this moment inspire us all to take action, protect our environment, and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come. He thanked everyone who supported me on this incredible journey. The Certificate of Achievement was presented to Coal India Coal India Ltd in recognition of winning a Green World Award for their commitment to environment best practice. CIL, living up to its Corporate Citizen role is one of the largest spenders in the country under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Coal India as a corporate entity, it contributes to the country's economically and socially apart from its core role as energy provider.

Foreign portfolio investor Emerging India Focus Funds settles case with Sebi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign portfolio investor Emerging India Focus Funds has settled a case pertaining to the alleged violations of FPI rules with capital markets watchdog Sebi after paying Rs 64.35 lakh as settlement charges. In a corollary to its settlement order, Sebi on Tuesday said that the case concerns to non-compliance with the 'fit and proper' criteria for the period from October 13, 2022, to April 11, 2023. The latest order came after the applicant filed an application with Sebi proposing to settle the proceedings initiated against it, "without admitting or denying the

findings of facts and conclusions of law" through a settlement order. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) initiated adjudication proceedings against the applicant and issued a show cause notice in February for the alleged violations of FPI Regulations and Intermediaries Regulations. Pending adjudication proceedings, Emerging India Focus Funds filed an application with Sebi and paid Rs 64.35 lakh on November 13 to settle the alleged violations. "In view of the acceptance of the settlement terms and the receipt of settlement amount by Sebi, the instant adjudication proceedings initiated against applicant vide SCN (show cause notice) dated



February 29, 2024, is disposed of," Sebi said in its order passed on Monday. The SCN was issued to the applicant on account of revocation

of license of its controlling shareholder - Emerging India Fund Management Ltd - by the Mauritius financial regulator

(FSC) after which the applicant was not in compliance with the 'fit and proper' criteria for the period from October 13, 2022 to April 11, 2023. Further, the applicant failed to forthwith inform Sebi and the Designated Depository Participant about the change in its eligibility status. EIFF replaced the controlling shareholder with a new fit and proper entity only in April 2023, sources said. Between April 2022 and April 2023, therefore, EIFF was in breach of Sebi regulations, and a show cause notice was duly served on them. This has now been duly settled. EIFF has only invested in mutual

funds in India since November 2021. Emerging India Focus Funds was named in the Hindenburg Research report, which alleged that the fund was used to inflate the volume as well as price of the Adani Group companies. Sources close to the development said that the case that has been settled with Emerging India Focus Funds (EIFF) has nothing to do with the Adani or Hindenburg report related to enforcement actions undertaken by Sebi. Specifically, this case does not form a part of the 24 cases that were reported to the expert committee set up by the Supreme Court after the Hindenburg Report of January 2023.

IBL and BFIL sign MoU with Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare



IndusInd Bank Limited (IBL) and Bharat Financial Inclusion Limited (BFIL) on Monday announced a collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoA & FW), Government of India, to launch the Bharat Sanjeevani Krishi Utthan initiative. This initiative aims to support the government's flagship program, "Formation and Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) providing a robust framework to empower FPOs across the country. This collaboration has been driven through BFIL and IBL's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and aims to enhance agricultural productivity, promote

sustainable farming practices, and improve farmers' income consistently, across 11 states namely Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. Commenting on this significant partnership, Mr. Faiz Ahmed Kidwai, Additional Secretary, MoA & FW, GoI, said, "BFIL and IBL's commitment to leveraging technology in agriculture is commendable. By utilizing IT solutions, providing project management support, and extending their expertise, BFIL & IBL are empowering farmers to make data-driven decisions and enhance their production practices, contributing to the growth and sustainability of the agricultural sector."

Indic Wisdom raises funds to boost wood-pressed oil production

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indic Wisdom, a Mumbai-based manufacturer of high-quality wood-pressed oils on Tuesday raised funds in a Pre-series A round primarily led by Rockstud Capital along with other investors. A significant rise in consumer awareness about their health and a shift in preference towards natural, nutrient-dense food products is driving the demand for cold-pressed oils. These oils, renowned for their high nutritional content, including essential vitamins, antioxidants, and fatty acids, offer a superior alternative to refined oils, which often undergo processing that can strip them of valuable nutrients. Indic Wisdom Pvt. Limited traces its inspiration to India's egalitarian culinary traditions. Growing up with the belief that food should be natural and shared, Prajakta Khare & Kaustubh Khare founded Indic Wisdom to contemporise that



civilisational wisdom and invested in manufacturing to produce goodness at scale. It is strategically positioned to capitalize on the burgeoning market for premium cold-pressed oils. Their comprehensive product range, encompassing cooking oils, multipurpose oils, and specialty oils, caters to the diverse needs and preferences of health-conscious consumers. The founders bring over two decades of combined experience in digital transformation, artificial Intelligence, and onshore/offshore sales. Their expertise, honed through previous roles, is now

dedicated to a singular mission: to modernize India's ancient culinary traditions through continuous innovation and knowledge expansion. By doing so, they aim to create products that promote global well-being. Prajakta Khare, co-founder of Indic Wisdom, says, "With Indic Wisdom, we want to take India's timeless tradition of prasad - food that is pure, sustainable, and meant for everyone - to the world. We are doing this by incorporating modern production best practices and quality standards in traditional food production practices."

INBRIEF

POWERGRID ACQUIRES FOUR MAJOR ISTS PROJECTS

Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID) has successfully acquired four Project Special Purpose Vehicles to execute Inter-State Transmission Projects related to transmission of renewable energy.



55TH FOUNDATION DAY OF GNDU



Guru Nanak Dev University has taken new steps in the field of higher education. On the occasion of the 500th birth anniversary of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

HITS OPENS ADMISSIONS FOR 2025-26

CHENNAI: Hindustan Institute of Technology and Science, a NAAC A+ accredited institution renowned for academic and research excellence, has announced admissions for the academic year 2025-26. Alongside, the institution has unveiled a Rs. 5 crore merit-based scholarship initiative to support deserving students.



GNDU'S MECHANICAL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT PARTICIPATED IN SCIENCE FESTIVAL



AMRITSAR: The Department of Mechanical Engineering of Guru Nanak Dev University, participated in the Khalsa Science Festival, organized by the Society for Promotion of Science and Technology in India in collaboration with Khalsa College, Amritsar.

India beat Japan 2-0, to face China in final of women's ACT hockey

PTI ■ RAJGIR (BIHAR)

Defending champions India continued their unbeaten run and defeated Japan 2-0 to enter the final of the women's Asian Champions Trophy hockey tournament here on Tuesday.

Vice-captain Navneet Kaur converted a penalty stroke in the 48th minute while Lalaremsiami struck from field play in the 56th minute for India, who had plenty of scoring chances including 13 penalty corners.

India will face China, whom they defeated in the league stages, in the final on Wednesday. Earlier, China beat Malaysia 3-1 in the first semifinal. Malaysia will take on Japan in the third-fourth place match, while Korea finished fifth after beating Thailand

3-0 in the fifth-sixth place classification match.

The Indians continued their attacking game and put on early pressure on the Japanese defence, just like the last league game. The play was mostly inside the Japanese half as the Indian defence was hardly tested.

India had the first shot at the goal inside the initial five minutes. Skipper Salima Tete's attempt was thwarted by Japanese goalkeeper Yu Kudo.

The Indians repeatedly penetrated the Japanese citadel and in the process secured two penalty corners in a span of two minutes but Kudo was alert under the bar to deny Navneet Kaur and Deepika.

Three minutes into the second quarter, India secured three back-to-back



penalty corners but failed to find the back of the net.

It was raining penalty corners for the hosts as they got back-to-back set pieces in the 21st minute but Kudo produced a brilliant save with her fully-stretched right leg to deny Deepika again.

In the 24th minute, India earned a penalty corner followed by another in the next minute but failed to get past Japanese goalkeeper Kudo, as they also lacked in execution.

A minute after the change of ends, India secured two penalty corners but wasted both. In the 35th minute, Kudu again denied Deepika from a set piece.

In the 41st minute, Deepika stole the ball just outside the Japanese circle, but shot wide from a one-on-one situation with Kudo.

Seconds from the end of third quarter, Kudo once again pulled off a brilliant save to deny Uditra from another penalty corner.

In the 47th minute, India secured their 12th penalty corner but failed to breach Kudo.

But a minute later, India broke the deadlock through a penalty stroke earned by Deepika and Navneet made no mistake.

The goal seemed to have rejuvenated the Indians as they scored a fine field goal in the 56th minute.

Lalaremsiami slammed into the back of the Japanese goal after she was brilliantly set up by Sunelita Toppo's terrific run from the right flank.

Japan got a penalty corner in the dying moments, but failed to get past a rock solid Indian defence.

Pulisic scores twice, US beats Jamaica 4-2 for 5-2 aggregate win in CONCACAF Nations League QF

AP ■ ST. LOUIS (US)

Christian Pulisic scored twice in the first half, Tim Weah got a goal in his return to the U.S. National team from a red card and the Americans beat Jamaica 4-2 for a 5-2 aggregate win in their CONCACAF Nations League quarterfinal.

Playing their first competitive matches under coach Mauricio Pochettino, the United States advanced to a semifinal on March 20 at Inglewood, California. The Americans won the first three editions of the tournament.

The U.S. Also qualified for next year's CONCACAF Gold Cup, while Jamaica will have to play a qualifier.

Pulisic put the U.S. Ahead in the 13th minute when he ran onto a long looping pass from Weston McKennie and kicked the ball past onrushing goalkeeper Andre Blake. Pulisic doubled the lead off a pass from McKennie that Tanner Tessmann dummied in the 33rd minute. Pulisic's



shot deflected in off Di'Shon Bernard for his 33rd international goal.

Ricardo Pepi, who scored off a Pulisic pass in the opening leg in Kingston on Thursday, boosted the lead to 3-0 in the 42nd with his 13th goal, a right-foot shot from just outside the

penalty area.

Demarai Gray scored the first of his two goals for Jamaica in the 53rd and Weah, who hit a post in the fourth minute, put the U.S. Ahead 4-1 in the 56th when he settled a pass from Yunus Musah and sent a shot just

under the crossbar for his seventh goal.

Gray got his second goal in the 68th. Costa Rica took a 1-0 lead into its home match against Panama on Monday night. On Tuesday, Mexico is at home trying to overturn a 2-0 first-leg loss at Honduras and Canada is home with a 1-0 lead against Suriname.

Weah started in place of injured Johnny Cardoso after completing a two-game suspension for a red card against Panama in the Copa America last summer. That was the only change made by Pochettino from the first leg.

Defender Tim Ream, at 37 the oldest player on the roster, captained the Americans in his hometown of St. Louis.

Jamaica coach Steve McLaren, a former England manager, told the media that star Michael Antonio wasn't available because he lost his passport and couldn't get a U.

Croatia, Denmark qualify for Nations League quarterfinals with draws

AP ■ MADRID

Denmark and Croatia completed the Nations League quarterfinals lineup after both sides secured draws.

Denmark went 0-0 in Serbia, and Croatia came from behind to share 1-1 with visiting Portugal.

They joined France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands in the last eight.

The quarterfinals will be held from March 20-23.

In Warsaw, Liverpool fullback Andy Robertson scored an injury time header to give Scotland a 2-1 win over Poland and send the host down into League B. Scotland has a playoff to secure its League A status.



With 32 minutes gone, João Felix brought down a superb 45-yard pass from Vitinha and slipped the ball under the advancing keeper to give the visitors the lead. When Andrej Kramaric hit the post and Josko Gvardiol had a 62nd minute goal ruled out for offside it looked like it might not be Croatia's night.

But Manchester City's Gvardiol got the equalizer just a few minutes later and Croatia held on to take the second quarterfinal spot from Group A1.

Northern Ireland will step up to League B after topping its group. Northern Ireland let slip a two-goal lead but drew in Luxembourg 2-2. Romania hammered Cyprus 4-1.

San Marino will jump into Group C after beating Lichtenstein 3-1.

Scotland wins again

Mike Tyson-Jake Paul fight draws record betting for a combat sports event



AP ■ LAS VEGAS

Jake Paul's unanimous victory over former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson might have been disappointing from a competitive standpoint, but it drew record betting.

BetMGM said the fight between the YouTube star and the 58-year-old Tyson, who showed his age by being a sitting target, was its most-bet boxing or mixed-martial arts fight. The sportsbook took three times the number of bets and four times the money of any combat sport in BetMGM's history.

Craig Mucklow, vice president of trading at

Caesars Sportsbook, said the fight was on par with an NFL Monday night game.

"We knew there would be tremendous interest in the fight, as the betting suggested it was a generational matchup in customer demographics," Mucklow said. "Those old enough to remember a prime Mike Tyson got to live the nostalgia one last time, while those not old enough to know Iron Mike were firmly on the Jake Paul side of the counter."

DraftKings sports operations director Johnny Avello said the fight also was its most-bet boxing match.

"The bettors were yearning

for Tyson to return to the ring even at 58 years old, and wanted to be a part of this moment with one of the icons of the sport," Avello said. "We'll see who Jake Paul fights next, but his matches have proven to create immense buzz and unprecedented action on our platforms."

The amount of betting can't necessarily be used to draw a direct comparison with betting on big fights in the past since so many major bouts, including Tyson's biggest fights, occurred before sports betting was legalized beyond Nevada in 2018. It's still not legal in 38 states. But the fight at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, still drew an enormous handle.

Most of the wagers at BetMGM Sportsbook were on proposition bets, with the most popular being on Tyson to prevail either by knockout, decision or a first-round KO. Though Paul was a -175 favorite, 67% of the tickets and 53% of the money at BetMGM was on Tyson.

"Paul winning was a good outcome for the sportsbook," BetMGM senior trader Alex Rella said.



Bayern midfielder Palhinha faces weeks out after injury while with Portugal

AP ■ MUNICH

João Palhinha's year could be over early after the Bayern Munich midfielder was injured on Portugal duty.

Palhinha will "be sidelined for the coming weeks" after he tore a muscle in his right adductor, part of the hip and thigh area, Bayern said on Tuesday.

That kept Palhinha out of Portugal's 5-1 win over Poland in the Nations League on Friday and its 1-1 draw with Croatia on Monday.

He is set to miss tough games for Bayern including hosting Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League next week, facing Borussia Dortmund in

the German Klassiker on Nov. 30, and taking on defending champion Bayer Leverkusen in the German Cup on Dec. 3.

German media reported Palhinha was not expected to return until after the winter break. Bayern's last game before the break is Dec. 20.

Bayern could have to rely on Leon Goretzka, who has been a fringe player this season, because coach Vincent Kompany's other preferred defensive midfielder, Aleksandar Pavlovic, has yet to return following surgery on a broken collarbone last month.

Pavlovic has managed "some elements" of training with the rest of the team, Bayern said on Monday.

PGA Tour approves reduction to 100 players keeping cards off FedEx Cup list

AP ■ NEW YORK

The PGA Tour policy board have approved eligibility changes that eliminate 25 cards through the FedEx Cup in the first reduction of jobs since the all-exempt tour began in 1983.

Starting in 2026, only the top 100 in the FedEx Cup are assured full status the following year.

The board voted on proposals from the 16-member Player Advisory Council aimed at giving everyone who earns a full PGA Tour card a chance to get into enough tournaments to have a fair chance at keeping their cards.

It also approved smaller field sizes — a maximum of 144 players, down from 156 —

for tournaments on one course with ample daylight hours. Another change was eliminating the four restricted sponsor exemptions, allocating them to what amounts to the alternate list.

Open tournaments still get unrestricted sponsor exemptions (typically four) they can give to whomever they want. With changes not taking effect until 2026, that makes next year even more cutthroat with more than 170 players who have cards trying to finish in the top 100.

"The PAC discussions were based on a number of guiding principles, including our belief that PGA Tour membership is the pinnacle of achievement in men's professional golf," said Adam Scott, a player

director on the policy board who also serve on the competitions subcommittee of the PAC.

"The changes approved today will provide equitable playing opportunities for new young talent to be showcased, and positively refine the playing experience for our members."

It will be tougher than ever to get a PGA Tour card. Along with players having to finish in the top 100 — tournament winners still get a two-year exemption — the tour will award only 20 cards to the Korn Ferry Tour, along with cards for the leading 10 players not already exempt on the European tour and five from Q-school.

Players who came through the Korn Ferry and Europe



fall behind the top 100 and tournament winners in the priority list. Previously, they often had to go weeks at a time without a spot for them

to play. Up until the early 1980s, only the top 60 were exempt and everyone else had to go through qualifying. Because players

had a card that didn't guarantee starts, the PGA Tour switched to the all-exempt tour for the top 125 in 1983. That's been the

number ever since.

It's the latest significant adjustment to the tour since the disruption of Saudi-backed LIV Golf, which began in June 2022. In the last two years, the tour has created \$20 million signature events with limited fields and a postseason for only the top 70 players.

"The reality is that we're all playing under different circumstances than we were four years ago," PAC Chairman Camilo Villegas said in three weeks ago when the changes were proposed. "We had no competition. We were the best. All of a sudden we have competition and there are little shifts. The changes we're proposing make a better product. What does having a PGA Tour card mean?"

The tour also announced changes to the FedEx Cup points distribution that start in 2025, awarding more points to second place and decreasing points from 11th place and down. For signature events, the decrease starts after seventh place.

Monday qualifying will offer four spots only to 144-man fields, reducing the number to two spots for 132-man fields and none when only 120 players are in the field.

There also was the ongoing pace-of-play problem, which rules officials for years have argued was due primarily to too many players on the course. The field sizes would be 120 players before Daylight Savings Time, then up to 132 players and a maximum of 144 in the summer.

Australia have to leave Kohli alone, hope he doesn't bring the intensity: Shane Watson



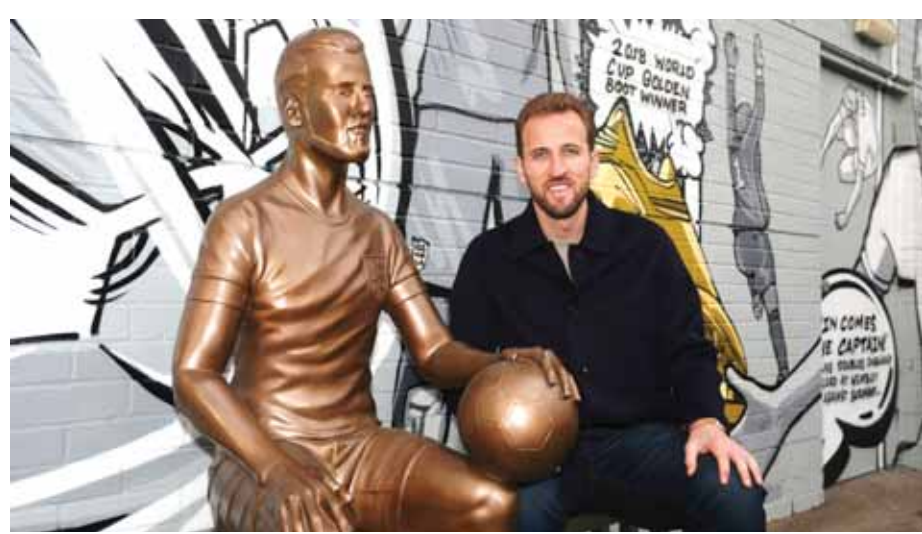
I've got nothing but respect for Virat, he's a champion: Lyon

PTI ■ PERTH
Former all-rounder Shane Watson has advised the Australian team to avoid getting into confrontations with Virat Kohli in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy as he feels the intensity the celebrated Indian batter derives from provocations brings the best out of him.
Going through a lean run of form, Kohli has enjoyed great success in Australia in the past and will look to regain his touch in the five-match Test series, which gets underway on Friday at the Optus Stadium here. Provoking the Indian batting mainstay has often proved to be counterproductive for the Australians, and Watson has experienced it himself.
"The one thing that I know of Virat is... Because the fire burns so brightly and deep inside him, the intensity he brings to every ball that he is engaged in a game has been superhuman," Watson was quoted as saying on the Willow Talk podcast. "But, there have been in recent times where moments in this career that fire has started to go out because it is just so hard to maintain that intensity in every moment he is involved in a game.
"And, that is where Australia have to leave him alone and hope he doesn't bring the intensity -- nine out of 10 intensity -- to every ball."
Kohli has played 13 Tests in



Australia since 2011, amassing 1,352 runs at an average of 54.08, including six centuries and four fifties, with a top score of 169. While this would be his fifth tour Down Under in the longest format, Kohli's best outing came during the 2014-15 series when he aggregated 692 runs in four Tests at an average of 86.50, including four hundreds and a half-century. These remarkable numbers are not lost on Watson. "We have seen that when he has had success in Australia, he is up

"If there is stuff happening around and that intensity is not there, that is when you will see the not-so-best version of Virat. So from an Australian perspective, let's hope we get to see that version of him," Watson said.
Kohli's performance in the red-ball format this year has been below par, managing just 250 runs in six Tests at an average of 22.72. "Smith wasn't actually batting at his best as an opener"
When the discussion turned to Australian batting, Watson backed Steve Smith to bring the very best of him against the formidable Indian bowling attack. Smith will be back at his usual number four slot after struggling as opener following the retirement of David Warner.
"Steve wanted to open. He was super keen to take up a new challenge. But, one thing with that opportunity he had was he wasn't actually batting at his best at that time," Watson noted. "So, he got an opportunity to open, and Steve Smith at his very best would have made the most out of it because he just loves scoring runs, whether it is opening or at No. 4. You could see it a few times he got out when he was opening -- his game and his technique was a little bit off."
For the marquee series against fierce rivals India, the Australian selectors have picked 25-year-old uncapped Nathan McSweeney to open the innings alongside Usman Khawaja.



Pant rejects Gavaskar's assessment, says did not leave DC due to disagreement over retention fee

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Rishabh Pant on Tuesday rejected the legendary Sunil Gavaskar's assessment that the India wicketkeeper-batter left Delhi Capitals due to disagreement over his retention fee ahead of the mega auction of the Indian Premier League.
Pant, who captained Delhi Capitals last year after making a comeback from a horrific car accident, is among the marquee players who were not retained by their franchises.
He is expected to be one of the most sought-after players when the auction takes place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on November 24 and 25.
"My retention wasn't about the money for sure that I can say," Pant wrote on X, responding to a broadcaster video showing Gavaskar talking about the auction dynamics.
Gavaskar said while he expects Delhi

and above for everything in the middle. Every ball he is up for every single moment.
"You can see the fierce intensity that he brings, and if he gets that, then it shuts everything else out. That is when he is at his absolute best."
have been retained by the franchise, they've gone for more than say, what the No 1 retention fee deduction would be. Clearly I think, maybe there was some disagreement over there," he said.
Gavaskar said Delhi Capitals will have to look for a new captain as well if Pant is not there in the roster.
"My feeling is that Delhi would definitely want Pant back because they need a captain as well. If Rishabh Pant is not in their squad then they have to look for a new captain. My feeling is (that) Delhi would definitely go for Rishabh Pant," he said.
Pant, along with other former captains Shreyas Iyer (Kolkata Knight Riders) and KL Rahul (Lucknow Super Giants), is listed at a base price of Rs 2 crore each among marquee Indian players.
Pant has always been a part of the Delhi franchise since his IPL debut in 2016, scoring 3,284 runs at 35.31 with one century and 18 fifties in 111 matches.



Capital to rope in Pant once again, he also wondered if there was a disagreement over the fee between the franchise and the player.
"The auction dynamics are completely different; we don't really know how it will go. But what I feel is that Delhi would certainly want Rishabh Pant back in the squad," Gavaskar told Star Sports. "Sometimes, when a player is to be retained, there is talk between the franchise and the player and franchise about the fees that are expected."
"As you can see, some of the players who

Kane believes 2026 World Cup won't be his England swansong

AP ■ LONDON
Captain Harry Kane believes the 2026 World Cup will not be his last appearance for England.
There is increasing scrutiny about the 31-year-old Kane's future, even though he extended his all-time England scoring record to 69 goals in 103 appearances as Ireland was beaten 5-0 on Sunday at Wembley Stadium.
The Bayern Munich striker was surprisingly omitted from the 3-0 win against Greece last Thursday.
A statue and mural of Kane were unveiled on Monday at the east London home of his former youth team Ridgeway Rovers. The British Press Association asked him if the 2026 World Cup is his last shot at glory for England. "I

India's confidence 'damaged' but Australia won't underestimate visitors: Labuschagne

PTI ■ PERTH
A shattering defeat to New Zealand on home soil would have caused a "little bit of damage" to India's confidence but Australia will not make the mistake of underestimating the visitors, said charismatic batter Marnus Labuschagne here on Tuesday.
The world No. 2 India are heading into the five-Test Border-Gavaskar series, starting here on Friday, following their whitewash at home, which ended their 12-year unbeaten run in their own backyard.
Australia's middle-order mainstay Labuschagne believes the loss to the Kiwis would have dented India's confidence.
"It's really hard to judge. They played in completely different conditions -- spinning conditions -- but having India come here off the back of a loss at home is something that's never happened before (in my career)," Labuschagne told the media.
"I think that is a good thing in terms of... They are probably a little bit lower on confidence, not coming off a Test victory, losing to New Zealand 3-0. I think that's going to do a little



bit of damage to their confidence."
However, Labuschagne insisted that Australia, who have lost each of their last four series to India both home and away, will have to guard against complacency.
"They're a quality line-up and they're one of the best teams in the world. So you can never underestimate a team like that," he said.
India staged an incredible comeback on their last Australia tour in 2020-21 to win 2-1, despite the absence of regular skipper Virat Kohli and injuries to several other frontline players along the way.
"That's what happened in 2021 -- the likes of (T) Natarajan played, (Mohammad) Siraj got his first crack in Australia, Washington Sundar played," Labuschagne recalled.
"They had all these guys that were probably a little bit new -- Shubman (Gill) played those couple of games (in the 2020-21 series) -- so there were new faces around," he added.
With India set to take the field without regular captain Rohit Sharma and No. 3 batter Gill in the first Test at the Optus Stadium here, Labuschagne said India have enough talent in their ranks to meet all challenges.
"They're a quality line-up and they've showed that over a period of time. You can't ever underestimate the depth of Indian cricket," he said.

Shastri confident 'world class' Jaiswal will return from Australia as a better batter

PTI ■ PERTH
Former India head coach Ravi Shastri is confident that the "already world class" Yashasvi Jaiswal will return from the Australian tour a significantly improved batter, no matter the challenges he encounters along the way.
Shastri said if Jaiswal can adapt to the challenging Perth pitch, known for its lively bounce, the young opener will play with freedom later on in the series. "I think he'll be a better player when he leaves Australian shores. Already he's world class," Shastri said at a Fox Cricket event.
"You saw what he did against England (and) just the freedom with which he plays.
"I think once he adapts to these conditions -- it's not going to be easy to adjust in Perth with that



the Aussies on their home turf is no easy feat.
"It's going to be tough," Shastri said.
"As I found out on my three tours here as a coach, you have to be at your best. Your A game has to come to the park very early if you want to catch Australia on the wrong foot.
"You don't want to give an inch. I think that is the only way. There is no other way you can play. You've got to, or you're not going to get an inch.
"You have got to understand very early what to expect from the media as well, because they'll be behind the Australian team. But if you can get your boys to get out there and play as hard as it gets be ready for some tough cricket and perform, the media will respect you."
"You will see Kohli firing in the start of the series"

bounce, no matter how talented you are. You have got to be prepared to do the hard yards.
"But if he can see that phase through, I think he'll entertain. He will love these pitches. He's someone who score pretty freely as well."
Hailed as one of Indian cricket's brightest young talents, the 21-year-old made a dazzling start to his Test career.
He cemented his spot in the team with a stunning series performance against England earlier this year.
"He's come up the hard way, so you can see that hunger and passion, not just in his eyes, but when he's out there in the middle, fielding in the slips. He wants to be involved in the game."
Having led India to two series victories in Australia, Shastri knows firsthand that defeating