



PATAAKHA BAN EXPLODES, SC REACTS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday demanded answers from the Delhi Government and Police Commissioner on how its ban on bursting firecrackers to curb pollution was flouted during Diwali celebrations in the National Capital. The Bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih took a serious view of newspaper reports that indicated a total non-compliance with the Government's restrictions on bursting firecrackers. The Court said that the affidavit, which has to be filed in a week, should also detail the steps that would be taken to ensure that firecracker-related pollution does not arise again during Diwali celebrations next year.

"We want the Delhi Government to immediately respond as to why this has happened. We will simultaneously issue notice to Delhi Police Commissioner as to why there is non-compliance. We have to hear this immediately. The real problem is that this is all under the Air Prevention Act, 1981, which after amendment this year, has only penalty provisions," the SC remarked during the hearing of a plea concerning air pollution in and around the National Capital Region. The Bench also asked the Delhi Government to consider implementing a perpetual firecracker ban in the national capital. The Court further said that these steps should include measures to conduct a public campaign to sensitise the public against such pollution.



FILE PHOTO: PIONEER

"The affidavit by Delhi Government and Police Commissioner to be filed in one week ... In the meanwhile, Delhi Government and other authorities must also take call on perpetual ban of these firecrackers,"

the Court's order said. The Court will consider this aspect of Diwali-related pollution again on November 14. "There cannot be any dispute that the ban on firecrackers was

hardly implemented. The ban on firecrackers being non-complied is very well clear from the report which amicus cited, which is that this time pollution level was at an all time high. Even a report suggested farm fire was also at a high time rise," the Court further observed in its order. The Court also gave the States of Punjab and Haryana one week's time to submit details of stubble burning incidents in the last ten days. Due to deteriorating air quality in Delhi, the State government had recently banned the production, sale, and use of various types of firecrackers in the national capital till January 1, 2025. Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Archana Pathak Dave agreed that there was absolute non-compliance with these restrictions during Diwali this year. Amicus Curiae Aparajita Singh

added that there is a report suggesting a huge increase in air pollution on the day of Diwali, with the pollution percentage rising from 10 per cent to 27 per cent. The Court observed that something needs to be done to address this issue. "Something has to be done. Either the ones who are selling crackers despite the ban, their premises must be sealed. We will look into this. Amicus Curiae points out that a report suggested that there was a huge increase in the pollution on the day of Diwali. Pollution percentage goes from 10 per cent to 27 per cent... This has to be responded to immediately," the Court said. The Judges also flagged concern over people bringing in firecrackers from other States into Delhi to defy the firecracker ban. **Continued on page 8**



EC reschedules 14 Assembly bypolls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With less than 10 days remaining, the Election Commission (EC) on Monday rescheduled bypolls in 14 Assembly constituencies across Kerala, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh from November 13 to November 20 after requests from political parties. Bypolls to 14 constituencies will be held with Maharashtra Assembly elections, and the second phase of Jharkhand polls.

Sources in the poll panel said political parties had requested for a change in the polling date, citing festivals such as Kalpathi Rastholsavam (November 13-15), Kartik Purnima (November 15) and Prakash Parv of Sri Guru Nanak Dev (November 15). The parties said the festivals may impact voter turnout in these states. "Representations have been received in the Commission from various recognised national and state political parties (including BJP, INC, BSP, RLD) and some social organisations for change of date for poll in some Assembly constituencies having by-elections on 13th November, 2024, considering large scale social, cultural and religious engagements on that day which may cause inconvenience to large number of people, give rise to various logistic issues and may lead to reduced voters participating during the poll," the EC said. **Continued on page 8**



Rescue and relief work underway after a passenger bus fell into a gorge in Kupri area, in Almora, Uttarakhand PTI

Packed bus falls in Almora gorge, 36 dead

PURNIMA BISHT ■ DEHRADUN

At least 36 people were killed and 27 injured when a 42-seater private bus carrying 63 passengers plunged into a 200-metre-deep gorge near Marchula in Almora district of Uttarakhand around 7.30 am on Monday. President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed deep grief and condoled the bereaved family members. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has ordered the suspension of the Assistant Regional Transport Officers (ARTOs) of Pauri and Almora districts while also directing the Kumaon commissioner for a magisterial probe into the accident. According to officials, the bus, owned by Garhwal Motor Owners Union Limited (GMOU), was en route from Naini Danda in Pauri district to Ramnagar in Nainital district when it reportedly lost control around 7.30 am near Sarad Bend and plunged into the gorge along a stream. The force of the fall ejected some passengers, while others managed to escape on their own. Those who climbed to safety alerted authorities, prompting immediate

response from the police and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF). A team from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) joined the rescue operation within two to three hours. Local villagers also assisted in locating passengers trapped in the wreckage, as per the officials. Initially, 28 passengers were found dead at the scene and later, eight more succumbed to injuries in hospital. Six passengers were also airlifted to AIIMS Rishikesh in the afternoon while another six were admitted to Sushila Tiwari Hospital in Haldwani. All victims were locals from Pauri, Nainital and Almora districts. The senior superintendent of police of Almora Devendra Pincha told The Pioneer that preliminary investigation suggests overloading and technical fault in the bus as the potential causes of the accident. As per the CM's order, the joint transport commissioner Sanat Kumar Singh suspended two ARTOs of Ramnagar and Pauri, Neha Jha and Kulwant Singh, respectively. Singh said that the lead agency of the Transport department will conduct an inquiry and further strict action will be taken against guilty officials accordingly.

Deeply concerned about safety of Indians in Canada: MEA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE / PTI ■ NEW DELHI/OTTAWA

Taking strong exception to an attack on a Hindu Sabha Temple in Brampton in the Canadian province of Ontario, India on Monday condemned the "acts of violence perpetrated by extremists and separatists". New Delhi also urged the Justin Trudeau Government to ensure that all places of worship in the country are adequately protected. "We call on the Government of Canada to ensure that all places of worship are protected from such attacks. We also expect that those indulging in violence will be prosecuted," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said here. Protesters carrying Khalistani flags clashed with people at

Brampton's Hindu Sabha Temple on Sunday, prompting the High Commission of India in Ottawa to issue a strong statement, condemning the attack by "anti-India" elements. Jaiswal also pointed out that it remains "deeply concerned" about the safety and security of its citizens in that country, asserting that the diplomatic officers providing consular services to Indians "will not be deterred by intimidation, harassment and violence". "We remain deeply concerned about the safety and security of Indian nationals in Canada. The outreach of our Consular officers to provide services to Indians and Canadian citizens alike will not be deterred by intimidation, harassment and violence," he said. According to a PTI report from Ottawa, protestors



Indians at a consular camp in Brampton, Ontario, Sunday, November 3, 2024. The consular camp witnessed "violent disruptions" on Sunday as per Indian High Commission in Canada PTI

Strongly condemn deliberate attack on Hindu temple in Canada; equally appalling are cowardly attempts to intimidate our diplomats. Such acts will never weaken India's resolve; we expect the Canadian government to ensure justice, uphold rule of law: Prime Minister Narendra Modi

carrying Khalistani flags clashed with people at a Hindu temple in Brampton, triggering condemnation by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who said every Canadian has the right to practise their faith freely and safely. On Sunday, Peel Regional Police said that a protest occurred at the Hindu Sabha temple in Brampton and unverified videos circulating on social media appeared to show demonstrators holding banners in support of Khalistan, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported. The videos showed fist fights and people striking each other with poles on what appears to be the grounds surrounding the Hindu Sabha Mandir temple, the report added. **Continued on page 8**

Jammu and Kashmir Assembly breaks six-year hiatus

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The portals of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly were thrown open after a gap of more than six years allowing newly elected members to attend the maiden address of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha to the first-ever legislative Assembly of the Union Territory after the abrogation of articles 370 and 35-A on Monday. The last Budget session of the Mehbooba Mufti-led Peoples Democratic Party-Bharatiya Janata Party (PDP-BJP) alliance government was adjourned sine die by the speaker on February 13, 2018. The alliance government later collapsed in June 2018 leading to the Governor's rule. On August 5, 2019, the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir was reorganised into two Union territories. Meanwhile, a ruckus broke out on the floor of the Assembly soon after the unanimous election of veteran National Conference leader Abdul Rahim Rather as speaker of the house. Waheed ur Rehman Para, a PDP MLA, tried to grab the limelight by bringing in a resolution against the abrogation of Article 370 without giving any advance notice to the chair. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah reacted on the spur of the moment calling out the act as a mere photo exercise. It was also "vociferously"



CM Omar Abdullah, Speaker pro-tem Mubarak Gul with Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather PTI

opposed by the BJP MLAs. Speaker Rather while trying to calm down the tempers of BJP members stated, "This is my domain, let me examine this and accordingly I will decide on the resolution." Rather said while pacifying the opposition. However, the 28 BJP legislators refused to sit and continued to oppose the PDP MLAs move. In his brief remark, Omar Abdullah said in the Assembly that a single MLA's private resolution during remarks over the Speaker's election carries no meaning. "How the House will reflect and discuss this will not be decided by any one member. The resolution brought today has no importance but it is only for the cameras. If there was a purpose behind it, then they would have discussed this with us before..." During the ruckus, the Speaker, Abdul Rahim Rather adjourned the house for 15 minutes. **Continued on page 8**

Who created the 'Mallu Hindu Officers' WhatsApp group?

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A WhatsApp Group of Hindu Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers in Kerala has sent shock waves across the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in the state and a high level probe is on to find out the brains behind the "mischief". P Rajeev, Kerala Minister for Law and Industries, who is also the Chief-Minister-in-waiting, told the media at Kochi on Monday that the government has noted the development with all seriousness and a probe is on to bring to light all factors behind the formation of the group. The group was created on October 31 from the phone used by K Gopalakrishnan, an IAS officer in the state. News about the formation of the 'Mallu Hindu Officers' WA group spread like wildfire across Kerala, and it was taken off cyberspace within 24 hours. However, Gopalakrishnan said that his phone was hacked and he was not aware of the existence of such a group. "It was only when colleagues told me about the WA group that I came to know about it. Multiple Groups were formed using the contact numbers in my phone and I do not know anything more than this," Gopalakrishnan said. He has filed a police complaint about the hacking of his phone. Dr MG Gireeshan, cyber expert who is a leading hackathon specialist, told The Pioneer that it was possible to hack the phone of anybody who is not aware of the potential of the internet, and mobile phones. **Continued on page 8**



Sensex tanks, investors lose ₹5.99 lakh crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth eroded by Rs 5.99 lakh crore on Monday due to heavy sell-off in stock markets with the BSE Sensex tumbling more than one per cent. Markets were dragged down by Reliance Industries, banking shares and unabated selling by foreign investors. Investors also turned cautious ahead of the US presidential elections and Federal Reserve interest rate decision scheduled to be announced later this week. The BSE benchmark tumbled 941.88 points or 1.18 per cent to settle at 78,782.24, the lowest closing level since August 6. During the day, it slumped 1,491.52 points or 1.87 per cent to 78,232.60. In line with a weak trend in

equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 5,99,539.5 crore to Rs 4,42,11,068.05 crore (USD 5.26 trillion). "Markets witnessed broader sell-off as investors turned risk averse ahead of key US election outcome and Federal Reserve's policy decision in the next few days time. While stretched valuation concerns have been weighing for sometime, the persistent foreign fund outflows have created a lot of uncertainty amongst the investors resulting in a steep correction. Also, corporate earnings have failed to meet expectations, which has further dampened investors' sentiment," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd. **Continued on page 8**

Honouring the Sun, Chhath Puja greetings

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

As people gear up to celebrate the revered four days Chhath Puja starting from Tuesday, there is visible enthusiasm among the devotees, especially those from the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand with markets around the country bustling with shoppers splurging on the items related to the sacred festival. In the national Capital, such excitement is visible in different markets across Delhi as people from Purvanchal constitute a sizable and significant fraction of the total population. Amid the palpable enthusiasm, trade related to the auspicious festival, worshipping the God Surya, is expected to be approximately ₹12,000 crores across the country, making it one of India's most culturally significant festivals. The first day of Chhath Puja, Nahay Khay, signifies the start of the rituals with about 150 million devotees,

particularly women, participating to cleanse themselves by taking a holy dip in rivers, especially the Ganga, symbolising spiritual purification. On Wednesday, the second day, Kharna, is marked by a rigorous day-long fast, during which devotees abstain from food and even water from sunrise until sunset. In the evening, the fast is broken with a traditional meal (prasad) offered to Lord Surya, which typically includes rice pudding (kheer) and chapatis. The third day is the main day of Chhath Puja, characterised by a complete fast without water as devotees gather at riverbanks or other water bodies to offer the first Arghya (a traditional offering) to the setting sun. On the last day on Friday, devotees will observe the final day, known as Usha Arghya. This day is marked by offering prayers and Arghya to the rising sun in the early morning. With the

completion of this ritual, the 36-hour fast concludes, and devotees celebrate the end of their Chhath Puja observance sharing a festive meal with family and friends. The festival, which worships both the rising and setting sun, is not just a mere celebration for the devotees, it also brings happiness to the traders who benefit from the sales of the products related to it. The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), which has been tracking festive sales this year, on Monday released data on expected sales during the sacred festival, estimating that it will generate approximately ₹12,000 crores in trade across India. Even in the national capital, the Purvanchali population celebrates Chhath Puja on a grand scale. Markets across the city, including Chandni Chowk, Sadar Bazar, Model Town, Ashok Vihar, Shalimar Bagh, Pitampura, Rani Bagh, Uttam Nagar and Tilak



PHOTO: PTI

Nagar, are bustling with people purchasing traditional Chhath Puja items. According to CAIT National President BC Bhartia, that in addition to Bihar and Jharkhand, Chhath Puja is celebrated with great fervour in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Odisha, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Vidarbha, and Madhya Pradesh. "Many Purvanchalis reside in these states, contributing significantly to the local economy. The festival, which involves worshipping both the setting and rising sun, symbolises the inclusive nature of Indian culture," Bhartia said.

According to CAIT, essential Chhath Puja items like bamboo baskets, banana leaves, sugarcane, sweets, fruits, and vegetables (particularly coconuts, apples, bananas, and green vegetables) have seen a high demand this year. The association also added that traditional attire, including sarees, lehenga-chunni, salwar-kurta for women, and kurta-pyjama, dhoti for men, are being purchased in large quantities, benefiting local traders and small-scale industries. "Handmade items produced on a small scale are also witnessing significant sales," it said. CAIT secretary general and Chandni Chowk Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) MP Praveen Khandelwal, emphasised that "Chhath Puja is not just a religious festival but an integral part of Indian culture, reflecting social unity and dedication. It also boosts trade and directly benefits local producers, reinforcing Prime

Minister Narendra Modi's 'Vocal for Local' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-Reliant India) vision," he added. Amid the celebration, it is often observed that the majority of products used during the festival are crafted by local artisans and craftspeople, generating new employment opportunities and supporting cottage industries. Upon this, Bhartia highlighted that Chhath Puja, beyond its spiritual significance, has emerged as a major opportunity for trade and employment, bringing renewed economic energy to Indian markets including the sale of items such as vermilion used by married women. "For women observing Chhath Puja, applying a long streak of vermilion from the nose to the hairline is an auspicious gesture, symbolising their prayers for the health and longevity of their husbands and families," the trader said.

Rains bring down air pollution levels

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The IITR post-monsoon report, released by the institute on Monday, indicates that although there was a spike in pollution levels, it was lower compared to the pre-monsoon period of 2024 and the post-monsoon of 2023, owing to the rains and high temperatures.

CSIR-IITR evaluated the status of air quality for the period of September-October 2024 (post-monsoon) through the monitoring and analysis of ambient PM10, PM2.5, SO2, NO2, and toxic heavy metals, namely Lead (Pb) and Nickel (Ni), at nine locations grouped into three categories: residential, commercial, and industrial areas in Lucknow.

Additionally, day and night noise levels were monitored at these nine locations in the city.

The head of the Environment department at IITR, AH Khan, stated that the post-monsoon air quality survey results were significantly influenced by the rains on the monitoring days. "A decrease in the concentration levels of particulate pollution in the city was observed compared to the pre-monsoon of 2024. The monsoon rains scavenge particles from the atmosphere, and the wet surface helps control dust from resuspension into ambient air. During the post-monsoon, increased atmospheric humidity can lead to the agglomeration of particles, making them heavier and causing them to settle on the ground. Activities in the city, such as construction, markets, and vehicle movement, are also reduced due to the effects of rain.

IITR POST-MONSOON REPORT

Gomti Nagar, Chowk noisiest

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Gomti Nagar and Chowk were the noisiest areas in Lucknow, according to the IITR post-monsoon report released on Monday. Gomti Nagar recorded an average noise level of 72.8 dB during the day and 70.5 dB at night, while Chowk registered 86.5 dB in the morning and 73.4 dB at night. In residential areas, daytime noise levels ranged from 39.5 to 86.5 dB(A), and nighttime levels ranged from 36.4 to 82.4 dB(A). In commercial areas, daytime levels varied from 58.2 to 95.4 dB(A), and night-time levels from 55.8 to 81.5 dB(A). All mean noise values exceeded the respective daytime

standard of 55 dB(A) and nighttime standard of 45 dB(A) for residential areas, as well as the daytime standard of 65 dB(A) and nighttime standard of 55 dB(A) for commercial areas, as per NAAQS. In the industrial area of Amausi, daytime and night-time noise levels were recorded at 78.4 dB(A) and 72.4 dB(A) respectively, both above the national standards of 75 dB(A) for daytime and 70 dB(A) for nighttime. Overall, all residential, commercial, and industrial areas showed a slight increase in daytime and night-time noise levels until 2022, followed by a decrease in 2023. However, compared to 2023, both daytime and night-time

noise levels rose again in 2024. Noise pollution refers to the spread of unwanted sounds into the environment, which can have various mental health effects. The brain continually monitors sounds for signs of danger, even during sleep. Continued exposure to noise pollution can trigger anxiety and stress, leading to issues such as stress-related illnesses, high blood pressure, speech interference, hearing loss, sleep disruption, and decreased productivity. Individuals living with noise pollution may experience irritability, frustration, and anger. If a person feels unable to control the noise in their environment, its impact on their mental health can intensify.

PM10 among commercial areas. In the industrial area of Amausi, the average concentration of PM10 was 129.4 µg/m³. In residential areas (Aliganj, Vikas Nagar, Indira Nagar, and Gomati Nagar), the 24-hour concentrations of PM2.5 ranged from 29.5 to 139.3 µg/m³, with an average of 69.8 µg/m³. The highest average concentration of PM2.5 among residential areas was also observed in Gomati Nagar. In commercial areas (Charbagh, Alambagh, Aminabad, and Chowk), the concentration of PM2.5 ranged from 42.5 to 201.3 µg/m³, with an average of 95.0 µg/m³. Charbagh recorded the highest average concentration of PM2.5 among commercial areas. In the industrial area of Amausi, the average concentration of PM2.5 was 106.8 µg/m³. The trace metals (Pb and Ni) associated with PM10 in the city were found in the range of 0.09–0.41 µg/m³, with an average of 0.26 µg/m³ for Pb, and in the range of 3.5–12.8 ng/m³, with an average of 8.03 ng/m³ for Ni. The 24-hour concentrations of SO2 ranged from 7.3 to 29.4 µg/m³, with an average of 15.8 µg/m³, while the 24-hour concentrations of NO2 ranged from 10.2 to 58.4 µg/m³, with an average of 29.7 µg/m³. The values of SO2 and NO2 decreased by 25.7% and 24.7%, respectively, from post-monsoon 2023 to 2024. However, the average values of SO2 and NO2 were well below the permissible limits of 80 µg/m³, as prescribed by the CPCB (NAAQS-2009). Charbagh recorded the highest average concentration of

Police foil self-immolation bid by woman in front of Vidhan Bhawan

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A woman attempted self-immolation in front of Vidhan Bhawan in Hazratganj after she reached there, breaching the security cordon on Monday morning. However, police personnel present there rescued her before she could set herself ablaze. The police then took the woman to Civil hospital for a medical examination. The woman said she wanted to immolate herself to highlight that goons had encroached upon her land and that officials concerned were unable to address her grievances. According to the Hazratganj police, the woman came from Ghaziabad because her complaint was not heard at the

local police station. Earlier, the self-immolation prevention squad swung into action in front of Vidhan Bhawan at around 11:30 am when the woman attempted to pour some inflammable substance on her. They immediately caught hold of the woman and handed her over to the Hazratganj police. "Some people from the village have occupied the woman's land, due to which she was upset," the police said. She was identified as Mamta, a resident of Ghaziabad's Loni village. The woman had complained to the local police but her grievances remained unheard. She came to Lucknow to highlight her plight. The police said further investigation was ongoing.

EX-CORPORATOR ATTACKED

Armed miscreants allegedly attacked former corporator Ramu Pehlwan in Chinchhat police station area late Sunday night. It was alleged that two people named Rakesh Gautam and Raj, along with their associates, attacked him. A complaint has been filed by the former councillor in this regard. On the basis of his complaint, the police arrested some of the accused. Pehlwan, who lives in the Kanchanpuri area of Matiyari village, was allegedly attacked near his residence. He was elected from Shaheed Bhagat Singh ward under the banner of Samajwadi Party in 2012. Sources claimed that the former corporator was attacked over a land dispute.

Belongings reduced to ashes as fire breaks out in flat

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A fire broke out in a locked flat at Surya Lake View Apartment in Vibhuti Khand on Monday. Neighbours noticed smoke and flames coming from the flat and promptly alerted the fire brigade. Since the flat was locked, firefighters had to break windows and doors to bring the fire under control within 30 minutes. Unfortunately, all belongings inside the flat were

damaged. As per reports, the fire erupted in flat 705 on the seventh floor of Surya Lake View Apartment. When neighbours saw flames rising from the balcony, panic ensued. Upon checking, they found the gate locked. In addition to notifying the fire brigade, they informed the deputy commissioner of police about the incident. Smoke made it challenging to extinguish the fire. Firefighters, upon arrival, first

turned off the lights in the entire tower, broke down the flat's door, and attempted to douse the flames with a hose pipe. Despite the smoke complicating their efforts, the fire was eventually brought under control. Chief Fire Officer Mangesh Kumar confirmed that residents of the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth floors were evacuated safely. He stated that the fire was contained in time and did not affect nearby flats.

UP government to train 82,120 girls in sports

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government has accelerated its efforts to bring the sports talents of 82,120 girls studying in Kasturba Gandhi Awasiya Balika Vidyalayas to the national level. The government aims to achieve this by implementing the 'One KGBV, One Sport' scheme. Under the leadership of Minister of State for Basic Education (Independent Charge) Sandeep Singh, a specific sport will be selected for each school, and the students will receive specialised training. This initiative will help the girls acquire proficiency in specific sports fields in order to excel in national contests and championships while also maintaining their physical and mental health. The 'One KGBV, One Sport' scheme has been implemented in Uttar Pradesh's Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) to nurture the sports talents of girls and elevate them to the national level. This initiative is designed to provide specialised sports training to girls from marginalised and underprivileged communities. Under this scheme, each school will select a specific

sport in which students will be trained by sports experts. The programme will begin as a pilot project in two KGBVs per district, with plans to expand to other schools upon its success. The main aim of this scheme is to train the 82,120 students studying in KGBVs for participation in state and national-level competitions. This initiative will not only provide the girls with sports kits and basic training but will also ensure their selection for various competitions at the district and state levels. A sports committee will be formed in each school, comprising the warden, physical education teacher, sports in-charge, and two student athletes. This committee will select a sport based on the students' interests and the available resources. A qualified female coach will be appointed to provide training in the chosen sport. If necessary, assistance from external sports trainers can also be utilised. Under the scheme, a set schedule will be established for conducting sports activities, where trainers will teach the students the nuances of the sport. Nutrition and health awareness programmes will also be organised to educate

the students about diet, nutrition, and health for better well-being. Periodic health check-ups for the girls will be conducted as well. Former national and international players will be invited to inspire the students. Girls who exhibit outstanding performance will be rewarded at the local level. Additionally, respected community members and departmental officials will be invited to school sports competitions to motivate and encourage the students. For the successful implementation of the scheme, support will also be sought from state and national sports associations, as well as corporate groups. With the help of corporate entities, necessary sports equipment and other facilities will be made available to the girl students. Selected students will be placed in designated nodal KGBVs for three months to receive specialised sports training. During this period, their accommodation, meals, and training will be fully catered for. After the training period, the students will be sent back to their original KGBVs, with parental consent obtained before the transfer.

Dengue cases on the rise despite optimal weather conditions

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Dengue cases are still on the rise, even with favourable weather conditions, according to Vikas Singhal, joint director of vector-borne diseases. In Uttar Pradesh, the total number of dengue cases has reached 9,821, a significant decrease from 28,042 at the same time last year. In Lucknow, the numbers stand at 2,388, compared to 3,021 last year. "The climatic conditions are conducive to the occurrence of dengue, with temperatures remaining ideal for mosquito breeding," Singhal noted. He urged residents to take precautions, especially after Diwali, by ensuring there is no stagnant water on terraces and in other areas around their homes, as mosquito breeding is still a concern. Addressing concerns about varying platelet counts reported by patients tested at different laboratories, Singhal reassured the public that discrepancies can occur. "Patients may receive different

platelet counts from different labs due to the various methods used for testing. The count is not fixed and can vary," he explained. He emphasised that doctors assess the overall condition of the patient rather than relying solely on platelet counts. "Clinical observation is critical in determining treatment, as platelet count is just one marker of a patient's health," he said. Singhal highlighted key warning signs that may necessitate hospital admission, including vomiting, bleeding, and a drop in blood pressure. Platelet transfusions are recommended when counts fall below 20,000. Additionally, he pointed out that two days following a drop in temperature—specifically on the sixth day of illness—are critical. "Patients should rest completely during this period, as fluid can shift from the intravascular to the extravascular compartment, leading to complications. Maintaining hydration is essential," he added.

Milestone for UP in fight against TB

Lucknow (PNS): The Yogi government has reached another significant milestone in the fight against tuberculosis (TB), successfully identifying and treating patients across Uttar Pradesh. This fiscal year, the state has once again outpaced others in its efforts to become TB-free. With a target of identifying 650,000 TB patients, Uttar Pradesh has already reached 86 per cent of this goal by the end of October, leading the nation in TB notifications. Recent data shows Uttar Pradesh at the forefront, with the highest number of notified cases, followed by Maharashtra with 185,765 patients and Bihar with 167,161. This continued momentum reflects last year's success, indicating the state is on track to exceed its TB notification target again. Experts emphasise that identifying and treating as many TB patients as possible is essential for eliminating the disease in both the country and the state. To support these efforts, the Central TB Division fixed notification targets for each state at the beginning of the year. Uttar Pradesh's goal was raised to 6,50,000, up from 5,50,000 last year. As of October 31, the state has identified 559,000 TB patients, with private doctors playing a crucial role.

Skin bank likely to come up at KGMU burn unit

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A skin bank is likely to open at the burn unit of King George's Medical University shortly. Sharing this information, the head of the plastic surgery department, Dr Vijay Kumar, stated that if the department is successful in establishing the skin bank, it would be the first in the state. He mentioned that processes are underway for the procurement of some equipment. "The building is ready, and the equipment are being procured. Fifty per cent of the equipment have been acquired, and for the remainder, the tendering process has been completed and the matter has gone for the KGMU vice-chancellor's approval. We will apply for the licence from the Director General of Medical Education (DGME) soon," he said. He explained that a skin bank means skin is procured from donors and stored in the bank for use by patients suffering from burns, trauma, or other conditions where skin is unavailable. "If there is a patient with 80 per cent burns and their skin has

been damaged, this skin from the skin bank can be applied to that patient," he added. Regarding the donors, he clarified that skin is harvested from individuals who have donated their bodies. "There are people who pledge their organs, such as kidneys, liver, and corneas, and they also fill up a form for skin donation. Hence, when the patient dies, the skin can be harvested. This can only take place once we obtain the licence for the skin bank," he said. He acknowledged that there are few places in the country with a skin bank, including Coimbatore, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Ahmedabad. "In the absence of the skin bank, a patient's own skin may be used, or applications are made to the aforementioned centres to obtain skin," he added. It should be noted that the burn unit itself was established at KGMU in January 2022. "After that, the budget was sanctioned for the skin bank; procurement takes time, and licensing also requires time," he said.

CITY BRIEFS



ANNUAL FEST
The three-day Annual Inter-College Literary and Cultural Festival at St Francis' College kicked off on Monday. The event aims to foster healthy competition among students in classes IX to XII, with around 1,500 participants from 21 schools across the city. The festival features a variety of competitions, including an English debate, elocution, best-out-of-waste, poetry writing, flower arrangement, western music, face painting, and choreography. The chief guest at the inaugural ceremony was ADG (the Economic Offences Wing) Ashutosh Pandey, who emphasised the importance of healthy competition and the college's commitment to nurturing talent.

HOUSE TAX RECOVERY
Lucknow Municipal Corporation has started a recovery campaign against house tax defaulters. A special team led by chief tax assessment officer Ashok Singh took charge of the campaign on Monday. The objective of the campaign is to increase the revenue of the municipal corporation by effectively recovering the outstanding house tax. The municipal corporation aims to recover outstanding tax of Rs 1,000 crore. Ashok Singh's team went to various areas and gave notices to the defaulters, instructing them to deposit the tax on time.

Increase vigil for Chhath celebration: DGP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Director General of Police Prashant Kumar, on Monday, directed deployment of additional police force at major ghats, places of worship and ponds in view of Chhath festival. Also, women police personnel have been asked to be deployed in plain clothes. Women are

present in large numbers during this festival. The director general of police has stressed deployment of divers at the ghats. Kumar said that women and children are present in large numbers during Chhath festival starting from Tuesday and there should be no laxity in the security of women. Anti-Romeo Squads should also be

deployed at crowded places, he added. The DGP said that people often burst crackers at major ghats and in view of this, fire brigade arrangements should be made at these ghats. The director general of police has asked the subordinates to increase vigil at railway and bus stations as there is a lot of crowd there on Chhath.

He also directed foot patrolling at crowded places and asked the LIU (local intelligence unit) to remain alert. The director general of police said that all social media platforms should be monitored and any kind of objectionable and false post should be removed immediately. Strict action should be taken against those who do this, he added.

AAP launches membership drive

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Aam Aadmi Party has started a membership drive in Uttar Pradesh. It was launched by party MP Sanjay Singh in Lucknow. Speaking on this occasion, Sanjay Singh said, "Don't divide, don't break, defeat BJP together." The AAP leader said the Bharatiya Janata Party wanted to end democracy and reservation. He said minorities, Dalits and backward people would not fall into the trap of BJP. Singh asked why had Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh not made any Dalit or backward person its head till date. Singh said, "Membership campaign has started in all the dis-

tricts and towns of UP from Monday. As per our target, 20 lakh members will be made in every district and we will try to make a total of 50 lakh members in the next six months. This campaign will run without any membership fee and people will also be able to join online through party's website and social media platforms." He further said that at least 10 office-bearers would be appointed in the districts, who would form 10 gram sabha and ward committees. "We will organise two programmes on the second Saturday of every month to discuss local, state and block issues," he said.

Attacking the Yogi Adityanath government, Singh said, "The Yogi government has decided to close 27,000 government schools, while 26,000 schools have already been closed. This decision reflects the government's anti-poor and anti-weak section mentality. We will protest across the state on November 9 on this issue." In the context of the by-elections, he said, "There is no discussion on what work the BJP has done so far. An agenda of hatred is being run in Uttar Pradesh. The Aam Aadmi Party will support the Samajwadi Party candidates and if the SP leadership wants, we will also cooperate in the campaigning."

Two girls drown, search on for missing third

Lucknow (PTI): Two girls drowned while bathing in the Renu river in the Chopan area of Sonbhadra, police said on Monday and added that a search was underway for a third girl. CO Sanjeev Katiyar said four girls from Bardiya village had set out to graze their cattle and goats. "While tending to the animals, they reached the riverbank and three of them — Sunita (12) and Sarita (10), daughters of one Kedar, along with Usha (14), the daughter of one Shyam Lal from the same village — decided to swim in the river. They were caught in deep water and began to drown," he said.

LDA to cover open drainage, sewer lines

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) has decided to cover the open drainage and sewer lines that run through its apartments, housing schemes, and commercial estates. The decision was taken in a meeting held on Monday. A four-member committee has been formed to identify the locations of these lines. This initiative is part of a mission to combat communicable diseases. Additionally, uncovered manholes will also be sealed, contributing to this mission's goals. The committee, led by LDA Secretary Vivek Srivastava, is tasked with submitting its findings and estimated costs within four days. LDA Vice-Chairman Prathmesh Kumar said that the project is expected to commence by the end of the month, with expenses covered by internal sources. The LDA plans to collaborate with the Health department to ensure the mission's success. Interestingly, the open manholes will be covered with concrete rather than metal, as

the latter has a higher risk of theft. Covering the drainage and sewer lines is crucial for public health, as open drains are breeding grounds for mosquitoes and other diseases. Health guidelines emphasise the need to cover open water storage systems to prevent disease spread. Moreover, covering these lines is essential to prevent accidents.

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR

Tender Notice Reference No.GNDU/Gen/73/2024

The Department of G.N.D.U. Amritsar invites online bids for the following:
Sr. No.1
Item: Printing of 32 Pages Answer Book, 16 Pages Answer Book and 08 Pages Practical Answer Book
Quantity: 06 Lac
Closing date & time: 14-11-2024 at 5:00 p.m.
For details log onto www.eproc.punjab.gov.in
Note: Any corrigendum(s) to the tender notice shall be published on the above website only.

NA/12/26097/2023/38727
Dated CHD :- 11/4/2024

Cabinet approves new Higher Services Rules 2024

Transfers allowed after just 3 years of service



Cabinet ministers Yogendra Upadhyay (left) and Suresh Khanna addressing mediapersons in Lucknow on Monday

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a significant move aimed at supporting teachers in aided degree colleges across Uttar Pradesh, the Yogi Adityanath cabinet, on Monday, approved the new Higher Service Rules 2024, which allow teachers to request transfers after just three years of service, reducing the previous minimum requirement of five years.

This decision is expected to provide notable relief, particularly to women teachers who are posted in distant districts, allowing them the opportunity to reunite with their families sooner.

Under the new Higher Service Rules 2024, teachers in aided degree colleges across the state, appointed on a regular basis and permanently posted, can now

request a transfer after completing just three years of service, instead of five years. The updated rules also stipulate that teachers are entitled to only one transfer during their entire career.

This decision by the Yogi government is intended to bring positive change within the teaching community, particularly benefiting women and others who face challenges working far from their families. This policy move is widely regarded as a step toward fostering balance and stability within the education system.

The Yogi government recently

enacted the Uttar Pradesh Education Service Selection Commission Act, 2023, which came into force on August 23, 2023. With this new legislation, the Uttar Pradesh Higher Education Service Commission Act, 1980 was repealed, effectively nullifying the transfer rules framed under the 1980 Act. Similarly, the rules set in 2005 have also been repealed, creating the need for a new regulatory framework.

A revamped system for selection within the education service has now been introduced under Section 31 (1) of the 2023 Act, aiming to streamline the trans-

fer process for teachers. Under this new system, teachers seeking a transfer must obtain approval from both their college management and the university. Once approved, the application is to be submitted to the director of higher education for final processing. This change is expected to bring transparency, streamline the transfer process and minimise unnecessary delays.

Experts believe that this policy will enhance professional satisfaction among teachers. Additionally, the new rule supports women empowerment in education by offering greater flexibility for women teachers who are stationed away from their families. The decision is seen as a significant step toward creating a more balanced and improved educational framework within the state.

Experts also believe this initiative will not only foster a stable atmosphere in educational institutions across Uttar Pradesh but also strengthen student-teacher relationships, contributing positively to the overall educational experience in the state.

Higher Education Minister

Yogendra Upadhyay said, "This change will not only elevate teachers' satisfaction levels but also benefit students, as teachers will be able to perform their duties with greater ease and contentment."

The minister emphasised the revision of transfer policies for teachers in aided degree colleges would positively impact Uttar Pradesh's education sector. "Working near their families will boost teachers' satisfaction and enthusiasm, leading to improved quality in educational institutions across the state. This initiative by the Yogi government provides a meaningful uplift for the teachers community while promoting higher standards in education," Upadhyay added.

The cabinet also approved a proposal to amend the Uttar Pradesh Retirement Benefits Rules, 1961. Under this amendment, if an employee dies while in service or after retirement without receiving their gratuity and has no surviving family members or nominees, the gratuity can now be paid to the individual designated in a succession certificate issued by a court.

Significant relief to foreign investors

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a significant move to boost foreign investment in Uttar Pradesh, a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at Lok Bhavan on Monday approved amendments to the Incentive Policy 2023 for FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) and investment of Fortune 500 companies.

This amendment provides significant relief to foreign investors. Now, foreign companies that secure funding through equity, loans or other sources can also invest in the state. This decision is expected to lead to an increase in foreign investment in Uttar Pradesh.

Providing details on the cabinet's decisions, Finance and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna stated, "The foreign direct investment (FDI) policy, introduced on 1/11/2023,

has been amended slightly. The minimum investment threshold for eligibility under the policy remains at Rs 100 crore. According to the RBI's definition, FDI has so far only included equity investments. However, with this policy amendment, we have broadened it to include foreign capital investment."

He further explained that until now, the FDI included investment made by a company in its equity alone, but many companies raise funds from external loans or other sources to expand. "We have now allowed that as well. If a company has just 10 per cent equity and secures 90 per cent of its investment from other sources, it will still be eligible for benefits under this policy."

He announced that this policy will now be known as the Foreign Direct Investment, Foreign Capital Investment

and Fortune Global 500 and Fortune India 500 Investment Promotion Policy, 2023.

It will include preference shares, debentures, external commercial borrowing, standby letters of credit, letters of guarantee, and other debt securities for foreign companies investing in equity as foreign capital investment.

Khanna further explained, "Other methods outlined by the RBI for calculating foreign investment, including the Framework on External Commercial Borrowing, Trade Credit, and Structured Obligations, will also qualify. Foreign capital investments made by a company — including at least 10 per cent in equity, with the remainder through debt and other instruments — will be deemed eligible and factored into the total capital investment calculation."

Reports of closure of 27K primary schools 'baseless': Govt

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Besieged with sharp criticism by the leaders of opposition parties, the Uttar Pradesh government, on Monday, denied the news of closure of over 27,000 primary schools in the state.

State Director General of Basic Education Kanchan Verma said that reports in the media that over 27,000 schools in the state will be closed are totally baseless and misleading. She claimed that no such process is underway.

Issuing a statement issued here on Monday, Verma said that media reports of closure of over 27,000 primary schools by merging them with nearby schools were absolutely misleading and baseless and not a single school was being closed in the state.

She said that the Primary Education department of the state was making continuous efforts to develop human resources and infrastructure in schools, improve the quality of education and reduce the dropout rate of students, especially girls. From this point of view, various studies are conducted from time to time; our aim is to further improve the quality of education, she added. Meanwhile, Congress general secretary Priyanka

Gandhi Vadra in her statement on Monday criticised the UP government for closing of 27,764 primary and junior schools in the state.

"This step is against the education sector as well as the children of Dalit, backward, poor and deprived sections. The United Progressive Alliance government had brought the Right to Education Act, under which arrangements were made that there should be a primary school within every kilometre radius so that school is accessible to children of every section. The objective of welfare policies and schemes is not to earn profits but to provide welfare to the public. The Bharatiya Janata Party does not want education to be accessible to children from weaker sections," she alleged.

On the other hand, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati said that the decision of the state government to close 27,764 primary and upper primary schools with less than 50 students was not appropriate. "In such a situation, where and how will poor children study? Instead of merging them with other schools, the state government should take measures to improve them by making necessary improvements," she said.

Yogi to kick off election tour from Jharkhand

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is in high demand for the assembly elections in Jharkhand and Maharashtra. Starting Tuesday, he will begin his election tour with his first stop in Jharkhand. He will kick off his campaign with a public rally in the Koderma assembly constituency, where he will address three gatherings to garner support for Bharatiya Janata Party and National Democratic Alliance candidates. In his third rally, he will appeal for votes for four BJP candidates simultaneously.

On Tuesday, Yogi's first rally will be held at Chandravati School grounds in Domchanch, where he will seek support for BJP candidate Dr Neera Yadav from Koderma. His second rally will be in support of Roshan Lal Chaudhary, the BJP candidate from the Barkagaon constituency. The third rally will be held at Ambagwad grounds in Jamshedpur. There, Yogi will encourage voters to back the BJP by supporting the party's candidates Purnima Das Sahu (Jamshedpur East), Saryu Roy (Jamshedpur West), Meera Munda (Potka) and Ramchandra Sahis (Jugsalai).

'Old trick of BJP': Akhilesh Yadav on rescheduling of assembly bypolls in UP

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

As the Election Commission on Monday rescheduled from November 13 to November 20 the assembly bypolls to all nine seats in Uttar Pradesh, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav alleged that this is an old trick of the BJP to avoid losing elections. The AAP said the move has brought the credibility of EC "under question". In a post in Hindi on X, the SP chief said, "First the Milkpur bye-election was postponed, now the date of bye-elections for the rest of the seats has been rescheduled. The BJP was never so weak."

Yadav further said that if they (BJP) postpone it, they will lose even worse.

"The fact is that due to 'maha berozgari' (unemployment) in UP, people who go to different parts of the country for work have come to UP on Diwali and Chhath holidays. They were going to vote in the by-elections to defeat the BJP. As soon as the BJP understood this, it postponed the by-elections, so that people's holidays end and they go back without casting their vote," the former chief minister said, adding that this is BJP's old trick.

The Election Commission rescheduled assembly by-elections to all nine and four seats in Uttar Pradesh and



Punjab, respectively, and one seat in Kerala from November 13 to November 20 in view of festivals. Parties including the Congress, BJP, BSP and RLD had urged the poll body to reschedule the polls in view of various festivals, saying that it could impact voter turnout.

The BJP, BSP and RLD had said that in UP, people travel for three-four days ahead of Kartik Purnima, which will be celebrated on November 15.

When asked about the SP chief's allegations, state BJP spokesperson Manish Shukla said, "The bypoll date shift was demanded as the date coincided with Hindu festi-

val. But Samajwadi Party has to do politics in everything. More so in this case as they are least bothered about majoritarian sentiment but about their vote bank."

UP Congress president Ajay Rai said his party is not contesting the bypolls in the state. "Since we are not contesting the bypolls, so there was no need for us to make any representation to the EC for shifting bypoll dates. I am the president of the UP Congress and can talk only about UP," Rai told PTI when asked about the EC mentioning that the date for the bypolls was changed in view of the requests made by several political parties including

CPI (ML) to support SP in UP bypolls

Lucknow (PNS): The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) will support the Samajwadi Party, a constituent of the INDIA bloc, in the by-elections on nine seats of Uttar Pradesh assembly. The party said it would do this to defeat the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party for its politics of hatred, policies favouring corporate, the bulldozer rule of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

CPI (ML) state secretary Sudhakar Yadav said on Monday that the letter of support had been sent to the SP. He said that BJP's policies were responsible for the increasing unemployment and inflation. "Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi, Uttar Pradesh has become infamous for Dalit oppression, violence against women, custodial deaths, encounters and human rights violations. Communal violence in Bahraich was orchestrated to create polarisation in the by-elections," he said.

The CPI (ML) leader said that the government denied reservation in recruitment of 69,000 teachers and kept the matter pending for four years. "The party that raised the slogan of 'beti bachao' gave protection to the rapists in the BHU-IIT gang-rape. There is a deliberate delay in providing justice to the victim student. A Dalit teacher's family was killed in Amethi. Bulldozer razed Akbarnagar in Lucknow," he commented.

Temple renovations to finish this month

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

MAHAKUMBH 2025

As part of preparations for Maha Kumbh 2025, the Yogi Adityanath government has prioritised the restoration of Prayagraj's historic temples, with renovations now close to completion.

It is worth mentioning here that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Union Tourism and Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat emphasised the importance of timely completion of the projects in a recent Maha Kumbh review meeting in Lucknow. The Tourism and Smart City departments and Prayagraj Development

Authority are collaborating closely to finish these projects at an accelerated pace. The Tourism department is currently overseeing 15 temple corridor and renovation projects, with 14 set for completion by November 15 and the final project by November 30. Key projects nearing completion include the Bhardwaj Corridor, Mankameswar Temple Corridor, Dwadash Madhav Temple, Padila Mahadev Temple, Alop Shankari Temple and nine additional temples. Meanwhile, the Smart City

initiative is advancing three major projects, all slated for completion by November 15. These include the Akshayavat Corridor, Saraswati Koop Corridor and Patalpuri Corridor.

The Prayagraj Development Authority is finalising two projects: the renovation of Nagvasuki Temple, targeted for November 30, and the Hanuman Temple Corridor, set to be completed by December 10.

Additional Mela Officer for Maha Kumbh Vivek Chaturvedi remarked,

"Preparations for Maha Kumbh are progressing at full speed. The temple corridor and renovation work are also in their final stages. The Mela administration has prioritised both the faith and the comfort of all devotees and tourists attending Maha Kumbh to ensure a memorable experience for them." During Maha Kumbh 2025, millions are expected to bathe at the sacred Sangam, where the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers converge. By visiting Prayagraj's revered temples, devotees will express their deep devotion to the Sanatan faith.

Narrow escape for passengers as bus catches fire

Lucknow (PNS): Passengers on board a moving private sleeper bus had a narrow escape when the vehicle suddenly caught fire on the Yamuna Expressway near Mirhawali village in Hathras, a police official said on Monday.

Sadabad Circle Officer Himanshu Mathur said that no passenger sustained any injuries.

The bus was going towards Bihar from Delhi's Wazirabad. The fire started from the luggage kept on the roof of the bus and within a short time the flames engulfed the

entire vehicle, the police said. As soon as the driver stopped the bus after getting information about the fire, passengers jumped out from the bus to save their lives, police said, adding that the police and fire brigade reached the spot and somehow controlled the blaze but by then the bus was completely damaged. According to the police, it is unclear how many passengers were on board when the bus caught fire. A case was registered and further investigations are on by the police.

Rahul to visit Rae Bareilly today, but won't seek votes for SP candidate

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Leader of opposition in Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is visiting Rae Bareilly on Tuesday, but he will not hold any public meeting for the candidate of INDIA bloc (Samajwadi Party) in the by-election.

This visit of Rahul is being kept separate from the by-elections being held on nine assembly seats of Uttar Pradesh by the Congress high command.

Samajwadi Party, however, is not happy with the move as it feels that this will send a message against SP candidates contesting in bypolls under the INDIA bloc banner.

The SP leaders were expecting that Rahul will also campaign for the candidates of INDIA bloc in the by-elections being held on nine assembly seats in the state, but campaigning for the by-elections has not been included in Rahul's tour for the time being. Some political experts are also calling Rahul's visit during the UP by-elections a well-planned political move of the Congress.

It is worth mentioning that amidst the long tussle between the alliance partners Samajwadi Party and Congress over ticket distribution in the state, SP president Akhilesh Yadav had announced the names of his party's candidates on most of the seats. This had led to displeasure in Congress. It even refused to contest the by-elections. After this, SP

chief Akhilesh Yadav started saying that the issue is not about seat sharing but about which candidate will be able to win the election and on this basis, SP fielded candidates on all nine seats.

Earlier, SP was giving two seats to Congress, while Congress was demanding at least three seats. As a result, Congress left all the seats for SP.

It is worth noting that about two weeks are left for the campaigning for the by-elections. Rahul Gandhi will be on a tour of Rae Bareilly during these days, but the fact that this tour has no connection with the by-elections is reflecting the rift between SP and Congress.

Is it possible that the seat-sharing has split the alliance of these two parties? Now it remains to be seen how long Rahul Gandhi, the leader of SP's ally party, keeps distance from the by-elections. Overall, it seems that Rahul Gandhi will definitely come to UP but will not seek votes for the candidates of INDIA bloc i.e. SP. Sources in the Congress confirmed that after chairing a meeting of the District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (Disha) with the officials of the district administration and other government departments in Rae Bareilly, Rahul will proceed to Telangana. Interestingly, the Congress, so far, has not made the visit of Rahul public yet.

CS intervenes to help elderly man; bank opens on Sunday to assist him

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government's CM Helpline (1076) is proving instrumental in addressing citizens' issues across the state promptly. Thanks to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's continuous oversight, numerous concerns are now being resolved within hours via the helpline.

Making the above claims here on Monday evening, an official spokesman of the government claimed that a recent incident in the state capital highlights a swift resolution of the problem of an elderly Indiranagar resident. After his wife's recent death, the man had been visiting the bank repeatedly over several days, attempting to access funds from

their joint account, but with no success. However, when the chief secretary intervened, bank officials even opened the bank on a Sunday to assist, promptly withdrawing the requested amount for the elderly man.

According to Mukesh Kumar, a resident of Kailashpuri in Indiranagar, his father, Sohanlal and his late mother Rajeshwari held a joint account at a bank. Recently, after his mother's death during treatment, Sohanlal needed to withdraw funds. Sohanlal visited the bank with a cheque and informed them of his wife's demise. However, bank officials stated that withdrawals from a joint account were not allowed without additional paperwork.

After completing the required formalities as instructed, Sohanlal was still unable to access the funds. He was told that the processing was delayed, despite his repeated visits over several days.

On October 26, frustrated, Sohanlal reached out to the CM Helpline (1076), explaining his urgent need for the funds. Responding swiftly, Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh instructed the department concerned to immediately contact the bank's general manager and manager to resolve the issue. Thanks to this intervention, the bank addressed Sohanlal's problem within hours, even opening on Sunday to facilitate the withdrawal of money.

Mayawati attacks Cong, BJP for luring voters through freebies

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, on Monday, attacked the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress, saying at a time when crores of people are suffering due to inflation and unemployment, both the parties are busy blaming each other and announcing freebies and tempting promises in the campaign for the Maharashtra and Jharkhand assembly elections.

She said that instead of focusing on the issues related to the people, these parties were busy in "negative politics" with their false propaganda and promises before the elections. The BSP chief posted on social

media platform X: "Whether it is the Congress government or the BJP government in different states of the country, the promises made to the people by these two parties are not being fulfilled honestly, because their promises are made only to mislead the people and forget them after forming the government."

She added, "This is the reason why Congress governments, especially in Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka, are facing allegations of breaking promises and various BJP governments, including Uttar Pradesh, after coming to power, are seen doing various kinds of jugaad politics to divert attention from the real

burning issues of public interest and public welfare."

Mayawati asserted that BSP does not issue any manifesto to mislead the public in the elections, but works honestly for crores of poor, oppressed and unemployed people as its constitutional responsibility and political religion.

She said, "At such a time, people are in dire need of employment to get rid of all the troubles and this is also their first demand." She claimed that her government provided as many jobs at government and non-government level as the subsequent SP and BJP governments together have been able to provide.

Chhath begins today with 'Nahaye Khaye'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Preparations are in full swing for the four-day Chhath festival which will start on Tuesday with the 'Nahaye Khaye' (bathing-eating) event. Efforts are on in Banaras Locomotive Works to make Surya Sarovar ready for the festival. Meanwhile, District Magistrate S Rajalingam and Additional Commissioner of Police (ACP) S Chinnappa inspected various Ganga ghats, including Assi, Ganga Mahal, Rewa, Dashashwamedh, Manikarnika and Namoo Ghat as well as Ishwargangi Talab (pond) etc on Monday regarding the preparations for the Dala Chhath festival and gave necessary instructions to the officials concerned of Nagar Nigam and other departments. During the inspection at Assi Ghat, the DM took information about the estimated number of devotees and fasting people



District Magistrate S Rajalingam on Monday inspecting a Ganga Ghat to see preparations for Chhath Puja in Varanasi

coming to the ghat apart from priests and other people present there. He directed the additional municipal commissioner present on the spot to immediately get the silt on the ghat cleaned. He also instructed that the work of soil leveling should be done and debris around there be removed apart from proper arrangements for changing rooms, toilets, drinking water, barricading, lighting, signage etc.

Rajalingam expressed displeasure over less manpower deployed on the spot and directed the additional municipal commissioner to issue notice to the contractor concerned. He directed the additional municipal commissioner to get all the ghats cleaned by increasing the contractors and manpower. He directed to appoint a nodal officer for all these arrangements. He said a better plan for the movement of people should be prepared. Apart from this, he also inspected the Ishwargangi Talab as cleaning work was going on there. He also directed the Water Police and NDRF to remain alert. Despite hectic work going on at the ghats, it will be a challenging task for the local administration to make the main Ganga ghats ready for the festival as the first 'arghya' of the Chhath Puja will be offered to Surya Bhagwan at the sunset on November 7

while second and last on the next day (November 8) at the time of sunrise which will mark the end of the festival. Huge amount of silt had accumulated on the ghat stairs due to the flood in the Ganga river earlier when the water level had even crossed the warning level. In recent years, the 88-odd internationally famous Ganga ghats witnessed the rush of thousands of people during the Chhath Puja festival. Meanwhile, people started thronging various bazaars and temporary roadside markets to purchase various puja articles. The rush of people is expected to increase from Tuesday when the four-day festival begins. It is also expected that the rush at the ghats of Ganga and Varuna rivers apart from some ponds will be heavy on this popular festival of this region of Purvanchal (eastern Uttar Pradesh) and adjoining Bihar.



Devotees taking part in a procession for immersion of an idol of Goddess Kali after 'Kali Puja' festival in Prayagraj on Monday. PTI

World Bank team inspects camp

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A World Bank team visited the CB-NAAT (Cartridge Based Nucleic Acid Amplification Test) site in Shivpur here on Monday and took complete information about the process and gave important suggestions regarding further improvement in identification, examination and treatment of tuberculosis (TB) patients in Varanasi district. Giving this information, District Tuberculosis Officer (DTO) Dr Piyush Rai said on the occasion the camp was also inspected by the World Bank team which will also visit Konya area and BHU on Tuesday. For the purpose of TB control in the district, screening is being done by running a campaign in urban and rural areas. In this examination is being done with an ultraportable handheld X-ray machine. In the camp organised by the Health department at Ayushman Arogya Mandir



The World Bank team visiting a health camp in Varanasi on Monday.

Health Sub Centre Kargana Pratham on Monday, examination was done with ultraportable handheld X-ray machine, the report of which was received in one minute. A total of 180 patients were examined in the camp, in which 19 patients were found to be TB probable. This machine has been received by the Central TB Division in collaboration with

the William J Clinton Foundation (WJCF). This was informed by Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary who said that this initiative has been taken by the government to strengthen the TB Active Patient Search (ACF) campaign and TB Preventive Therapy (TPT). At the places where the maximum number of TB patients have been found or are found

during the campaign, special camps are organised there and patients with possible symptoms are examined. DTO Dr Piyush Rai said getting the report in one minute after examination with the X-ray machine has become very convenient. On confirmation of TB, the treatment of the person concerned is also started on time. Such camps are being organised in urban and rural areas from March last and under this programme 24 camps are being organised every month. "So far a total of 133 camps have been organised in which 9,035 patients have been screened and 652 TB suspects have been found, out of which 58 are undergoing treatment", the DTO said, advising that cough for two weeks or more, phlegm with cough, blood in phlegm, weight loss, loss of appetite, chest pain, mild fever in the evening etc are symptoms of TB and if such symptoms are seen, definitely one should get tested.

National Ganga Utsav: Ganga aarti performed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

On the occasion of National Ganga Utsav being celebrated by National Clean Ganga Mission on the anniversary of declaring Ganga as national river, the activists of local unit of Namami Gange performed the aarti of Maa Ganga at Namoo Ghat here on Monday under the aegis of its District Ganga Committee. The participants expressed gratitude towards Maa Ganga by cleaning the river banks in coordination with IFS officer Ravindra Singh from Forest department, senior officers of Nagar Nigam, personnel of Ganga Task Force, CRPF, Base India and Srijan Samajik Sanstha cleaned the banks of Ganga from Namoo Ghat to Rajhat Bridge. The participants appealed to the people to give due respect to national river Ganga, which is the backbone of Indian culture. A pledge of Ganga cleanliness was taken with the citizens present at Namoo Ghat carrying



Namami Gange activists offering aarti at Namoo Ghat on occasion of National Ganga Utsav in Varanasi on Monday.

the national flag. For the conservation of national river Ganga, they displayed placards on which cleanliness slogans were written. They also made the people aware through the slogans. Regional coordinator of Namami Gange (Kashi) and Nagar Nigam's cleanliness brand ambassador Rajesh Shukla said Ganga river is a symbol of India's cultural heritage which binds the nation together. "Indian civilisation is

incomplete without Maa Ganga", he said, adding that despite having diverse languages, religions, cultures, music in the country, there are some things that bind us, keep us united and Ganga river is one of them. He said it is our national and moral duty to contribute to the cleanliness of Ganga. City co-coordinator Bina Gupta, Dr Rajesh Srivastava from Base India, Sanjay Patil, Abhay Swabhimani and members of Govardhan Dham Committee were prominently present in the event. **RESEARCH VISIT:** Dr Rajeev Pratap Singh, Associate Professor at the Institute of Environment and Sustainable Development (IESD), Banaras Hindu University (BHU), is currently on a research visit to the Nahdlatul Ulama University of Surabaya (UNUSA) in Indonesia. His visit from October 31 to November 9 is a part of a significant ASEAN-India collaborative research initiative focusing on sustainable agriculture. This research project, conducted in collaboration with Dr Edza Aria Wikurendra from UNUSA, aims to explore plant-microbe interactions in salt-affected soils, a growing concern for agricultural productivity and sustainability in many regions. Dr Singh brings his expertise in organic soil amendments which will be crucial in assessing their role in improving soil health and agricultural resilience in saline conditions.

BHU launches garbage collection drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has launched a transformative door-to-door garbage collection drive coordinated by the Sanitary and Support Services (SSS) unit of BHU on Monday. This initiative aims to efficiently manage solid waste across all residential areas, hostels and academic/administrative buildings within the university, aligning with the principles of Swabhav Swachhata - Sanskar Swachhata. The drive emphasises the importance of cleanliness in character and values in our daily lives as the high-lighted during the 2024 Swachhata Hi Seva (SHS) campaign. "Our efforts towards cleanliness not only enhance our campus but also reflect our values", said Vice-Chancellor Prof Sudhir K Jain. He highlighted the role of universities as the cornerstone of a unified society, where education transcends boundaries and fosters a spirit of collective responsibility. The door-to-door waste collection drive promotes systematic waste segregation at the source, encouraging all residents and heads of the offices to use three designated bins: green for



Door-to-door garbage collection drive being flagged off at BHU in Varanasi on Monday.

biodegradable waste (including food and vegetable waste for composting), blue for non-biodegradable materials (such as polythene, plastic and glass) and red for hazardous waste (including sprays, paints, electronic waste, pesticides, syringes, medicines and sanitary napkins). This approach fosters responsible waste disposal practices among community members, ensuring proper segregation and management. To bolster this comprehensive garbage collection drive, BHU

has mobilised significant resources, including 19 tricycles, four Tata Ace vehicles, one tractor-trailer, one compactor vehicle and one Escort (JCB). Additionally, five more tricycles are being procured to further enhance waste collection capacity. The university is also acquiring a fogging machine and a sanitary incinerator to improve hygiene and waste management across the campus. Professor-In-Charge of SSS Prof Sarfaraz Alam informed that the campus has been strategically divided into three blocks: Residential

areas, hostels and academic/administrative buildings. The residential areas are further divided into 15 sectors, each assigned a tricycle for waste collection. These tricycles will visit each sector until 10 am daily to collect garbage from households. The collected waste will then be transferred to a tipper vehicle, which will transport it to the dumping yard at the new BHU Press. From there it will be sent to the Karsara plant in Varanasi. The agreement between BHU and the Varanasi Municipal Corporation is in its final stages, marking a collaborative effort to enhance waste management practices. He said that compost pits have been dug at various locations across the campus to collect organic waste from households, hostels and canteens, facilitating the composting process. The SSS unit has actively engaged with community members to raise awareness about the new garbage collection system and the benefits of waste segregation through extensive outreach efforts. They have been made aware of how to utilise the designated bins effectively and understand the importance of separating their waste to contribute to a cleaner and greener campus.

Boy dies after toffee gets stuck in throat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A four-year old boy died after a toffee got stuck in his throat in Jarauli Phase-1 under Barra police station. He was identified as Anivat (4), son of Rahul Kashyap. Anivat had bought the toffee from a shop on Sunday evening and swallowed it. After it got stuck in his throat, he experienced breathing problem. When his condition started deteriorating, his mother Sonalika gave him water which provided him relief for some time but again he experienced breathing problem. His parents took him to a nearby private hospital and then to another hospital. However, he died after around three hours. On getting the information on Monday morning, Barra Station House Officer (SHO) Rajesh Sharma along with force rushed to the spot when the kin refused for an autopsy. On hearing about the incident, shopowner escaped after shutting down his shop. On the other hand, kin demanded a probe by the Food department and action against the toffee company.

Murder case worked out

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

With the arrest of three accused the Prayagraj Police claimed to have worked out the sensational murder of Mandeep that took place a few days ago in Lohari village under Meja police station. According to the police, the incident took place when Mandeep had reached his girlfriend's house to meet her on October 30 and was killed after being beaten up with a stick by her mother, brother and brother's friend. Thereafter they fled by throwing the body in the bushes. Police arrested the three accused and sent them to jail. Accused Suraj told the police during interrogation that Mandeep was in one-sided love with his sister. Mandeep Yadav of Khai Chandelan Ka Pura of Karchana, had left home on October 30. When he did not return late at night, his family got worried and started searching for him. On November 1, his body was found in the bushes of Amiliya Khurd village under Meja police station area. An FIR was registered at the Meja police station on the complaint of father Banwari Lal Yadav. Police had named the

girl's mother Nimonkali, brother Suraj and brother's friend Pradeep Patel, of Bari Baijiya police station Kaundhiara. Meja police station in charge Rajesh Upadhyay said on being tipped off by an informer, the Meja police team arrested all three accused. Mandeep's bicycle has also been recovered. Clash claims two lives **CLASH:** A clash took place between two groups over lighting of earthen lamps in Kajrigarh village under Utraon police station. Eight people were injured in this incident two of them died during treatment on Monday. The family members created a ruckus by placing the bodies outside the house of the accused. On receipt of information, police force of three police stations reached the spot, including the top officials. A first information report (FIR) was registered against the accused. Five people were arrested and raids are on in search of others. Reports said Dilip Kumar Dubey and Ram Abhilash Yadav had a dispute over placing 'diyas' on the disputed land on Diwali. Pawan Kumar Dubey had suffered serious head injury and fell unconscious on the ground. The other family members

who went to intervene were beaten up and injured. Pawan Kumar (32) who was seriously injured was undergoing treatment at the district hospital and died during treatment on Monday. His uncle, Jitendra Dubey, also died during treatment on Monday afternoon. The family members kept placed the bodies at home and staged a chakka jam. The family members demand that the accused be arrested as soon as possible and as compensation demanded arms license, a job, road construction, demolition of the house of the accused etc DCP (Ganganagar) Kuldeep Gunawat and ADM (Finance,) ACP (Phulpur), ACP (Handia) along with the force of many police stations were deployed at the scene. A case of assault and attempt to murder was registered against 10 named and many unknown people. On the complaint of Dilip Kumar Dubey, the police has registered a case and are investigating the matter. The Utraon police arrested Sunil Kumar, Dhruv Shankar, Ravi Shankar and Dhara Singh and Vikas Yadav of one side on charges of attempt to murder by assault and sent them to jail.

2 women commit suicide in separate incidents

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Two women committed suicide in separate incidents in Unnao on Sunday night. In the first incident a woman allegedly committed suicide by hanging herself in her house in the Kotwali Sadar area of Unnao on Sunday night. On getting information police took the body into possession and sent it for post-mortem examination. According to reports, Priyanka (29), wife of Suresh of Keota Talab, hanged herself to death. Her family members said Priyanka's brother lives in Delhi and she wanted him to take her there. But due to the circumstances, he could not do so. When Priyanka's wish could not be fulfilled, she went into deep tension and committed suicide. Priyanka was married to Suresh about seven years ago

and had three children, including a daughter and two sons. Her husband worked in a grocery store. The father of the deceased alleged that he was constantly demanding a bike in dowry. Police were investigating the case. The exact cause of death will be clear on receipt of the post-mortem report. In another incident, a woman living near Kanchan Nagar of Ganga Ghat Kotwali area in Unnao, after quarrelling with her husband, committed suicide by hanging herself on Sunday night. The police rushed to the spot and started a probe in the matter. Sachin Rawat of Kanchan Nagar had a love marriage with Anjali four years ago. Anjali had a dispute with her husband over some issue and hurt by it went to her room and committed suicide by hanging herself. When she did not come out of the room

for a long time, the family members became suspicious. When Sachin opened the door, he saw Anjali's body hanging from the noose. On getting information Ganga Ghat Kotwali police reached the spot and started investigation. The police sent the body for the post-mortem examination. Binda Nagar outpost in charge said that the woman hanged herself after a quarrel with her husband. The investigation was in progress, he added. **GANJA RECOVERED:** ACP Bilhaar recovered 346 quintals of ganja laden in a truck and a Bolero and arrested four persons, including the truck driver, in Araul police station area on Sunday night. Being smuggled from Odisha it was to be supplied in Kanpur Dehat. The man who bought the ganja has also been arrested.

Locked house burgled

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The locked house of a retired sub-inspector (S-1) was burgled in Purwamir village under Maharajpur police area. Miscrants stole generator, submersible pump, wire and other items from there. The victim has informed the police about the incident which have started investigations. Brahmanand Mishra of Fatehpur is retired sub-inspector from UP Police. In his complaint, he said his new house is situated adjacent to Shine City of Purwamir. On reaching there on Monday, he found locks of house broken and household goods ransacked. Miscrants broke into the house and committed the theft. Purmamir outpost incharge Prabha Shanker Singh said a probe was on. **ROAD MISHAP:** Two people were killed while three others grievously injured when an uncontrolled speeding dumper after hitting a motorcyclist, rammed into a car near Gujela

village under Sajeti police station area on Sunday night. In the incident car driver and the motorcyclist were killed on the spot while the former's wife and two kids were seriously injured. On the information of passers-by, police sent the injured to Ghatampur CHC by an ambulance from where after first aid, they were referred to Kanpur's district hospital. After informing the kin of the deceased, police sent the bodies for autopsy. Anuj Verma (40), son of Shiv Kumar of Anna Chauraha, Sanigawa, Kanpur, was a bus driver. On Sunday he along with wife Manju (35), sons, Raj Umrao and Rudra Umrao, had come to his in-laws' place in Kirar village. On return near Gujela village, due to tyre burst an uncontrolled speeding dumper coming from opposite direction hit the motorcyclist and then rammed into his car. This led to killing of motorcyclist Prabhakar Chaturvedi of Saket Nagar and car rider Anuj on the spot.

Youth killed in mishap

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

An 18-year-old mobike Aborne youth was killed after his bike was hit by a car late on Sunday night. Gautam Kumar died in the Chauhatka area of Khuldabad. Reports said that Gautam, the youngest son of Virendra Kumar of Jayantipur Sulemsarai of Dhoomanganj, was coming to Civil Lines on the bike with his friend Gagan on Sunday night when the speeding car hit it near the Chauhatka bridge. As a result Gautam died while Gagan was injured. He was admitted to the Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital. After the accident, the driver left the car and fled. Dhoomanganj Station House Officer (SHO) Amarnath Rai said the car has been taken into possession by the police. However, the driver managed to flee from the spot.

Vigilance Awareness Week organised



PNB staff taking part in Vigilance Awareness Week celebrations.

On the occasion of birth anniversary of Sardar Ballabh Bhai Patel, Kanpur Divisional office of Punjab National Bank (PNB) organised Vigilance Awareness Week from October 28 to November 3. On the first day, staff members of all the branches and

divisional office pledged for integrity. The next day a walkathon was organised while a health check-up camp and a gram sabha were organised on the third day. Divisional Chief Prem Chandra Chaudhary, Deputy Divisional Chief Vibhor Srivastava, Chief Manager Rohit Kumar and other staff members were present on the occasion.

Union Minister Ravneet slams Canadian PM over attack on Hindu temple in Brampton

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

Union minister Ravneet Singh Bittu on Monday condemned the attack on a Hindu temple in Canada's Brampton and accused Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for his "dirty politics." Protesters carrying Khalistani flags clashed with people at a Hindu temple in Brampton on Sunday.

The BJP and its government have always taken "tough steps" whenever it comes to the persecution of Hindus or infringement of their rights, the ruling party said here on Monday as India condemned the acts of violence perpetrated by extremists and separatists at a temple in Canada.

Protesters carrying Khalistani flags clashed with people at Brampton's Hindu Sabha Temple on Sunday, prompting the High Commission of India in Ottawa to issue a strong statement condemning the attack by the "anti-India" elements.



"We have seen how strongly and clearly a firm reply has been given to Canada while displaying India's strength," BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said at a press conference at the party headquarters in Delhi when asked about the incident. He said the BJP and its government take "tough steps" whenever it comes to persecution of Hindus or infringement of their rights.

"I think taking cognisance of this case also, India will put forth its stand very firmly and take steps whatever is necessary," he added. Peel Regional Police said a

protest occurred at the Hindu Sabha temple in Brampton and unverified videos circulating on social media appeared to show demonstrators holding banners in support of Khalistan, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported.

The videos showed fist fights and people striking each other with poles on what appears to be the grounds surrounding the Hindu Sabha Mandir, the report added.

Union minister Bittu in a social media post said, "Justin Trudeau has successfully divided the Indian Diaspora

in Canada for his dirty politics. Sikhs and Hindus live together in harmony in India but they are being pitched against each other in Canada. I highly condemn the attack on the temple or any religious place of worship by Trudeau's Khalistani elements."

In a video message, Bittu said, "The news which is appearing in the past few days, (that) the situation that has developed in Canada, it is not about one particular religion. Be it Hindu or Sikh, Justin Trudeau has divided in such a way there."

He alleged that the Canadian police were standing in support of the Khalistani elements.

"Temples were being attacked. And nobody is ready to stop them. How they were chanting slogans and openly speaking about Khalistan. It will not be tolerated," he said. "These are some people (Khalistani elements) whom you are using. They are on your payroll," Bittu said.

"After this incident, no image of your country (Canada) and your PM (Trudeau) has left,"

he further said. After the incident in Canada, the High Commission of India in Ottawa issued a strong statement on Monday condemning the recent attack on Brampton's Hindu Sabha temple by "anti-India" elements.

The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) on Monday said the "attack" on a Hindu temple in Canada was a cause of concern and alleged that the Indian consulate's prior request to the Canadian administration for providing security was "intentionally" ignored.

Reacting to the incident, VHP international president Alok Kumar said the attack was a cause of concern, more so because a consular camp had been organised by the Indian consulate at the temple.

The Indian consulate had informed the police about the event three days ago and had specifically said that in view of the security environment in Canada, adequate protection was required for the camp and the temple, he said.

Election Commission orders transfer of Maharashtra DGP Rashmi Shukla

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

Ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly polls, the Election Commission (EC) on Monday directed the state government to transfer DGP Rashmi Shukla with immediate effect following complaints from political parties, including the Congress, sources said. Maharashtra goes to polls on November 20.

The poll body directed the Maharashtra chief secretary to hand over Shukla's charge to the next senior-most IPS officer in the cadre. The chief secretary was also directed to send a panel of three IPS officers by Tuesday afternoon for appointment as DGP, the sources said.

During a recent review meeting, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar warned officials to not only be impartial and fair but also ensure that they are perceived as non-partisan while carrying out their duties.

On October 29, Kumar had expressed concern over politically motivated crimes in Maharashtra and asked DGP Shukla to ensure a strict clampdown on such incidents.

The recent killing of NCP leader Baba Siddique led to a political furor. He was shot dead by three gunmen in Bandra East on October 12. NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar and his MVA allies Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress welcomed the Election Commission's move to direct the Maharashtra government to transfer DGP Rashmi Shukla with immediate effect. The chief secretary has asked Mumbai police commissioner to hold the additional charge of the post, sources said.

"The Election Commission has taken the right decision. Such persons should not continue in the post," Pawar



told reporters in Mumbai. "It was absolutely inappropriate to keep her in the position and grant her extensions. It's a positive development that the EC moved to remove her. Her tenure in the state had already come to an end," the former Union minister said. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray, who was present at the media briefing, also welcomed the EC's decision on Shukla.

Briefing reporters in Nagpur, state Congress president Nana Patole said his party had approached the EC three times seeking Shukla's transfer, citing her alleged role in tapping phones of opposition politicians, and asked why it took so long for the poll body to take the decision.

He requested the EC to ensure Shukla is not given any election-related duties. "Shukla used to support the BJP and had tapped phones of opposition leaders and we had filed complaints against her. We had been continuously demanding from the state government not to give important posts to such an officer," the Congress leader said.

However, (Deputy Chief Minister) Fadnavis and (CM) Shinde gave her an "illegal" extension of two years and made her DGP for their own electoral interest, Patole alleged.

"Hence, we had complained

to the Election Commission and it took cognizance of our complaint. But, the question arises why it took so long," the Congress leader said while thanking the EC for its decision.

The DGPs of West Bengal and Jharkhand were transferred immediately after the announcement of elections there, Patole said. "Why it took so long for the Election Commission to transfer Maharashtra DGP Shukla?" he asked.

On Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange's decision to stay away from the November 20 assembly polls, Pawar said nobody from the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) has anything to do with Jarange's decision. "We are pleased to hear that Manoj Jarange has decided to withdraw from the Maharashtra assembly elections. Had he chosen to continue his campaign, it could have inadvertently benefited the BJP in the election process. Therefore, we wholeheartedly welcome his decision," he said.

Asked if MVA leaders were secretly helping Jarange to continue his tirade against the BJP, Pawar said, "As MVA, we want to clarify that we are not involved in Jarange's choices. However, we welcomed his decision to withdraw the candidates, as it may have benefited the BJP in the upcoming Maharashtra assembly elections."

India-Vietnam joint military exercise 'VINBAX 2024' gets underway in Ambala

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A joint exercise by the militaries of India and Vietnam aimed at enhancing capabilities for deployment of engineering and medical teams to undertake tasks as part of a UN contingent in peacekeeping operations got underway in Haryana on Monday.

The fifth edition of 'VINBAX 2024', which will conclude on November 23 at Ambala and Chandimandir, marks a significant increase in scope with bi-service level participation for the first time by personnel of the army and the air force from both countries, the defence ministry said.

The exercise is a sequel to the bilateral exercise in Vietnam in 2023 and a major milestone in strengthening the bilateral relations between India and Vietnam.

"The aim of 'VINBAX 2024' is to enhance joint military capability of both sides in employment and deployment of Engineer Company and Medical Teams to undertake engineering tasks as part of a United Nation contingent in



peacekeeping operations under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter," the defence ministry said in a statement.

The Indian Army contingent comprising 47 personnel is being represented by a regiment of the Corps of Engineers along with personnel from other arms and services. The Vietnamese contingent comprising of similar strength will be represented by the troops Vietnam People's Army, it said.

The conduct of 'VINBAX 2024' as a field training exercise will strengthen mutual confidence, and interoperability and enable

sharing of best practices between the Indian Army and Vietnam People's Army, the statement said.

A 48-hour validation exercise with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief demonstration and equipment display is also part of the schedule to assess the standards achieved by both contingents while executing technical military operations under similar scenarios in UN missions.

"The joint exercise will also provide an opportunity to the troops of both the contingents to learn about the social and cultural heritage of each other," the ministry said.

Rajya Sabha Dy Chairman Harivansh to lead Indian delegation at G20 Parliamentary Summit in Brazil

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh will lead the Indian delegation at the 10th G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit (P20) in Brasilia, Brazil to be held from November six to eight, according to a Rajya Sabha statement on Monday.

The 10th P20 Summit will promote debates and exchanges under the motto "Parliaments for a just world and a sustainable planet". Currently India is looked upon as one of the most active partners of the G20 group of nations.

Parliamentarians of the G20 will debate and discuss on many issues including "The contribution of parliaments to the fight against hunger, poverty, and inequality; The role of parliaments in promoting sustainable development" and "Parliaments in the construction of global governance adapted to the challenges of the 21st century". The delegation is accompanied by Rajya Sabha



member Manoj Kumar Jha along with P C Mody, Secretary-General, Rajya Sabha and Utpal Kumar Singh Secretary General Lok Sabha among others.

Since parliaments can make a substantial contribution to fulfilling the G20's mandate, the P20 was set up at the 2018 Summit. It is a platform for Speakers of Parliament to discuss and explore avenues to provide a parliamentary contribution to the implementation of G20 decisions.

The 10th P20 Summit will promote debates and exchanges under the motto "Parliaments for a just world and a sustainable planet". Currently India is looked upon as one of the most active partners of the G20 group of nations.

NCSC launches revamped e-grievance management portal to streamline complaint handling

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A revamped e-grievance management portal designed to speed up complaint processing and improve service delivery for the Scheduled Castes community has been launched by the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC).

Initially introduced on the 130th birth anniversary of B R Ambedkar on April 14, 2021, the portal has seen significant upgrades in the last two years, allowing complaints to be submitted both online and in person through a web portal and a mobile application, the NCSC said in a statement.

The portal offers a centralised platform for individuals from Scheduled Castes to file grievances related to discrimination, harassment, social exclusion, or denial of rights.

By providing real-time tracking of complaint status, it aims to enhance transparency and accountability, allowing complainants to follow the progress of their cases without needing to physically visit Commission offices.

To manage the technical and operational aspects of the portal, the NCSC has established a Project Management Unit (PMU) at its headquarters in New Delhi, in partnership with the Bhaskaracharya Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG-N). This unit oversees the digitisation of complaints received across the Commission's



12 state offices, including the transformation of approximately 18,600 physical complaints into digital format. Out of the 36,000 complaints registered on the portal, 18% have resulted in notices to concerned authorities, while 35% have prompted reminders, the statement said.

The e-GMP portal also integrates system-assisted features for efficient case management. For example, it automatically lists complaints that are ready for hearings, allowing the NCSC Chairman and members to schedule meetings promptly. Hearings may be conducted through video conferencing to ensure swift attendance and resolution of cases.

Additionally, the portal publishes minutes of hearings, offering a transparent record for both petitioners and authorities.

With ongoing user feedback, the NCSC plans to synchronise the portal with an updated, user-friendly NCSC website to further improve accessibility.

Congress in habit of lying: Dharmendra Pradhan on teachers' right of reservation in universities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Monday attacked the Congress for alleging that right of reservation of teachers in central universities was being snatched.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday accused the Centre of taking away the right of reservation of teachers in central universities and claimed that the "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" slogan mocked

the fight for social justice. Kharge said an RTI query had revealed that of the 18,940 sanctioned posts in 46 central universities, 27 per cent teaching posts were lying vacant.

"Congress party is in habit of lying. When one lie does not last, they come up with another lie. Whereas, the truth is crystal clear. In 2014, during the Congress UPA government, there were 16,217 sanctioned posts in central universities out of which 6,042 posts -- 37 per cent posts -- were vacant. 57 per cent, 63 per

cent and 60 per cent posts of SCs, STs and OBCs were vacant," Pradhan said in a social media post.

The minister said the Narendra Modi government was rapidly filling all vacant posts by taking every section along. "This is the reason that despite the increase in the number of sanctioned posts (18,940) in 2024 as compared to 2014, the total number of vacant posts has decreased from 37 to 26.8 per cent today. During the last two years, more than 6,890 teaching posts have been recruited on mission mode, in which 939

(13.6 per cent) are from SC, 464 (6.7 per cent) ST, 1,535 (22.27 per cent) OBC and 348 (5.05 per cent) are from EWS," he further said.

"Recruitment to vacant posts in central universities is a continuous process which is going on at an unprecedented pace," he added.

Alleging that Kharge had followed the footsteps of former party chief Rahul Gandhi to spread confusion regarding central universities, Pradhan claimed that the Congress should explain why it kept the Dalits, oppressed and

the backward classes deprived of their rights despite ruling the country for 60 years.

"What was the reason that they did not get representation in various educational institutions of the country? Congress party has no right to talk about backward classes. Because for decades you have worked to snatch the rights of SCs, STs and OBCs and it is only the government of the honourable Prime Minister Modi ji that has worked to give rights not only to SCs, STs and OBCs but also to the economically weaker EWS class," he said.

Opposition MPs say they may disassociate with Waqf committee, protest Chair's 'unilateral' decisions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition MPs in the parliamentary committee scrutinising the Waqf (Amendment) Bill are likely to meet Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday over its chairperson Jagdambika Pal's alleged unilateral decisions and attempts to "bulldoze" proceedings without giving them reasonable time to prepare.

Claiming that they have been "stonewalled" during the committee's proceedings, opposition MPs have written in their letter, which they circulated among themselves on Monday, to Birla that they may be forced to disassociate with the panel.

Opposition sources said they are likely to meet Birla on Tuesday and put forward their grievances.



Opposition members, including DMK's A Raja, Congress's Mohammad Jawed and Imran Masood, AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi, AAP's Sanjay Singh and TMC's Kalyan Banerjee among others, have written the joint letter addressed to the Speaker.

They accused Pal, a seasoned BJP MP, of taking "unilateral decisions" on fixing the dates of sittings and at times for three consecutive days, and whom to call witnesses. They

said it is not practically possible for MPs to interact without preparation. Asserting that the joint committee of Parliament examining the Bill is like a mini Parliament, they said it should not be treated as a mere "ventilating chamber" to get the proposed legislation passed as desired by the government ignoring the due process.

The committee's proceedings have been marred by frequent protests from opposition members over a host of issues, while the BJP members have accused them of deliberately trying to scuttle its work.

Pal has rejected the charge that he has not allowed opposition members to air their views, asserting that he has ensured that everybody is heard.

IRF urges Modi Government for installation of crash barriers on Char Dham routes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Concerned at increasing road accidents, global road safety body International Road Federation (IRF) urged the Modi government and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highway for installation of crash barriers and parapets on most of the hill roads in Uttarakhand including Char Dham Yatra route, to curb accidents and make the hill roads safer is welcome. The IRF further stressed for separate tough driving license for hill drivers and stricter fitness and overloading norms for vehicles. This comes after at least 36 people died after a bus carrying 42 passengers lost control and fell into a gorge near Marchula in Uttarakhand's Almora Monday morning. The hill roads in the country are prone to regular road



accident a lot needs to be done to ensure road safety, especially in higher areas in the states of Uttarakhand, Himachal, Jammu and Kashmir, and North East states in the country the government should plan to incorporate the latest technologies and safety features, including installation of soil and slope stabilization and roadside safety in the hilly terrain infrastructure, crash barriers,

certification and development of safety code for hills should also be adhered to make road travel safe and sustainable on hills" said Kapila.

"The Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways as well as confirmed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for installation of crash barriers and parapets on most of the hill roads in Uttarakhand including Char Dham Yatra route, to curb accidents and make the hill roads safer is welcome. Road crash barrier systems are used worldwide on highways, especially on hill roads, to physically prevent vehicles from running off the roadway or falling down a steep slope and protect vehicle hitting a road side object. Similar crash barriers should be installed in all hill roads" Said Biju Muthu, CEO India chapter of

International Road Federation. During the year 2023 about 1.55 lakh people died in road accidents in the country.

"At present, most of the hill roads in the country have been constructed around hill slopes, which remain cut off during heavy rains due to landslides. Construction of well-engineered safe tunnels and long bridges will help in movement of traffic round the year. The Ministry of Road and State PWD's should focus on engineering safe roads rather than more roads as rectifying faulty designed roads with black spots is more expensive than building safe roads. Similarly, the stress should also be on safe vehicles with higher visibility features, including ABS brakes, reflective tapes on commercial vehicles and mandatory fog lamps on all vehicles," said Kapila.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Smogged capital!

Delhi's air has taken a hazardous turn with the city enveloped in a thick blanket of smog and the AQI reaching alarming levels

Delhi's pollution levels have once again reached alarming highs, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) crossing the 400 mark just two days after Diwali. As of Sunday morning, the city witnessed hazardous air conditions, recording AQI values that are 65 times above the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended limits. The city's air quality entered the "hazardous" category as a thick blanket of smog descended. For context, an AQI level above 450 is classified as 'severe-plus,' posing serious health risks, especially for vulnerable populations like children, the elderly and individuals with respiratory issues. On Saturday night, Delhi's AQI stood at 327, but within just 12 hours, it shot up to 447, marking a significant spike. This worsening air quality is not limited to isolated pockets of the city; regions across Delhi-NCR, including Jahangirpuri, Mundka, Narela and Sonia Vihar, also recorded dangerously high levels.



Many people reported respiratory issues due to the poor air quality and eye irritation, a direct effect of the dense smog. These symptoms highlight the immediate health repercussions of Delhi's worsening air quality, especially after Diwali. Firecrackers during Diwali celebrations have a substantial impact on Delhi's air quality. The smoke and particulate matter released from fireworks contain pollutants like sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide and heavy metals that remain suspended in the air, exacerbating pollution levels. The annual agricultural practice of stubble burning in neighbouring states, including Punjab and Haryana, contributes to Delhi's smog. Its persistence remains a critical factor in the air quality crisis. During winter, Delhi's colder temperatures and lack of

strong winds trap pollutants close to the ground. This natural 'trapping effect' worsens in the days following Diwali as pollutants from firecrackers and stubble burning accumulate in the air, creating hazardous conditions. In an effort to tackle this recurring issue, the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP-II) was implemented in Delhi-NCR starting October 21, following the dip in air quality to the 'Very Poor' category. This plan mandates restrictions on activities that contribute to pollution, such as construction and industrial operations. However, despite GRAP-II's implementation, the AQI remains alarmingly high, showing the need for stricter enforcement and possibly, more robust solutions to address the city's persistent air quality issues. Delhi's post-Diwali pollution crisis is a reminder of the complex and multifaceted nature of air quality management. Efforts to control pollution through initiatives like GRAP and public awareness campaigns have had limited success, underscoring the need for more effective and sustained interventions. A multi-pronged approach involving stricter restrictions on firecrackers, better stubble management practices, and real-time pollution control is essential to bring lasting improvement to Delhi's air quality. As Delhi faces yet another winter of hazardous air, urgent, long-term solutions are crucial to protect the health and wellbeing of its citizens.

PICTALK



People purchase bamboo baskets and other items ahead of the 'Chhathi Puja,' in Gurugram

Finding strength in the face of life's deepest sorrows

Adversities are integral to our lives. However, we possess a wellspring of strength that enables us to recover and move on

First read about resilience in my physics classes in school as the ability of a material to absorb energy and release back that energy as it springs back to its original shape.

Later, I understood a third element, the ability to spring back without creating a permanent distortion. Human resilience is no different. I have met many people who bounced back. I then understood its meaning in daily life. It was about humans and their strength to face adversities and move forward with renewed vigour. I remember an incident from almost four decades back.



I was only 26-years-old. My colleague was 56. His only child, a son around my age, died in a boat accident while on vacation with his friends in the Sundarbans. I went with my wife to console and realised that words were superfluous. What do you tell an old couple who had just lost their only child? I had tears in my eyes, and I found the gentleman consoling me instead. He sought solace

and strength from the scriptures. Another colleague lost her 41-year-old son. She wanted to write about it, had even tried multiple times, but could not bring herself to articulate her feelings. I encouraged her to write. She shared her innermost thoughts, 'A woman goes through severest of physical pains and mental suffering through labour pain at the time of her child's birth. This is the natural cycle of life.

But what is unnatural is when this cycle of life breaks due to the untimely death of the younger person, whom the woman had given birth to, and nurtured, to become a good and strong human being to face the world.' The lady now lives through her son's memories. She also expresses her emotions by writing poetry or short stories. This is her way of coming out of her traumatic experience and honouring her son's life. Another lady that I recently interviewed for an episode of a virtual show lost her young son of 22 a few years back. She 'transcended' her grief cherishing the fond memories of a limited time spent together. She helps others transform their grief into growth.

The loss of a child is probably the most difficult form of adversity. We face challenges and find the inner strength to deal with them. There are a few, who unfortunately are not able to cope, and sometimes take extreme steps. There are also a few people who may require additional medical help to deal with feelings of depression. Above all, they require love

and support from the near and dear ones. Each human is a wellspring of resilience. All that is needed is to tap within and for others to help. We may adopt a few lessons from the lives of resilient persons. They believe they are masters of their destiny, they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, they adapt to situations, they do not obsess over factors over which they do not have control, they are optimists and many more. However, resilience does not require us to present a brave facade at all times. It is also important to create a social environment and not hesitate to seek help. I close the article, with a prayer that all of us find the courage to be resilient, and with a quote from Emil Dorian, a Romanian poet, prose writer, and physician, "Strong people alone know how to organise their suffering so as to bear only the most necessary pain."

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA

Providing a fulcrum for the new global order



SUDHIR HINDWAN

The Indo-US partnership stands out as a stabilising force, rooted in shared democratic values and a commitment to security, peace and technological progress

The global power structure has undergone profound changes, shifting from the Cold War's rigid bipolarity to an era of unipolar dominance, and now, to a complex multipolar framework. This transition has amplified the voices of countries that were once sidelined, making their contributions essential to shaping international relations. For a stable and cooperative world, active participation from all nations is necessary in this evolving paradigm of global politics.

A key relationship in this multipolar world is the strengthening bond between India and the United States, founded on shared respect and strategic interests. Over the past decade, their alliance has evolved significantly, propelled by a common vision for regional stability and global security. Regions like West Asia and conflicts like Russia-Ukraine illustrate how global geopolitical tensions are often rooted in complex interplays of power, ideology, and rivalry. Maintaining peace requires transparent diplomacy, cooperation, and trust-based dialogue among nations. To sustain global stability, countries must collaborate on critical fronts such as climate action, renewable energy, and technological innovation.

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is an example of how emerging powers are asserting influence, sparking responses from other nations. India's growing partnership with the US stands as a stabilising counterforce in this landscape. Key agreements like the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) have enhanced defense and data-sharing capabilities, primarily to counter security threats in the Indo-Pacific region. Additionally, India and the US have institutionalised their cooperation through strategic initiatives like the 2+2 Dialogue, a platform that enables regular high-level discussions and reinforces a multi-layered security partnership. These collaborations reflect the importance of joint efforts in combating modern challenges, from chemical weapons control to



counter-terrorism initiatives, underscoring the need for stringent international regulations.

The role of smaller nations is also evolving within this multipolar order. These countries are adapting to shifting global dynamics, often requiring support from larger nations for economic, strategic and cultural integration. India's growing recognition as a mediator in international disputes, as seen in its balanced stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, reflects its increasing diplomatic stature. This approach not only underlines India's commitment to global peace but also highlights its ability to bridge divides as a neutral party.

With an evolving international landscape, new security frameworks and collaborative information-sharing networks have become critical for countering emerging threats. India's active role in tackling these challenges showcases the potential of soft diplomacy. This diplomatic approach resonates with India's cultural philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (One Earth, One Family), which advocates for inclusive governance and unity. This ethos aligns well with the India-US partnership, which is also rooted in shared democratic values and mutual respect for sov-



IN AN ERA WHERE POWER IS INCREASINGLY DISPERSED, THE INDO-US RELATIONSHIP REFLECTS A PROACTIVE RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY MULTIPOLARITY

eighty. Recent technological agreements, including the US support for the production of F414 engines, advanced drones, and fighter jet components in India, symbolise the strides both countries are making toward a robust defense alliance. Such agreements not only solidify defense cooperation but also pave the way for smoother technology transfers.

Beyond defense, India and the US are deepening cooperation in areas like artificial intelligence (AI) and information technology (IT), underscoring India's expanding role in global tech markets. Indian companies, particularly in the IT sector, have successfully established a presence in international markets, creating jobs, fostering trade, and contributing to the US economy. With an Indian diaspora of about 5.6 million living, working, and studying in the US, these contributions further strengthen the economic ties and cultural connections between the two democracies. This vibrant Indian-American community enhances mutual understanding and shared aspirations between the two nations, fostering a unique bond that complements strategic cooperation.

The Indo-US partnership holds strategic importance not only for bilateral benefits

but also as a pillar for building broader international coalitions to address global security threats. As two of the world's largest democracies, India and the US are in a unique position to lead efforts against transnational terrorism and other pressing security issues. By jointly developing a forward-looking security framework, both countries can drive global initiatives for peace and stability. Through shared commitments, this alliance has the potential to shape a diplomatic roadmap that champions prosperity, security, and harmony on a global scale.

In an era where power is increasingly dispersed, the Indo-US relationship reflects a proactive response to the challenges and opportunities presented by multipolarity. As both nations continue to strengthen their alliance, they contribute not only to their own security but also to a collective effort aimed at promoting peace, economic stability, and shared progress. This partnership is more than just a bilateral relationship; it embodies the hope for a cooperative, resilient global order that values inclusive growth and sustainable peace.

(The author, a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav Award, is a professor and expert in strategic affairs; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EDUCATION SYSTEM REVAMP

Madam — The article 'Reforming India's education...' (November 2) presents suggestions that could be considered positively. The education system we had for long could produce creative brains and talents that have been absorbed by the knowledge and talent seeking institutions all over the world. Most of the scientists and technocrats contributing to most inventions and developments in various countries are Indians, who had their basic education in India. The country is caught in the grip of confusion over the type of education we need to provide to our students.

The act of leaving education to market forces dominated by avaricious private players has converted the essence of education from learning to just scoring high marks, which helps in gaining seats in educational institutions and nothing more. The cream is able to gain placement in the IT sector, and the rest are left to be satisfied with a degree that cannot fetch them a job. It is all the more a serious concern that now the system is made to suffer the onslaughts of the communal flare ignited in every sphere of life. As a result, those who have a degree but no employable skill are taken up for infusing skill in them to make them employable. We need to wait and see how this is going to yield the desired result. It is time to leave education to the States to compete themselves in creating skilled and knowledgeable forces for mutual benefit.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

INDIA-CANADA TENSIONS

Madam — Apropos of 'MEA summons Canadian diplomat' (November 3), Canada's baseless and unsubstantiated allegations against Union Home Minister Amit Shah under pressure from Khalistani extremists, have taken Indo-Canadian diplomatic relations to a new low. The surveillance of the Indian diplomats in Canada is beyond all diplomatic norms and is illegal. Even earlier, Canada failed and refused to provide any proof or congenial evidence of India's involvement in Canada-based Khalistani extremist Nijjar's murder.

Toxic work culture



The recent tragic death of a 26-year-old Chartered Accountant from Kerala working in a MNC in Pune has reignited discussions about exploitative work conditions prevalent in many Indian organisations. In fact, her mother wrote a letter to the chairman of the company, blaming the toxic work environment as the reason for her daughter's death. The woman's case is not an isolated

incident. Stories of young professionals suffering from burnout, stress and even physical collapse due to inhumane work hours are becoming disturbingly common in India.

While many Indian companies boast of initiatives aimed at employees' engagement and their wellbeing, these things appear to be at the surface level, failing to bring meaningful change to daily work experiences. While many issues can play a role in attributing to toxic workplace cultures, the most pervasive is weak leadership. In the pursuit of chasing profits, companies often overlook the human cost of overworking employees. Meaningful change is urgently needed to address the exploitative practices rampant in Indian MNCs.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Urapakkam

No terrorist or extremist organisation activates itself or indulges in separatist, destructive or terrorist activities without state support and sponsorship. Pakistan is the best example of such state-sponsored terrorist organisations. Justin Trudeau is facing fierce opposition within its ranks and in the country while the parliamentary elections are approaching fast. Khalistani extremists do have some political support in India, but such political parties and leaders miserably lost elections in recent Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. It is very strange that anti-India Khalistani extremists have no support in India and are not relevant for Canada too, so Justin Trudeau's support for them is highly undiplomatic and unbecoming of his Government. The large Indian diaspora in Canada may not be favourable of their Khalistani support.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

NEW ZEALAND'S CLEAN SWEEP

Madam — This is one of the most humiliating defeats for team India at home and Skipper Rohit Sharma can't have any

excuse for this shocking performance of the players and especially the batters. Full credit goes to New Zealand for their absolute commitment and application in all departments of the game and Captain Latham led by example with his cool strategies to record 3-0 by cleanly whitewashed India. The Indian batters who have taken their place for granted so far played miserable throughout the series.

The performances of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli were crestfallen and we don't see any kind of seriousness from them in the middle to realise the match situation. After their dismal outcome at Bengaluru and Pune, when the fans expected a turnaround at Mumbai by expecting the captain to stay in the middle for longer, the post-match press conference for Rohit became longer than the time he spent at the wicket, which was a very sorry affair and a huge disappointment for the Indian fans across the nation.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

BUILDING

WORKPLACE RESILIENCE

Resilience is more than just bouncing back from setbacks; it's about adapting and staying steady



SAKSHI SETHI

Quite often we come up with research studies that state that employees with access to mental health resources, such as counselling and stress management programmes, reported higher resilience levels while those who received mindfulness training and stress-reduction workshops were better equipped to handle workplace challenges, leading to lower absenteeism and higher engagement. But the question arises are we workplace resilient? In today's fast-paced and often unpredictable business environment, resilience has become a critical quality for both organisations as well as individuals.

The term resilience usually refers to something more than just the ability to bounce back. It is the ability to adapt to challenges, recover from setbacks and maintain a steady course even in times of uncertainty. It is an adaptive skill that enables employees to handle stress and maintain productivity under pressure. Effective resilience management helps businesses not only survive but thrive during challenging periods by fostering a resilient workforce that can navigate complex and shifting landscapes.

The need for resilience, in recent years, has undoubtedly become increasingly evident due to factors such as economic fluctuations, organisational restructuring and external crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. The ability to manage resilience allows organisations to build a workforce that can handle continuous change without compromising the wellbe-



ing of employees or the quality of work. Resilient employees contribute to a positive workplace culture by handling stress effectively and collaborating with others to solve problems. They also tend to show higher levels of job satisfaction, reduced burnout and a greater sense of purpose in their roles. These attributes are beneficial not only to the individual but to the organisation, as resilient employees contribute to a stronger, more cohesive team dynamic.

Several approaches such as encouraging a positive work culture; providing access to training and development; promoting work-life balance and encouraging team cohesion and collaboration can help organisations promote resilience at both individual as well as organisational levels. Only when employees feel valued and supported, they are more likely to develop a strong sense of belonging and purpose. An environment where employees feel safe to express concerns and seek help when needed promotes emotional resilience. Additionally, professional development opportunities build confidence, thereby helping employees feel more competent and ready to face obstacles.

Leadership plays a crucial role in resilience management. On the other hand, leaders too, who show resilience, especially during challenging times, inspire confidence in their teams can also provide the necessary guidance, recognise stress signs early on, and take action to support struggling employees. Resilient leaders foster a growth mindset within their teams, viewing setbacks as learning opportunities rather than failures.

Only fostering a team-based environment where collaboration and mutual support are encouraged enables employees to rely on one another in times of need. When employees trust their teammates, they are more likely to share concerns, ask for help and aid others, which collectively contributes to a resilient workforce. In conclusion, managing resilience in the workplace is essential for creating a thriving, adaptable, and supportive work environment. Investing in resilience is ultimately an investment in organisational success and individual wellbeing. By prioritising resilience, businesses will be better prepared to face future challenges, ensuring a sustainable and positive work environment.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

India's gold repatriation: Safeguarding India's wealth



SHIVAJI SARKAR

India has taken a bold step by repatriating 214 tonnes of gold from the Bank of England, signalling a strategic move to protect national wealth against global shock



In a striking move to safeguard national wealth, India has repatriated 214 tonnes of gold from the vaults of England, a signal of heightened concern over escalating geopolitical tensions and looming sanctions. This shift reflects a broader trend, with central banks globally ramping up their gold purchases.

In May alone, India recalled 100 tonnes from the Bank of England, reinforcing a strategy to shield assets amid global uncertainty. Now, as global gold prices soar toward a potential \$3,000 per ounce, the world is watching closely, with India emerging as a key player in the race to secure precious metals in these volatile times. The government of India has decided to prioritise protecting its assets in the face of global geopolitical unrest. About 100 tonnes were returned from the Bank of England in May.

A total of 324.01 metric tonnes of gold were held in the custody of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) and the Bank of England, while 510.46 metric tonnes were retained domestically. Additionally, 20.26 metric tonnes of gold were stored as deposits. The gold in the world market is projected to rise to \$3000 per ounce, according to Goldman Sachs. The Diwali 2024 market sparkle appears subdued for several reasons despite cracker sales going back almost to the fuzzy pre-ban era of the National Green Tribunal.

The traditional gold sales could not touch previous years' highs as the metal was priced at around Rs 78,430, almost 30 per cent higher than last year. "Silver sales rose 33 per cent, while gold volume fell by 15 per cent," according to the Indian Bullion and Jewellers Association. The market is stated to be as dizzy as it was in 2015 or 2019, marked by slowdown. In its report titled "43rd Half Yearly Report on Management of Foreign Exchange



GOLD HAS RISEN TO MULTIPLE ALL-TIME HIGHS THIS YEAR. SIZABLE CENTRAL BANK PURCHASES OF GOLD BARS HAVE RESET THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RATE AND PRICE LEVELS SINCE 2022

Reserves: April - September 2024," the RBI stated that it had a total of 854.73 metric tonnes of gold in both domestic and foreign repository facilities.

The RBI has been buying gold to diversify its forex reserves and hedge against external risks. In 2024, the RBI added 54.7 tons of gold to its reserves, the highest acquisition in three years. After the Ukraine war, \$ 300 billion worth of Russian currency and other assets, kept as reserves in the US dollar, Euro and sterling pound, were seized by the US and the G7 countries. The assets are being used to bolster funding arms and other supplies to Ukraine. India has since acted cautiously even in deals with the purchase of Russian crude. The recent spat with Canada and the US-Israel escalation of the war to Lebanon and Iran has added to the caution.

This forced the repatriation of gold by RBI, which has been purchasing gold and stocking it abroad for payments in terms of gold instead of dollars. The RBI saves huge amounts in terms of vault rents as well. Robust demand in the world's second-biggest gold consumer could further push up global prices, which hit record highs last week. Rising demand for imports of gold could also widen India's trade deficit and put pressure on the rupee. Yes, India's gold purchases have contributed to rising global gold prices.

India's gold demand in 2024 is likely to fall to its lowest in four years as a rally in prices to a record high is seen denting purchases during the peak festival season, the World Gold Council

(WGC) said on Wednesday. Gold demand in the world's second-biggest consumer of the precious metal could stand around 700 and 750 metric tonnes in 2024, the lowest since 2020 and down from last year's 761 tonnes, according to Sachin Jain, CEO of WGC's Indian operations. This Dhanteras, gold sales dipped in India to 35 tonnes, down from last year's 42 tons.

Gold has risen to multiple all-time highs this year. Sizable central bank purchases of gold bars have reset the relationship between rate and price levels since 2022. Goldman Sachs Research estimates that 100 tonnes of physical demand lifts gold prices by at least 2.4 per cent. Credit card usage also hit new highs, with card spending reaching Rs 80,000 crore in September, a 57 per cent increase from last year. The retail mom-and-pop shops have problems as the footfall was subdued due to many turning to online shopping. Both Amazon and Flipkart reported a strong Diwali season, with Flipkart leading with a 64 per cent market share during the initial October sales.

Sales from online platforms saw year-on-year growth of 23 per cent, with goods worth Rs 32,000 crore sold. More are BNPL or Buy Now Pay Later customers, or paying in instalments helped by credit cards, indicating a cash shortage among the people.

This trend was especially pronounced among new shoppers from tier 2 and tier 3 cities. Car sales have suffered during most of the year before just margin-

ally picking up during the Dussehra and Diwali festive seasons. Maruti profits lowered to Rs 3102 crore in September, by 18 per cent, as against Rs 3762 crore a year ago.

Maruti CEO RC Bhargava says "Affordability is a concern". The demand for cars below Rs 10 lakh is in demand. Small cars inventory levels hit a "historic high" of 80-85 days, leaving dealers with a stock of 790,000 vehicles worth 800 billion rupees, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations says.

Despite high inflation, Indian consumers opened their wallets wide this Diwali season, pushing festival-related spending to about Rs 1.25 lakh crore, claimed Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) general secretary Pravin Khandelwal. Delhi alone saw spending of Rs 25,000 crore, including FMCG goods, consumer durables and home décor earthen lamps and electronic goods, traditional and modern products, he says. Mobile phones in the below Rs 20,000 range had brisk sales. Mobile phones were among the hottest sellers this season, with a 12-15 per cent rise in the average selling price, driven partly by a shortage in device availability. This scarcity led to consumers grabbing whatever stock was available, increasing the average price of phones sold. Rising gold and commodity prices, a fall in rupee value, crunch in income and manufacturing are concerns amid a global unstable war-like situation.

(The author is a senior journalist; views are personal)

India and Israel: A Bond forged in intelligence and shared threats

From R&AW's inception in 1968 to today's advanced defence collaborations, the Indo-Israeli alliance has quietly strengthened in the face of shared security challenges

It was three years after the Indo-Pakistan war. The year was 1968. India's external intelligence agency, The Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) was formed and its director was firmly advised by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, to develop deep ties with Mossad; Israel's formidable intelligence agency. The two have been working closely together to eliminate potential threats and impending security challenges. The interests of both agencies aligned; obliterating the similar nature of terror emanating from their borders. As Israel confronts Iran's proxies in the region, Indian security forces battle Pakistan's proxies, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-



ISHAAN SAXENA

Taiba, daily in the restive state of Jammu and Kashmir; which also happens to be one of the world's most heavily militarised zones. Pakistan, a nuclear-armed country, also happens to be the epicentre of global terrorism. Fast-forward to the year 1999 when India was engaged in the Kargil conflict with Pakistan. It was then that Israel provid-

ed India with drones to monitor the treacherous Himalayan terrain. Now, as Israel is entangled in its battles, India's Adani group has delivered several Hermes 900 drones which are also capable of aerial bombardment. They have been deployed in Gaza. This, of course, is beyond the ambit of the Indian Government's control since it's a joint venture between Adani Defence and Aerospace and Israel's Elbit systems. Besides, allegedly India sent two shiploads of arms to Israel early this year.

Over the past few years, Mossad has conducted a series of assassinations. These have included top Iranian nuclear physicists, professors and the head of

Iran's nuclear programme. Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed that Israel will not tolerate a nuclear Iran. So, in the foreseeable future, it is very likely that Israel will strike Iran's nuclear facilities because Iran is going to relentlessly pursue the nuclear path. This is irrefutable.

In recent times, the agency in collaboration with the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) has assassinated the top leadership of Hamas and Hezbollah; Ismael Haniyeh-the Hamas political leader in Tehran, Hassan Nasrallah-the Hezbollah leader and Yahya Sinwar who was the chief architect of the 7th October 2023 attacks on Israel. The very recent precision



strikes in and around Tehran would have sent shockwaves in the power corridors of Iran. The reverberations of these calculated strikes would have sent Iran's security cabinet scrambling to fathom how Israel could pursue such an accurate military operation. One will have to wait and watch Iran's reaction. Will it retaliate and escalate the exacerbated situation in the West Asia or

will it choose to mitigate the situation and let its proxies corner Israel?

But this outcome was almost certain. Israel had to engage in a limited military response. But what captured the imagination of the world was how Hezbollah paggers and walkie-talkies exploded simultaneously. Contentious debates regarding such a deadly operation were circulating to the centre stage. The vociferous debates focus on the morality and ethics of such an unprecedented operation.

After all, it does set a precedent for future attacks anywhere in the world. But as Israel's Ambassador to New Delhi put it; you have to surprise your enemy in a manner that does not involve the

conventional use of force. They say necessity is the mother of all inventions. Israel's campaign epitomises it perfectly.

They say that offence is not the best form of defence but in Israel's case, this chain of thought is unconvincing. The state exists in a precarious security zone. Israel may find itself alienated from the rest of the world as the valiant men and women of the IDF battle on various fronts, but the war and Israel's meticulous planning must continue.

Iran's proxies must be annihilated. Its relentless campaign to eliminate groups like Hamas and Hezbollah must not end anytime soon. Political parties or not, these actors harbour a twisted,

malicious and hostile ideology. There is no space for such entities to exist in a modern world. Israel must never forget that the long-lasting ties between the two nations will continue and India's explicit support will not fade anytime soon. The Indo-Israeli ties will be a durable bond in the years to come. This relationship which hinges on mutual respect and specific interests will bloom and crystallise in the years to come. Golda Meir, the fourth Prime Minister of Israel, articulated it quite clearly; 'peace will only usher in when Arabs love their children more than they despise us.'

(The writer is a socio-economic commentator; views expressed are personal)

Maratha quota crusader Jarange-Patil withdraws from poll fray

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After indulging in pro-reservation posturing for several months, Maratha reservation crusader Manoj Jarange-Patil on Monday withdrew from the fray of the State Assembly polls. After he withdrew organisation Shivba Sangathanana from the poll fray, Jarange-Patil repeatedly clarified that he was not doing a U-turn nor had he taken the decision under any pressure. Talking to media persons his village Antarwali Sarati in the Jalna district in Marathwada region, Jarange-

Patil said: "We held meeting till 0330 hrs in the morning. Ultimately we decided not to contest the Assembly polls...People may use their own discretion --whom to defeat, whom to elect. But, we want the people to remember those who had worked against our cause," Jarange-Patil Jarange-Patil said that his campaign demanding reservations for Maratha community would continue. On Sunday, Jarange-Patil shortlisted eight seats for contesting and half a dozen seats for attempting defeat of sitting MLAs, but in 24 hours changed the decision. Jarange-Patil said that it was



impossible to win elections depending on the votes of one community. "However, without the help of Maratha community no one can win elections...I told the Maratha community that this is not our family business, we might be misled," he said Jarange-Patil also admitted that his other allies, comprising Muslims and Dalit communities did not submit their lists of candidates as another reason for his unexpected retreat.

Jarange-Patil said that he would not extend support to any Independent candidate or political parties, nor would direct the Maratha commu-

nity to defeat candidates. "I do not want to direct the Maratha community to defeat any candidates. The community has to take a decision in this regard," he said. Jarange-Patil's decision to withdraw from the election is expected to benefit the MVA comprising Congress, Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) and Uddhav Thackeray-headed Shiv Sena (UBT) as it would prevent the division of anti-BJP votes.

It may be recalled that the BJP-led ND had suffered badly due to lack of adequate support from the Marathas in the recent Lok Sabha polls, in which the Opposition put up

an impressive performance in the state.

During the recent weeks, Jarange-Patil was approached for support by Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi founder Prakash Ambedkar and Parivartan Mahashakti - which includes Swaraj founder Yuvraj Sambhaji Rajee Chhatrapati, a descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Bacchu Kadu, the founder of Prahar Janshakti and Raju Shetti of Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana. However, Jarange-Patil did not lend his organisation's support.

In Jharkhand, JMM, Congress, RJD have crossed all limits says PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RANCHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday launched a scathing attack on the JMM-led coalition in Jharkhand, labeling it a "Ghuspathiya Bandhan" (infiltrators' alliance) and "Mafia Ka Ghulam" (mafia's slave) for allegedly supporting Bangladeshi infiltrators. Scams by coalition leaders in Jharkhand have become an industry and corruption has destroyed the state like termites, the Prime Minister said. "Appeasement politics has reached its pinnacle in Jharkhand where the JMM-led coalition is busy supporting Bangladeshi infiltrators. If this continues, the state's tribal population will shrink. This is a threat to tribal society and the country. This coalition has become a 'Gushpathiya Bandhan' and a 'Mafia Ka Ghulam', Modi said at a rally in Jharkhand's Garhwa. This was Modi's first visit to Jharkhand following the



announcement of assembly elections scheduled on November 13 and November 20 with counting of votes on November 23. It was also any prime minister's maiden visit to Garhwa. "Termites of corruption make the country hollow. In Jharkhand, the JMM, Congress and RJD have crossed all limits as far as corruption is concerned. This has impacted the poor, dalits, tribals and the backward communities. Jharkhand CM, MLAs and MPs of JMM-led coalition are neck-deep in corruption," the PM said, asserting that only the BJP can

provide Suidha, 'Suraksha', 'Sthirta' and 'Samridhhi', which is 'Modi's guarantee'. Modi accused the JMM, Congress, and RJD of using Bangladeshi infiltrators for "vote bank politics," enabling their settlement in Jharkhand, which he deemed a threat to the state's social structure. He emphasised the urgency of the situation, saying, "It is Roti, Beti, Maati Pukar to make BJP-NDA Sarkar in Jharkhand." "If Saraswati Vandana is prevented in schools, you can understand the level of threat," he said and added that curfews

during festivals like Durga Puja have become common. The Prime Minister said Jharkhand has become a hub for sand smuggling and claimed that "rumour-mongering has turned into an industry in the state, with 'one family active in Delhi and another in Jharkhand.'" He criticised the Congress for spreading falsehoods since Independence, alleging that it has devastated states like Himachal, Telangana, and Karnataka. Modi said AICC chief Mallikarjun Kharge admitted that the party makes false guarantees. "I am surprised how Kharge Ji spoke the truth that Congress's irrelevant announcements will bankrupt states," Modi remarked, asserting that Congress and its partners can never be relied upon. He also pointed out that the JMM-led coalition spread rumours discouraging farmers from accepting funds under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, leading them to believe the money would be taken away.

However, he added that the implementation of the scheme has instilled confidence among the farmers. He criticised the JMM-led coalition for misappropriating thousands of crores allocated by the Centre for various schemes, asserting that it is time for a "double engine government" in Jharkhand to ensure development over the next 25 years. "The Centre is making all efforts to boost infrastructure in Jharkhand, while the JMM-led coalition is trying to hinder progress," he said, citing the stalled North Koel Reservoir project as a key example. The foundation of the project on North Koel river flowing through Palamu and Garhwa districts was originally laid in 1972 but failed to take off. The Prime Minister said highways in Jharkhand were being widened while railways infrastructure was being augmented and 12 Vande Bharat Express trains were operational here.

Patna illuminates landmarks in blue for Chhath festival

PTI ■ PATNA

The historic Darbhanga House, the newly-built complex of the district collectorate and 'Sabhyata Dwar' are among the several public buildings located along the banks of Ganga in Patna which have been illuminated in blue hue ahead of the Chhath festival. The night-time illumination of these structures, some of which face popular old ghats in the city such as the Collectorate Ghat and Kali Ghat, have been done as part of a 'Go Blue' campaign of the Patna district administration. "Recently, we issued a public appeal to individuals and private entities who have properties located along the ghats of Ganga, to also illuminate those buildings with blue-colour lights, the theme for illumination during the Bihar Diwas celebrations here every year, to mark Chhath festivities," a senior official told PTI.



over 120-year-old Darbhanga House, a palace built by the erstwhile Darbhanga Raj estate that currently houses the PG department of the Patna University, stood out on the city skyline. The palatial building, known for its iconic architecture and aesthetic grandeur, faces the Kali Ghat along the river, which draws huge number of devotees during the Chhath celebrations. The building also houses an old Kali temple. Traditionally, people gather along the banks of Ganga to observe this ancient festival, but due to impact of rapid urbanisation on the river and other constraints, many now prefer to either do rituals in nearby water bodies or on rooftops using makeshift arrangements. The Collectorate Ghat is one such example where the river

water has receded, but only to come back during the monsoon season. The new high-rise complex which is expected to be inaugurated soon after the Chhath Puja, has been decorated with blue lights and commuters using the Ganga Drive built along the riverfront can catch a glimpse of the illumination. A huge neon sign 'Samharanaley Patna' mounted on its rooftop, glows in vibrant red at night, adding to its aura. "This illumination of the new Collectorate complex began around Diwali," the official said. The old Collectorate was a cluster of heritage buildings from Dutch era and British period, which were demolished in the second half of 2022 to make way for the new complex, despite protests from several quarters.

Karnataka CM accuses BJP of opposing welfare schemes

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday alleged that the BJP was opposed to guarantee schemes of the Congress government as they give economic and social strength to all sections of the society. He said BJP wants the poor and weaker sections to remain as they are so that it can "misuse" them. "BJP is opposed to guarantee schemes, it is because the government is economically and socially giving to all sections of the

society through guarantee schemes. We want to empower people through social justice to ensure that backward communities come to the mainstream," Siddaramaiah said. Speaking to media, the CM said: "BJP doesn't want equality, they want inequality and the poor to remain as they are. So we call them anti-poor. BJP misuses poor and people who don't have strength in the society. When you get strength, how can they misuse you? So BJP doesn't want people to get strength economically and

socially." The CM's assertion over his government's schemes comes amid a spat between Congress and BJP leaders, both at state and national level, following Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Wednesday indicating about revisiting one of the schemes -- 'Shakti' -- which provides free bus travel for all women domiciled in the state. Siddaramaiah said the Congress government is waging a fight to get justice from the Centre. Noting that the 16th finance commission that has

been constituted had recently visited Karnataka, he said, "We (Karnataka) faced injustice from the 15th finance commission. We (state) are giving more than Rs 4.50 lakh crore as tax per year, what we get back is Rs 55,000 crore, 65,000 crore. Is that right?" No BJP leader is speaking against injustice happening to Karnataka, he claimed. "Has Pralhad Joshi (union minister), Basavaraj Bommai and Jagadish Shettar (both MPs and former CM) ever spoken on injustice happening to Karnataka? What

should we say, if talking about injustice happening to Karnataka is called political?" He, however, noted that despite injustice to Karnataka by the 15th finance commission, it had recommended special grants of Rs 5,495 crore, Rs 3,000 crore each for peripheral ring road and for development of lakes, totaling Rs 11,495 crore. "Did the central government give it? Did Joshi (Pralhad Joshi) ask about it? Let him say if the Centre has given, if given I will quit politics, if not will Joshi quit?" the Chief Minister said.

Jammu and Kashmir Assembly breaks...

From page 1

Omar, however, admitted that the majority of people in J&K have not endorsed the changes made in 2019 and thereafter.

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha in his address to the Assembly said that he fully endorsed the Chief Minister's demand for restoration of statehood to J&K. "It gives me great pleasure to welcome all the newly elected members of the legislative assembly to the inaugural session of the assembly. We gather here after the successful and peaceful conduct of the first democratic elections in over a decade," he said. The LG said the elections, the first since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 and the reorganisation of J-K into a Union Territory, are "a critical milestone" in restoring democratic

governance after a period of "political uncertainty". Sinha said he looks forward to working together with all to strengthen the democratic institutions and provide the people with the governance and the future they deserve. The LG, however, said the aspiration for the return to Statehood in J and K remains strong. He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi on several occasions has already expressed his commitment to restoring statehood, which has been a source of rekindled hope and reassurance for the people. Referring to the resolution passed by the J and K's Council of Ministers calling for the immediate restoration of statehood, Sinha said the resolution reflects the collective will of the elected representatives, echoing the aspirations of the people for

the reinstatement of full democratic governance. "My Government will make all efforts for restoration of full statehood and constitutional guarantees available to the state. It would be a befitting reciprocation of the faith reposed by the people of J-K in our democratic institutions," he said. "In the meantime, I urge all stakeholders to work together as one team and extend full support to my government in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the people," he added. Asserting that the Government will make efforts for a dignified return of Kashmiri Pandits, Sinha said a safe and secure environment will be created for their return to the valley. He also announced that all the vacancies in the government sector will be identified and filled up on a fast-track basis.

Pataakha ban explodes, SC...

From page 1

"People are bringing firecrackers from other States. There has to be a public campaign before Diwali, lack of public understanding," the Bench remarked. The case before the Court also concerns pollution due to stubble burning in neighbouring States such as Punjab, which is said to be a major factor to air pollution in Delhi. The Supreme Court had earlier pulled up the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) for

failing to take adequate steps to tackle such pollution. It had even summoned the Chief Secretaries of Punjab and Haryana after noting that not a single prosecution had taken place against stubble burning incidents. In October, the Court had taken a prima facie view that the Union government was not taking any penal action to curb stubble burning. It had directed the Central Government to amend the law so as to increase the fines levied on farmers who indulge in the same.

EC reschedules 14 Assembly bypolls

From page 1

In Kerala, the byelection to Palakkad assembly seat has been rescheduled while that for Chelakkara Assembly and Wayanad Lok Sabha seats will be held as scheduled earlier on November 13. According to the Congress, a significant portion of the electorate in the Palakkad assembly seat in Kerala will celebrate the festival of Kalpathi Rastholsavam from

November 13 to 15. In Punjab, the 555th Prakash Parv of Sri Guru Nanak Dev will be celebrated on November 15 and an 'akhand path' will be organised from November 13 onwards. The four Punjab assembly seats where bypolls are being held are Dera Baba Nanak, Chabbewal, Gidderbaha and Barnala. The Bharatiya Janata Party, Bahujan Samaj Party and the Rashtriya Lok Dal had said

that in Uttar Pradesh, people travel for three to four days ahead of Kartik Purnima, which will be celebrated on November 15. Assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh where bypolls are due include Meerapur, Kundarki, Ghaziabad, Khair, Karhal, Sishamau, Phulpur, Katehari, Majhawan. The EC had fixed November 13 as the date for bypolls in 48 Assembly constituencies and two Lok Sabha seats.

Deeply concerned about safety of Indians in Canada: MEA

From page 1

Taking to social media, Trudeau thanked the local authorities for the swift response to protect the community and probe this incident. "The acts of violence at the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton today are unacceptable. Every Canadian has the right to practise their faith freely and safely. Thank you to the Peel Regional Police for swiftly responding to protect the community and investigate this incident," Trudeau said in a post on Monday. Meanwhile, the High Commission of India in Ottawa also issued a strong statement on Monday condemning the recent attack on Brampton's Hindu Sabha temple by "anti-India" elements. This incident disrupted a

consular event co-organised by the Hindu Sabha Mandir and the Indian consulate. In its statement, the High Commission remarked, "We have seen violent disruption today (November 3), orchestrated by anti-India elements outside the consular camp co-organised with the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton, near Toronto." Peel Regional Police said in a social media post on Sunday afternoon that they were aware of the protest taking place at the Hindu Sabha Mandir, and had increased its presence at the temple to maintain public order and safety. "We respect the right to protest in a peaceful and safe manner but will not tolerate violence and criminal acts," Chief Nishan Duraipappah posted on social media on Sunday after the videos began circulating. "Those that do participate in this activity will be pursued,

arrested and charged." Peel police told CBC Toronto no arrests were made at the temple Sunday. Police did not provide further details about the social media videos, what happened or whether any complaints were filed. Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown condemned the violence on social media on Sunday afternoon, saying those responsible should be punished to the greatest extent of the law. "I am disappointed to hear about acts of violence outside of the Hindu Sabha," he said. "Religious freedom is a foundational value in Canada. Everyone should feel safe in their place of worship." The recent attack on the Hindu Sabha temple in Brampton witnessed widespread condemnation by Canadian politicians, including opposition leader Pierre Poilievre.

"Completely unacceptable to see violence targeting worshippers at the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton today. All Canadians should be free to practise their faith in peace. Conservatives condemn this violence unequivocally. I will unite our people and end the chaos," Poilievre said in a social media post. Premier Doug Ford praised police for their "quick response," adding that the incident is "completely unacceptable and must be condemned. No one should feel unsafe at their place of worship," he said in a post. The Indian High Commission remarked, "We have seen violent disruption today (November 3), orchestrated by anti-India elements outside the consular camp co-organised with the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton, near Toronto."

The statement further added, "We also remain very concerned for the safety of applicants, including Indian nationals, on whose demand such events are organised in the first place. Despite these efforts by anti-India elements, our Consulate was able to issue more than 1000 life certificates to the Indian and Canadian applicants..." The relations between India and Canada came under severe strain following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in Khalistan extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar's killing. New Delhi rejected Trudeau's charges as "absurd". India has been maintaining that the main issue between the two countries is that of Canada giving space to pro-Khalistan elements operating from Canadian soil with impunity.

Who created the 'Mallu Hindu Officers'...

From page 1

"Generally, there are two easy methods. We can hack the phone details through WhatsApp web and also when we install certain applications. If we click on unwanted links, we are handing over the permission to make use of our phone to the person who has uploaded the application. Though the

new generation officers are cautious about the dangers involved in installing some strange applications, the older generation people are not aware of the trap," Gireeshan said. He is one of the top contributors of the Hackathon of Kerala Police Cyberdome, and is a defence technologist working as research head of Edgeforce Solutions, a Hyderabad-based

company. This is not the first time WA groups based on communal lines hog the limelight in Kerala. There was 'Green Light', a WA group meant for Muslim community officers in Kerala Police which allegedly leaked information and intelligence data to leaders of extremist organisations operating from the state.

Sensex tanks, investors...

From page 1

Friday, according to exchange data. Foreign investors pulled out a massive Rs 94,000 crore (around USD 11.2 billion) from the Indian stock market in October, making it the worst-ever month in terms of outflows, triggered by the elevated valuation of domestic equities and attractive valuations of Chinese stocks. In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended higher. European markets were trading higher. The United States markets ended in positive territory on

Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 3 per cent to USD 75.29 a barrel. Leading stock exchanges BSE and NSE conducted a one-hour special \Muhurat Trading\ session on the occasion of Diwali on November 1, marking the start of the new Samvat 2081. The BSE benchmark climbed 335.06 points or 0.42 per cent to settle at 79,724.12 in the special Muhurat trading session on Friday. The Nifty advanced 99 points or 0.41 per cent to 24,304.35.

Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 3 per cent to USD 75.29 a barrel. Leading stock exchanges BSE and NSE conducted a one-hour special \Muhurat Trading\ session on the occasion of Diwali on November 1, marking the start of the new Samvat 2081. The BSE benchmark climbed 335.06 points or 0.42 per cent to settle at 79,724.12 in the special Muhurat trading session on Friday. The Nifty advanced 99 points or 0.41 per cent to 24,304.35.

Should not have left WH after 2020 poll: Trump

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US will on Tuesday vote to elect its 47th President in a fierce race between Republican nominee Donald Trump and Democratic leader Kamala Harris that is set to go down in history as one of the tightest fights for the White House in decades.

As the countdown for election day began, Former President Trump raked up the bitter memories of the 2020 election as said he "shouldn't have left" the White House, triggering apprehensions that he was preparing the ground to not accept the outcome of the November 5 voting if he loses the contest.

"I shouldn't have left. I mean, honestly, because...we did so well," the former President said at a rally in Lititz, Pennsylvania.

Following the election that brought Joe Biden to power, Trump alleged fraud in the voting process and challenged the outcome in courts which rejected his claims.

In her closing remarks in the key battleground state of Michigan, Harris said she would be a president for all Americans and spoke about the need to turn the page on "hate and division" while Trump continued his tirade against his Democratic rival.

"It is going to be one of the most consequential elections of our lifetime and we have momentum on our side, can you feel it," Vice President Harris said in her rally in Michigan.

Harris also touched upon the war in Gaza in comments seen as an attempt to reach out to the Arab American voters in the state.

"This year has been difficult, given the scale of death and destruction in Gaza and given the civilian casualties and displacement in Lebanon," she said, adding "It is devastating."

More than 75 million Americans have already cast their votes as of Sunday, according to the University of Florida's Election Lab which tracks early and mail-in voting across the US.

In the overall campaign, Harris has been projecting the election as the one to protect the country's fundamental freedoms, safeguard constitutional values and ensure women's rights, while Trump has been promising to rebuild the economy and rid the US of illegal immigrants.

In some disappointment for Trump, a new poll in Iowa said Harris is leading with 47 per cent as against Trump's 44 per cent which signalled a positive momentum for the Vice President.

Trump has swiftly rejected the poll calling it skewed to favour the Democratic Party.

In his address in Lititz, Trump also questioned the immigration policy of the Biden-Harris administration and highlighted how the country's borders were safe till he was at the White House.

At the rally, Trump, who faced two assassination attempts, suggested that he would be OK if a gunman, targeting him, takes shot at ped-

dlers of 'fake news'.

"I have this piece of glass here. But all we have really over here is the fake news, right? And to get me, somebody would have to shoot through the fake news," Trump said.

"And I don't mind that so much. I don't mind," he said.

Trump also targeted Harris and accused the Democratic Party of being a "corrupt machine".

"It's all corrupt. She is corrupt. She is a corrupt person. I am running against a totally corrupt person," he alleged.



"I am really not running against her. I am running against a corrupt machine called the Democrat Party."

Pennsylvania has emerged as the most crucial of the seven battleground states having 19 electoral college votes followed by 16 each in North Carolina and Georgia, 15 in Michigan and 11 in Arizona. In other battleground states, Wisconsin has 10 and Nevada has six.

In the rally in Pennsylvania, Trump promised to usher in "a new golden age" in the US if he becomes the president and that he will "fix" the misdeeds of the Biden-Harris administration.

Trump is also holding rallies in North Carolina and Georgia while Harris is touring Michigan.

In her address at an event in Detroit, Harris said it is incumbent on the American people to decide the future course the United States takes, suggesting that Trump would be detrimental to the country.

Election Day offers voters the chance to reject "chaos, fear and hate", she said.

"In two days, we have the power to decide the fate of our nation for generations to come," she said.

"I see a nation determined to turn the page on hate and division and chart a new way forward. As I travel, I see Americans from so-called red states and so-called blue states who are ready to bend the arc of history toward justice," Harris added.

The Democratic Party leader also invoked God and said his plan was to "heal us and bring us together as one nation," but that it was not enough, adding that "we must act" to realise the plan.

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The electoral battle between Vice President Kamala Harris and former president Donald Trump appears to have gone to the wire, according to latest opinion polls.

Harris, 60, is the nominee of the Democratic Party and Trump, 78, is the Republican nominee. Their party members and support bases are united with their respective parties, and independent voters might decide who would be the next occupant of the White House.

To win the elections, a candidates needs 270 of the electoral college votes. Latest opinion polls indicate that the

elections will be decided by the results in seven battleground states of Arizona, Nevada, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Georgia.

Of these, Michigan and Pennsylvania play key role to them reaching the 270-mark.

The presidential race appears to be hurtling toward a photo finish, with the final set of polls by The New York Times and Siena College finding Harris gaining new strength in North Carolina and Georgia even as Trump erases her lead in Pennsylvania and maintains his advantage in Arizona, the daily reported Sunday.

According to The New York Times, Harris is now narrowly ahead in Nevada, North Carolina and Wisconsin, the polls show, while Trump leads in Arizona.

"The polls show them locked in close races in Michigan, Georgia and Pennsylvania. But the results in all seven states are within the margin of sampling error, meaning neither candidate has a definitive lead in any of them," the daily reported. The Real Clear Politics, which tracks all the major national and battleground polls, said it's a tie between Trump and Harris. In the national polls, Trump leads by 0.1 percentage points, and in battleground states the former

president has an edge of 0.9 percentage points. In the battleground states, as per Real Clear Politics, Trump has a lead, though within the margin of error, in Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Arizona; while Harris has an edge in Michigan and Wisconsin.

"The presidential race is tight, and neither candidate has a clear lead," The Hill said.

In its final poll, the NBC News said the poll shows Harris getting support from 49 per cent of registered voters in a head-to-head matchup, while Trump gets an identical 49 per cent. "Just two percent of voters say they're unsure about the choice," the news channel said.

Donald Trump calls for mandatory voter ID

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Republican presidential candidate Rand former president Donald Trump on Sunday expressed frustration over the current voting pattern as he urged his fellow voters to vote for him in this final battle and called for a mandatory voter ID.

The Democrats are opposing voter ID so that they can cheat, he alleged.

"I don't know why the hell we can't have a voter ID. The real Democrats want to have things like voter ID. They know it's crooked. There's only one reason you don't want a voter ID. There's only one reason, and that's to cheat. There is no other reason. There's no other reason. And they do cheat," Trump told his supporters at a rally in Pennsylvania, a battleground state.

He said it's "damn shame" that nobody seems to talk about it. "I'm the only one that talks about it because everyone's afraid to damn talk about it. Then they accuse you of being a conspiracy-theorist... and they want to lock you up."

"They want to put you in jail. The ones that should be locked up are the ones that cheat on these horrible elections that we go through in our country," Trump said.

He also called for returning to the ballot paper system.

"You ought to damn well go to paper ballots. You ought to go to voter ID. You ought to have the election over by 9 o'clock. I'm hearing now they're going to take weeks. Can you imagine? They spend all this money, all this money on machines, and they're going to say, we

may take an extra 12 days to determine. What do you think happens during that 12 days? What do you think happens? These elections have to be, they have to be decided by 9 o'clock, 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock on Tuesday night. Bunch of crooked people. These are crooked people," he said.

"In California, they just signed a bill that if you're an official or anybody, you're not even allowed to ask anybody for their voter ID. If you do, you've created a criminal act or something, I mean, they only do that because they want to cheat. What the hell are they doing? The whole world is laughing at us," Trump said.

"They're laughing at us. If nothing comes out of this whole thing, it's going to teach you damn well better get a different system. These bloodsuckers up there, they do nothing about it. What a shame. That's why the world laughs at us," he said.

"At 9 o'clock in the evening, they called the winner. They called the loser. Everyone home. Everybody was fine. They had voter ID. They had paper ballots. They had one-day election. At 9 o'clock, it was over. They called the winner. They called the loser... they say, we'll wait till the next time. We got to get smart as a country. This is just one thing. It's all corrupt," Trump said.

He also took on his Democratic rival Kamala Harris.

"She is corrupt. She's a corrupt person. I'm running against a totally corrupt person. I'm really not running against her. I'm running against a corrupt machine called the Democratic Party. It's totally a corrupt party," he said.

PTI ■ NEW YORK

More than 200 languages are spoken in New York, according to the Department of City Planning, backing the claim of it being the melting pot of America. However, the ballot papers in the US presidential elections will have only four other languages apart from English.

And guess what? Bengali represents the Indian languages in this list.

The US will on Tuesday vote to elect its 47th President.

"We are required to service four other languages besides English. It is Chinese, Spanish, Korean and Bengali as the Asian languages," says Micheal J Ryan, Executive Director, Board of Elections, NYC.

Subhshesh, who works as a sales agent in a store in Times Square, has Bengali roots. He is happy that his father living in the Queens area will get linguistic assistance when he goes to cast his vote.

"People like me know English but there are many in our community who are comfortable in the native language. This helps them at the polling station. I am sure my father will like the idea of seeing a Bengali language ballot paper," says Subhshesh. The inclusion of Bengali on ballot papers is not just a courtesy but a legal requirement.

By law, New York City is obligated to provide voting materials in Bengali at certain poll sites. This mandate extends beyond just ballot papers to include other essential voting materials, ensuring comprehensive language support for Bengali-speaking voters.

Ryan explains the reason why Bengali is among the list of languages the Board of Elections serves.

"There was a lawsuit about language access and as you know the country of India has a lot of different languages within it. The settlement of that lawsuit required within a certain population density to have an Asian Indian language. Then through some negotiations, they settled on Bengali. I understand the limitations of Bengali being the choice but it came out of a lawsuit."

The first time the South Asian community in the Queens locality of New York found ballots translated into Bengali was in 2013.

The addition of Bengali-language ballots came nearly two years after the federal government ordered the city to provide language assistance to South Asian minorities under a provision of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

The Bengali-speaking population includes people coming from Asian countries like India and Bangladesh. While it does not represent the whole gamut of languages spoken in the region, the inclusion of this language is expected to have a significant impact on voter participation within the Bengali-speaking community.

Dr Avinash Gupta, President, of the Federation of Indian Association says it helps the Indian community.

"It will help the Indian population to go out and vote. That is how we can get our voices heard. We are a sizable population. It is heartening to see how Indians go out and vote and even contest elections," says Dr Avinash Gupta.

Philippine military drills to seize island in South China Sea

AP ■ MANILA

The Philippine military opened two weeks of combat drills on Monday that would include seizing an island in the disputed South China Sea and likely be frowned upon by China.

More than 3,000 Filipino army, navy and air force personnel will take part in the maneuvers, which Philippine military officials said were not directed against any country.

China has rapidly expanded its military and has become increasingly assertive in pursuing territorial claims in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety. The tensions have led to more

frequent confrontations, primarily with the Philippines and Vietnam, though the long-time territorial disputes also involve Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Taiwan.

Last month, Indonesia said its patrol ships drove away a Chinese coast guard ship that disrupted a survey being undertaken by a state-owned energy company in a part of the South China Sea disputed by both countries.

"Our mission today is very clear, to prepare ourselves comprehensively to respond to any external threats that might challenge our sovereignty," Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. said in the opening

ceremony of the exercises. The maneuvers will include live-fire drills using artillery and assault rifles and beach landing drills. In the South China Sea, Filipino forces would simulate taking control of an island, Philippine army Col. Michael Logico told reporters without elaborating. Asked how China may react, Logico said he expected Chinese forces to undertake surveillance from a distance but added they would not likely make any hostile move.

"They have a front seat to the exercise. They'll watch and we don't mind," Logico said.

China has opposed such combat drills in the South China Sea, particularly if American

Iranian General dies in mishap

AP ■ TEHRAN

An Iranian Revolutionary Guard commander and his pilot were killed on Monday in an autogiro accident during an operation near the Pakistani border, state TV reported.

The report said that Gen. Hamid Mazandarani died during a military operation in the Sirkan border area, located in Sistan and Baluchistan province.

The semi-official Tasnim news agency said that the crash occurred during a drill. An autogiro, resembling a helicopter in rotor design but simpler and smaller, is typically used in Iran for pilot training and border monitoring. It is capable of carrying two people.

Israel ends agreement with UN agency providing aid in Gaza

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel said on Monday it had terminated the agreement facilitating the work of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, the main aid provider in Gaza, in what appeared to be a step to implement legislation passed last month that would sever ties with the agency and prevent it from operating in Israel.

Israel says the agency, known as UNRWA, has been infiltrated by Hamas. UNRWA denies the allegations and says it takes measures to ensure its neutrality.

On Sunday, Israel said its troops had carried out a

ground raid into Syria to seize a Syrian it accuses of working with Iran. It was the first time in the current war that Israel announced its troops operated in Syrian territory.

Despite growing pressure from the United States and others in the international community for a cease-fire in Gaza and Lebanon, intensified Israeli strikes against the Hezbollah militant group are expanding beyond Lebanon's border areas. Israel is also fighting a seemingly endless war against Hamas in northern Gaza.

Since the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah erupted last year, at least 2,900 people have been killed and 13,150 wounded in Lebanon, the Health Ministry reports, not including Friday's toll. Health authorities say that a quarter of those killed were women and children.

More than a year of Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza has killed more than 43,000 people, Palestinian health officials say. They do not distinguish between civilians and combatants, but say more than half of those killed were women and children. The war began after Palestinian militants stormed into Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducting 250 others.

Ukraine girds for impact of US election on war

AP ■ KYIV

Germany's top diplomat arrived on Monday in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv on an unannounced visit, in what appeared to be a show of European support for Ukraine on the eve of a US presidential election that could bring far-reaching changes in Washington's policy toward Russia's all-out invasion of its neighbour.

Germany is Ukraine's second biggest weapons supplier after the US, and Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock vowed that Berlin's backing would remain steadfast.

"Together with many partners around the world, Germany stands firmly by Ukraine's side," she said, German news agency dpa reported. "We will support the Ukrainians for as long as they need us so that they can continue on their path to a just peace."

The war is at a critical moment for Ukraine, with the Russian army making creeping gains on the battlefield and another hard winter ahead after Russia relentlessly battered the Ukrainian power grid.

With his army under severe Russian pressure in the eastern Donetsk region, Ukraine

Volcanic eruption burns houses in Indonesia; at least 10 dead

AP ■ MAUMERE (INDONESIA)

Indonesia's National Disaster Management Agency said on Monday that at least 10 people have died as a series of volcanic eruptions widens on the remote island of Flores.

The eruption at Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki around midnight spewed thick brownish ash as high as 2,000 metres (6,500 feet) into the air and hot ashes hit several villages, burning down houses including a convent of Catholic nuns, said Firman Yosef, an official at the Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki monitoring post.

He said volcanic material was thrown up to 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) from its crater, blanketing nearby villages and towns with tons of volcanic debris and forcing residents to flee.

Rescuers were still searching for more bodies buried under collapsed houses, said Abdul Muhari, the National Disaster Management Agency's spokesperson. Muhari said all the bodies, including a child, were found with a 4-kilometer (2.4 mile) radius of the crater. He said at least 10,000 people have been affected by the eruption in six villages of



Wulanggitang District, and four villages in Ile Bura district. Some have fled to relatives' houses while the local government is readying schools to use as temporary shelters.

The country's volcano monitoring agency increased the volcano's alert status to the highest level and more than doubled the exclusion zone to a 7-kilometer (4.3-mile) radius after midnight on Monday as eruptions became more frequent. A nun in Hokeng village died and another was missing, said Agustina Palma, the head of the Saint Gabriel Foundation that oversees convents on the majority-Catholic island. "Our nuns ran out in panic under a rain of volcanic ash in the darkness," Palma said.

since then due to seismic activity. In a video conference on Monday, Muhammad Wafid, the head of Geology Agency at the Energy and Mineral Resources ministry said there was a different character between January's eruption and Monday's eruption due to a blockage of magma in the crater, which reduced detectible seismic activity while building up pressure.

"The eruptions that occurred since Friday were due to the accumulation of hidden energy," Wafid said.

It's Indonesia's second volcanic eruption in as many weeks. West Sumatra province's Mount Marapi, one of the country's most active volcanoes, erupted on October 27, spewing thick columns of ash at least three times and blanketing nearby villages with debris, but no casualties were reported.

Lewotobi Laki-laki is one of the 120 active volcanoes in Indonesia, an archipelago of 280 million people. The country is prone to earthquakes, landslides and volcanic activity because it sits along the "Ring of Fire", a horseshoe-shaped series of seismic fault lines around the Pacific Ocean.

Pak blames India for worsening air quality

PTI ■ LAHORE

Ministers in Pakistan's Punjab province on Monday blamed winds from India for worsening smog here, urging the Indian authorities to take up the matter seriously, after the air quality index in the capital city hit a record high over the weekend.

Toxic grey smog has sickened tens of thousands of people, mainly children and elderly people, since last month when the air quality started worsening in Lahore, the city bordering India. The concentration of PM 2.5, or tiny particulate matter, in the air, approached 450, considered hazardous, the Punjab Environment Protection Department said.

"The wind direction brings air from India into Pakistan, yet India does not seem to be taking this problem as seriously as it should," Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari told the media here. She urged the Indian side of Punjab state to take this matter seriously.

"Delhi ranks first in smog levels today, with Lahore following closely in second place. Delhi's air quality index is around 393, while Lahore's is close to 280," she said, adding that China has been battling

smog for the past 26 years. Earlier, Punjab senior minister Murrizum Aurangzeb said the province was going to request the Pakistan Foreign Office to take up the issue of cross-border pollution with India.

"The easterly winds from Amritsar and Chandigarh are spiking the air quality index in Lahore to over 1,000 for the past two days," she said.

"The wind from India towards Lahore taking the smog to dangerous levels and the wind is likely to sustain its direction for at least next week. The people should take care of themselves by avoiding unnecessarily coming out of their houses. The elderly and children should be particularly careful," Aurangzeb said.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz also called for climate diplomacy with India and said she would soon write to the chief minister of the Indian side of Punjab to jointly address the issue of smog.

Meanwhile, the Punjab government has closed primary schools in Lahore for a week in the wake of rising smog. The government has already closed schools for specially-abled children for three months.

India's manufacturing sector regains growth momentum



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's manufacturing sector growth recovered from September's eight-month low to 57.5 in October fuelled by faster increases in total new orders and international sales, a monthly survey said on Monday. The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose from September's eight-month low of 56.5 to 57.5 in October, indicating a substantial and accelerated improvement in operating conditions.

In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction. "India's headline manufacturing PMI picked up substantially in October as the economy's operating conditions continue to broadly improve. Rapidly expanding new orders and international sales reflect strong demand growth for India's manufacturing sector," Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC, said. The upturn in performance was boosted by stronger

demand for Indian goods. Moreover, the introduction of new products and successful marketing initiatives helped enhance sales performance. New export orders also exhibited stronger growth, following the weakest uptick in a year-and-a-half during September. Panel members reported gains in new contracts from Asia, Europe, Latin America and the US. On the prices front, the October data signalled stronger inflationary pressures across India's manufacturing sector. Goods producers were also

more willing to take on additional staff, which coupled with rising material costs, added to business expenses. Both input prices and selling charges increased at stronger rates. "Input and output prices are both increasing as a result of persistent inflationary pressures in materials, labour and transportation costs," Bhandari added. On the employment front, not only did manufacturers hire extra staff at the start of the third fiscal quarter, but also to a greater degree than in September. Around one in ten panellists reported an increase in employment, while 1 per cent shed jobs. Going ahead, Indian manufacturers became more optimistic regarding future output volumes. "To start the third fiscal quarter, business confidence is also very high due to expectations of continued strong consumer demand, new product releases and sales pending approval," Bhandari said. The HSBC India Manufacturing PMI is compiled by S&P Global from responses to questionnaires sent to purchasing managers in a panel of around 400 manufacturers.

India re-elected as President of International Solar Alliance

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Monday said India has been re-elected as the President of Indian Solar Alliance (ISA) from 2024 to 2026. Addressing the press conference at 7th General Assembly of the ISA, Joshi informed that France has been re-elected as Vice-President of the ISA. India's election to the President post is a testament to the impactful work the country, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been doing over the years for the global good in advancing solar energy adoption across the globe and boosting investment in essential solar projects, including mini-grids and healthcare solutions, Joshi opined. Eight Vice Presidents of the Standing Committee, two from each of the four ISA geographical regions, were also selected by the Assembly. From the Africa Region, Ghana and Seychelles have been selected as the Vice Presidents, while South Sudan and the Comoros will support the Vice Presidents as Vice-Chairs of Africa. From the Asia and the Pacific Region, Australia and Sri



Lanka have been selected as Vice Presidents, with the United Arab Emirates and Papua New Guinea as the Vice-Chairs, he informed. Germany and Italy have been selected as Vice Presidents from the Europe and the Others Region, along with Greece and Norway as Vice-Chair. Leading the Regional Committee of the Latin America and the Caribbean region will be Grenada and Suriname, Jamaica and Haiti as Vice-Chairs, he said. ISA Member Countries have also selected the third Director General of the Alliance. Ashish Khanna is the Director General Designate and will assume office in March 2025, when the tenure of the incumbent Director General, Ajay

Mathur, comes to a close, he informed. ISA initiated Demonstration Projects in 2020 to meet the needs of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Development States (SIDS). The aim was to exhibit solar technology applications that can be scaled up and build the capacity of member countries to replicate these solar-powered solutions. Joshi noted that 11 of these projects were dedicated to the people of the respective countries: Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cuba, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Samoa, Senegal, The Gambia, and Tonga. ISA remains committed to supporting governments in their efforts to scale up solar

energy projects and improve the lives of their people, he stated. An important topic of discussion will be the guidelines for the Viability Gap Funding (VGF) Scheme, which provides for 10 per cent to 35 per cent of the total solar project cost to be given as a grant for developing solar projects in LDCs and SIDS identified by the countries themselves, provided 90 per cent of the project cost is locked in, he said. The ISA Assembly will also consider a proposal for promotion of greater involvement of women in ISA's initiatives, programs, and support activities, wherever feasible, across member countries, he said.

China's Haier Group plans JV with JSW Group envisaging ₹ 1K Crore investment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Haier Group, a leading Chinese appliances manufacturer, has plans to set up a joint venture with India's JSW Group envisaging a proposed investment of Rs 1,000 crore, sources said. The proposal of Shandong-based Haier Group has been submitted to the government as it attracts Press Note 3 of 2020, under which all firms in countries that share land borders with India need mandatory government approval. The source said the proposal was put up before the committee that scrutinises such applications. There is an inter-ministerial committee headed by the Home Secretary to consider applications under the press note. Countries which share land borders with India are China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar and Afghanistan. An email query sent to both companies remained unanswered. Last year in November, the USD 24-billion JSW Group signed a JV with China's auto major SAIC Motor to acquire a 35 per cent stake in MG Motor India. The JV was named JSW MG Motor India Private Ltd. Around 51 per cent of the company's shares are with Indian entities, including JSW, which has a 35 per cent stake.



Haier Group is operating here through its subsidiary Haier Appliances India, which was established in 2003. Headquartered in Greater Noida, the India unit is a subsidiary of Haier Singapore Investment Holding Pte. It is one of the leading brands in the home appliances and consumer electronics market and operates two manufacturing units - Pune, Maharashtra and Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh. Haier, which has over Rs 8,000 crore business in India, is constantly expanding its manufacturing capacity to meet the growing demand for appliances from rural and smaller towns and the Indian

middle class from urban markets with its affordable options. India is the third largest market for Haier Group globally after China and the US, where it has invested Rs 3,500 crore so far. It has a consolidated manufacturing capacity to roll out 9 million units annually combined from both plants. Earlier this year, Haier, which competes in the Indian market with brands such as Samsung, Panasonic, Whirlpool of India, and Bosch besides some homegrown manufacturers such as Godrej Appliances, Bajaj Electricals, Voltas etc, said it has lined up a "huge expansion plan".

CIL should prioritise augmenting coal production, supplies to reduce import



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned CIL's priorities should be to ramp up production of coal and scale up supplies to reduce imports, Union Minister G Kishan Reddy has said. Coal India Ltd (CIL) accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal output. Speaking at CIL's 50th Foundation Day on Sunday, the minister stressed upon the importance of miners' welfare and the rehabilitation of communities affected by mine closures. "Contractual workers play a significant role in Coal India's output, and I applaud the management's decision to implement Performance Linked Incentives for them, effective FY 2023-24," he was quoted as saying in a coal ministry statement. The launch of commercial coal mining has led to transparency, ease of doing business and investment opportunities, helping open the coal sector. Exuding confidence in CIL, he stated that the company has the competency and commitment to compete in the current open market scenario.

While coal will remain a central component of the country's energy landscape for the coming decades, India is also heavily investing in renewable energy and addressing climate change, the coal minister explained. He commended CIL's diversification efforts, including setting up of a thermal power plant and foraying into critical mineral acquisition. "In the Viksit Bharat initiative, Coal India has a vital role to play and it needs to shoulder this responsibility," he emphasised. Coal Secretary Vikram Dev Dutt highlighted that CIL provides coal to Indian consumers at competitive rates compared to imported coal. He added that coal stocks at power plants reached 31.6 MT as on October 28, 2024, as compared to 18.8 MT a year ago. This growth of 68 per cent is largely attributed to the contribution of CIL. Coal India, he said, should recalibrate its processes, operational and cost efficiency in accordance to the changing business dynamics.

MoA signed between Municipal Corporation and NTPC



PNS ■ RAIPUR

Women playing key role in various areas in India's civil aviation: Droupadi Murmu

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday said women are playing a key role in various operational and technical areas in the country's civil aviation sector. Interacting with a group of women achievers in the Indian aviation sector at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here, she emphasised that along with increasing the participation of women in the aviation industry, equal opportunities moving forward in this field are also necessary, an official statement said. Murmu said apart from education and proper training, the support of family members is also important, it said. "It is often seen that many women are not able to fulfil their dreams even after receiving higher education due to a lack of support from the family," the president was quoted as having said in the statement issued by her office. She urged the women achievers to become guides for other women and encourage them to choose

their careers and realise their dreams, the statement said. According to the president, women are playing a key role in various operational and technical areas in India's civil aviation sector. The meeting took place under the 'President with the People' initiative which aims to establish a deeper connect with people and recognise their contributions, the statement said. Murmu said, "Fifteen per cent of Air Traffic Controllers are women, 11 per cent of flight dispatchers are women, and 9 per cent of aerospace engineers are women". She also noted that 18 per cent of pilots who received commercial licenses last year were women. The president appreciated all women achievers who think innovatively and dare to tread new paths. She said that the inclusive efforts of the government have given a boost to the progress of women in the civil aviation sector. "More and more women are now choosing aviation as their career," the president said.

MoA signed between Municipal Corporation and NTPC

In the presence of Finance Minister Shri OP Choudhary, a Memorandum of Agreement of Rs 42.56 crore was signed between Raigarh Municipal Corporation and NTPC for the construction of Nalanda campus in Raigarh. Finance Minister Shri OP Choudhary said that this Nalanda campus will prove to be a milestone in the development of our new generation and making Raigarh an education hub. Finance Minister Shri OP Choudhary said that it is the dream of all of us to take Raigarh to new heights of development. In which the coming generation will actively contribute and Nalanda campus will work to prepare a strong foundation for it. Nalanda campus will be built with the cooperation of NTPC. The tender for this has been approved. Emphasizing on the creation of a knowledge-based society, he said that the coming time will be based on knowledge. India has become an economy of 3 thousand 700 billion dollars in 2024 from 266 billion dollars in 1991. Its size will increase even faster in the future. Everyone in the country benefits from the strengthening of the economy, but those who prepare themselves by acquiring knowledge over time, get more benefit from it.

Air purifier sales spike over 50 per cent as air quality worsens

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Demand for air purifiers has witnessed a surge as air quality, especially in Delhi-NCR, dropped to hazardous levels, according to manufacturers of the product. Companies, including Kent RO Systems, Xiaomi, and LG Electronics India, said in the festive season, air purifiers sales grew up to 50 per cent as the Air Quality Index (AQI) of Delhi and the adjoining moved towards an alarming level. Like the previous year, the appliance makers have witnessed growth in the last 2-3 weeks in sales and enquiries for air-purifiers and expect a further uptick with the increase in the AQI index in the coming weeks. Air purifier is a very small segment of the appliances market and its sales generally peaks in October and November, when the pollution level in North India, particularly Delhi NCR, and some other parts worsens due to stubble burning and Diwali celebrations. LG Electronics India Senior VP- Home Appliances Sanjay Chitkara said: "As Delhi battles one of its worst pollution seasons yet, suddenly the demand for air purifiers has surged in Delhi NCR". The city's AQI has crossed hazardous levels, with pollutants that are much smaller than the common PM2.5 particles, making them extremely dangerous and hard to filter out, he



said. Kent RO Systems CMD Mahesh Gupta said sales of air purifiers and filters witnessed a significant surge during the winter months in India, coinciding with the deterioration in air quality. The alarming levels of pollution, especially in the northern regions, create a sense of urgency among consumers to protect their health, he said.

"During the festive season, we observe a noticeable increase in sales of about 20-25 per cent as consumers become more conscious of indoor air quality and their overall well-being," he said. Xiaomi said amid rising pollution levels, particularly in the North region, there has been a noticeable shift in consumer behaviour, with a growing focus on health and cleaner indoor environments.

"This has driven a sharp rise in Xiaomi's air purifier & air purifier filter sales, with numbers climbing over 50 per cent higher than usual in the past month," said a Xiaomi spokesperson. According to a report from EMR, the India air purifier market size attained a value of Rs 777.75 crore in 2023. The market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 16.30 per cent between 2024 and 2032, it said. Some of the makers such as Panasonic and Daikin have either scaled down their presence in the segment or have exited due to below-expectation growth and seasonal sales. British tech firm Dyson, a global market leader in the premium range of air purifiers said, "With the continued spike in pollution, it's important for people to take proactive measures to protect their family members from the harmful effects of smog and pollutants. To safeguard themselves from the AQI outside, many restrict their movement and prefer to stay indoors." Last month, Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi had criticised air purifier manufacturers for making false claims about their products, and called for increased consumer awareness ahead of winter when air pollution worsens in Delhi due to crop stubble burning in neighbouring states. He had expressed concern over misleading marketing tactics adopted by some air purifier companies.

INBRIEF

- MORE FESTIVE SPECIAL TRAINS BY N. F. RAILWAY TO CLEAR RUSH**
MALIGAON: N. F. Railway has decided to operate few more festive special trains to meet the rising demand of passengers and ensure comfortable travel during the ongoing festive season. The details of stoppages and timings of these trains are available in IRCTC website and are also being notified in various newspapers and social media platforms of N. F. Railway. Passengers are requested to verify the details before undertaking their journey.
- GNDU EXTENDS LAST DATE FOR ODL AND ONLINE COURSES**
AMRITSAR: Guru Nanak Dev University has extended the last date for admission to courses offered under Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Online mode until 15th November 2024 as per the guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission- Distance Education Bureau (UGC-DEB) Notification. These online programs have been specifically designed to benefit not only the Punjabi diaspora in regions like the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, Africa and Europe but also anyone from India or across the globe seeking flexible higher education options.
- N. F. RAILWAY TO OPERATE FEW MORE FESTIVE SPECIAL TRAINS**
MALIGAON: N. F. Railway has decided to operate four more festive special trains to clear extra rush and ensure comfortable travel to the passengers during the festive season. These trains will run between New Coochbehar - Sealdah, Kathihar - Udhna, Kathihar - Amritsar and Kolkata - Saharsa. The details of stoppages and timings of these trains are available in IRCTC website and are also being notified in various newspapers and social media platforms of N. F. Railway.

MAN UNITED MAKES ITS WORST LEAGUE START IN ALMOST 40 YEARS

AP ■ MANCHESTER

A tumultuous week for Manchester United ended with a 1-1 draw against Chelsea and the unwanted statistic that the club has made its worst league start for almost 40 years. Moises Caicedo's stunning long-range volley secured a point for Chelsea and left United on 12 points which Opta, the Premier League's stats supplier, said was its lowest after 10 games since the 1986-87 season. That was the year Alex Ferguson was hired and went on to lead the club to a period of unprecedented success, winning 13 Premier League titles and two Champions Leagues. United fans will have to hope that is a good omen after Erik ten Hag was fired this week and replaced by Ruben Amorim. "Whenever you see a manager go you have to take some of the blame on yourself, it is because the team is not doing so well," United captain Bruno Fernandes said Sunday. "I spoke to the manager (Ten Hag) and apologized to him. I was disappointed he has gone and I tried to help him." Fernandes fired United ahead from the penalty spot in the 70th minute against Chelsea as interim head coach Ruud van

Nistelrooy looked to win back-to-back games during his temporary reign, having beaten Leicester 5-2 in the League Cup on Wednesday. But in front of the watching Olivia Rodrigo, Caicedo's strike from the edge of the box four minutes later ensured the points were shared. "I think we did the most difficult thing in this stadium against this team ... We were down and we came back immediately," Chelsea head coach Enzo Maresca said. Chelsea moved up to fourth in the standings, ahead of Arsenal on goal difference, while United is six points behind in 13th and playing catchup in the race for Champions League qualification. Tottenham beat Aston Villa 4-1 earlier in the day. Ten Hag was fired on Monday and while Amorim has been confirmed as his replacement, he does not take charge until Nov. 11. Van Nistelrooy is holding the reins until then and for a short while was making top-flight management look relatively simple. Fernandes' penalty put United in sight of a win that would have moved it to within four points of the top four. That was until Caicedo's strike. "I am disappointed we didn't win, we had the better of the chances in the game but overall



the performance was fantastic. They left their all out there on the pitch," Van Nistelrooy said. The Dutchman's future is unclear once Amorim takes over. But he has two games - against PAOK Salonika in the Europa League and Leicester in

the league - until he hands over to the new head coach. "We'll be backing him (Amorim) and helping them to get Manchester United to where we want it to be," Van Nistelrooy said. **SPURS THRASH VILLA:**

Dominic Solanke scored twice as Tottenham thrashed Aston Villa 4-1. The forward struck two goals in the space of four second-half minutes at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium after Villa had led at the break.

Solanke scored in the 75th and 79th as Spurs produced a stunning second-half performance to follow up its victory against Manchester City in the League Cup on Wednesday. Morgan Rogers had given

Champions League-chasing Villa the lead in the 32nd minute, but Brennan Johnson leveled the game four minutes after the break. Solanke's double put Spurs 3-1 ahead and James Maddison curled a free kick into the top

corner in the sixth minute of added time. Solanke is now on five goals for the season. Tottenham is up to seventh in the standings, while sixth-place Villa missed out on the chance to move into the top three. **GRUDGE MATCH:** AFC Wimbledon beat MK Dons 2-0 in the first round of the FA Cup and took bragging rights in one of English soccer's fiercest grudge matches. Matty Stevens and Omar Bugiel scored either side of halftime at Stadium MK in a competition that holds deep ties for fans of both clubs. Wimbledon was a shock winner of the Cup in 1988 when beating the mighty Liverpool 1-0. The team relocated to Milton Keynes in 2002 and was renamed MK Dons, which prompted disgruntled fans to create a phoenix club called AFC Wimbledon. And it was the traveling AFC Wimbledon fans who were left celebrating Sunday after securing its place in the next round of the Cup. **WREXHAM LOSES:** There will be no Cup run for Wrexham this season after losing 1-0 at Harrogate Town. Jack Muldoon's goal in the 24th was enough to seal victory for Harrogate, which plays in the fourth tier of English soccer, one division below Wrexham.



Gauff beats Pegula at WTA Finals while Swiatek prevails in her first match in two months

AP ■ RIYADH

Coco Gauff enjoyed a successful start by beating Jessica Pegula 6-3, 6-2 in an American matchup at the WTA Finals. Second-seeded Iga Swiatek rallied to beat Barbora Krejickova 4-6, 7-5, 6-2 in her first match in two months. Gauff converted five of her eight break-point opportunities to win her opening match at the year-ending tournament for the top eight ranked players. "I thought we both were playing high level," Gauff said. "I just think I was able to break through on the more important points." Gauff will face Swiatek on Tuesday with the winner taking control of the Orange Group. Pegula will next face Wimbledon champion Krejickova. Swiatek, who arrived at the WTA Finals with a new coach, hadn't played a match since losing to Pegula in

straight sets in the U.S. Open quarterfinals in September. "Even though I played a lot of those (practice) matches, I kind of forgot for a while how it is to feel all those things, a bit different stress and emotions," Swiatek said. "For sure, I needed some time to adapt. The most important thing was that even though it happened, I managed to fight through that. And was patient enough to wait to get better." Swiatek rallied from 3-0 down in the second set to turn it around against Krejickova, who has been hit by injuries and had played only 29 matches coming into the finals. Seven of them were victories at Wimbledon. On Saturday, top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka eased to a straight-set victory over Zheng Qinwen in the opening match of the finals in Saudi Arabia. Fourth-seeded Jasmine Paolini of Italy beat fifth-seeded Elena Rybakina in the other Purple Group match.

Dani Olmo leads Barcelona to city derby win over Espanyol

AP ■ MADRID

Dani Olmo made the most out of his return as a starter with Barcelona, scoring twice to lead the Catalan club to a 3-1 win over Espanyol in the city derby on Sunday in the Spanish league. Raphinha also scored for Barcelona, a week ago had routed Real Madrid 4-0 in the clasico at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. Barcelona is now nine points ahead of Madrid, whose game at Valencia on Saturday was postponed because of the deadly floods that killed more than 200 people in southern Spain last week. The game between Villarreal and Rayo Vallecano also was postponed, as were three second-division games scheduled to be played in the region this weekend. The victory extended Barcelona's 27-match unbeaten streak against Espanyol in the league. Espanyol, sitting in 17th place, has lost six of its last seven league matches. Olmo scored his double in his return as a starter after hurting his right hamstring on Sept. 15 against Girona. He had come off the bench in the team's wins



against Bayern Munich in the Champions League and Madrid in the Spanish league. "I was excited about coming back," Olmo said. "I'm feeling well. It was important to keep winning." He put Barcelona ahead in the 12th minute from close range after a neat cross by Lamine Yamal with the outside of his left foot. Olmo's second goal came with a strike from outside the area in the 31st. In his first season with Barcelona, Olmo now has five goals in five matches. Raphinha added to the lead in the 23rd by redirecting the ball into the net with one touch after Marc Casadó's long cross into the area.

Barcelona has outscored its league opponents 40-11 in 12 matches. Madrid has the second-best attack with 21 goals scored. "We are a team that can score a lot, not only with our strikers but also with the players in the second line," Olmo said. "We play very direct and create many opportunities." Espanyol thought it had moved closer in the 27th but Jofre Carreras' goal was called off after video review because of offside. It also had a goal by Alvaro Tejero disallowed for offside in the 58th, then Javi Puado finally scored a goal that counted in the 63rd. Barcelona also had a goal called off in stoppage time.

Before the match, Barcelona honored those who received awards at the Ballon d'Or ceremony last week, including Yamal, who earned the Kopa Trophy award for best Under-21 player, and Aitana Bonmati, who won the award for the world's best woman soccer player. Barcelona also won the best women's team prize. There was also a moment of silence in honor of the flood victims, which has taken place at all league matches this weekend. **SIMEONE'S SON SCORES:** Giuliano Simeone, son of Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone, scored his first goal with the club in the team's 2-0 win against Las Palmas. The goal came more than 20 years after Simeone's last league goal with the club as a player. Alexander Sorloth netted Atletico's second goal on Sunday, helping move the club back to third place, 10 points behind Barcelona. **OTHER RESULTS:** Sixth-place Athletic Bilbao drew 1-1 against Real Betis, while 10th-place Real Sociedad won 2-0 at Sevilla with goals from Takefusa Kubo and Mikel Oyarzabal.



Delhi SG Pipers sign Australian Olympian Jacob Whetton

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi SG Pipers on Monday announced the signing of three-time Olympian Jacob 'Jake' Whetton of Australia for the upcoming Hockey India League season. The 33-year-old midfielder will be replacing Dutchman Jorrit Croon, who has pulled out due to an ankle injury. "It's never easy to replace a player of Jorrit Croon's calibre. Unfortunately, his recovery from the ankle injury isn't progressing as hoped, which has led us to make this difficult decision," Delhi's head coach Graham Reid stated in a release. "On a brighter note, I am thrilled to welcome Jacob Whetton to the SG Delhi Pipers for the 2024 season. Jacob's experience and skill set will be invaluable in filling the void left by Jorrit. "His ability to control the midfield aligns perfectly with our game strategy, and I have known Jacob since 2009, so he

is well-acquainted with my coaching style. I'm excited about the energy and expertise he will bring to our team." Whetton has a wealth of experience with him, featuring in 253 games for the Kookaburras, netting 75 goals, and also helping the side win the silver medal at the Tokyo Olympics. Besides, the Queenslander also won the World Cup in 2014 and helped his team finish third four years later. He also helped his side win gold medals at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow 2014, Gold Coast 2018 and Birmingham 2022. Whetton has also won Champions Trophy twice (2012 and 2018) and a bronze in 2014. He also has four Oceania Cup titles and an FIH Pro League gold (2019). The HIL is returning after a seven-year hiatus and will run from December 28-February 1.

IPL auction set to be held in Riyadh at end of November

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Premier League's high-profile auction will be held in the Saudi Arabian capital city of Riyadh in the last week of this month, sources in the BCCI confirmed on Monday. "The IPL auctions will be held in Riyadh and it has been



notified to the franchisees. The likely dates are November 24 and 25," a BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity. This year's auction is a mega one with high profile India stars like Rishabh Pant, KL Rahul, Shreyas Iyer and Arshdeep Singh are going to go under the hammer.

The 10 franchisees will collectively have around Rs 641.5 crore to spend for 204 slots that are available. Out of those 204 slots, 70 are earmarked for overseas players. As of now, 46 players have been retained by the 10 franchisees with cumulative expenditure of Rs 558.5 crore.

Red Bull's Verstappen nears 4th straight F1 title

AP ■ SAO PAULO

Red Bull driver Max Verstappen took a major step toward securing his fourth straight F1 title by winning the Brazilian Grand Prix, despite starting 17th, and increasing his lead over McLaren's Lando Norris with three more races remaining. The Dutchman could secure the trophy in Las Vegas later this month. All he needs to do is to finish ahead of the McLaren driver. Other combinations could also secure the title for the 27-year-old. In one of the best drives of his career, Verstappen overcame punishments before the race as well as the wet weather at Interlagos to earn his first victory since June, and his eighth Grand Prix win of the year. He won by almost 20 seconds and also clocked the fastest lap at Interlagos 17 times during the race to receive an extra point. The Dutchman increased his

lead from 44 to 62 points over Norris, who won Saturday's sprint race. Norris started in pole position but finished in a disappointing sixth position. He avoided losing more points in an investigation by stewards, who fined him and Mercedes' George Russell 5,000 euros (\$5,440) for breaching the FIA's start procedure. Verstappen had been on course for a tough weekend in Sao Paulo. He received a five-place grid punishment after changing his engine for the sixth time in the season - the maximum allowed is four. He lost one point in Saturday's sprint race because of another penalty. And then his qualifying session earlier on Sunday was interrupted when he was 12th and trying to clock a fast lap to reach the final part of the session. "My emotions today were a roller coaster," Verstappen said after the race. "We stayed out of trouble, we made the right calls and we were flying." Verstappen said later at a press

conference that winning in Brazil was "incredibly important" in his bid for a fourth title and that he had been expecting to see his overall lead reduced. "It felt like I was driving a boat," Verstappen joked. When asked about what he expects next, he said: "I just want clean races, that's all. I am not thinking about clinching the championship in Vegas or whatever." After the Las Vegas GP on Nov. 23, there are races in Qatar (Dec. 1) and Abu Dhabi (Dec. 8), with a combined total of 86 points available. The two Alpine drivers, Esteban Ocon and Pierre Gasly, completed the podium. Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who started the race with a long shot at the drivers' title, finished fifth. F1 governing body FIA had rescheduled the qualifying session for 7:30 a.m. Local time (1030 GMT) Sunday after heavy rain on Saturday. The start of the Grand Prix was



brought forward from 2 p.m. To 12:30 p.m. (1530 GMT), while many in the paddock still wondered whether the drivers would take their cockpits at all during the morning.

The tense race under rain in Sao Paulo had an aborted start when Aston Martin's Lance Stroll went off on the formation lap. Norris could not hold his first position in the

first turn, losing it to Russell. The McLaren driver struggled until the end of the race to find his line under the rain, which Verstappen clearly managed to do from the start, finding grip

where others couldn't in the inside of the track. The big boost for Verstappen, and possibly a key moment in the drivers' championship, came when Haas driver Nico Hulkenberg spun off in the 27th of 69 laps. A virtual safety car came in and many drivers chose to go to their pit lanes but Verstappen, Ocon and Gasly opted not to stop and the gamble paid off. Five laps later, to the huge disappointment of about 10,000 Argentinian fans at Interlagos, Williams driver Franco Colapinto crashed. That meant a red flag, only minutes after leaders Russell and Norris had pitted. Ocon, Verstappen and Gasly changed their tires without losing their places, putting Norris under even bigger pressure to deliver. "It was the right time to box," Norris said after the race. "We were just unlucky." "I did all I could today. That's all. Max won the race. Good on him, well done but it doesn't

change anything for me," he added. Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton, who finished 10th, also praised Verstappen's performance under rain in Sao Paulo. "An amazing drive, congrats," the seven-time champion said on Instagram. Hulkenberg was disqualified after receiving a rare black flag before the restart because he had gotten assistance from marshals to return to the track. The bumpy track at Interlagos was under fire from drivers, with Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso receiving treatment for back pains after the race. Earlier, in the most emotional moment of the weekend at Interlagos, many fans on the stands cried when Hamilton drove the late Ayrton Senna's title-winning car ahead of the race. The seven-time champion took some laps under falling rain in the historic McLaren MP4/5B that Senna drove during his 1990 title campaign, in which he beat Ferrari's Alain Prost.

Series defeat against NZ will impact India's performance against Aussies: Gilchrist, Warner

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian legends Adam Gilchrist and David Warner have little doubt that Indian players' psyche would have been scarred after the recent whitewash at home by New Zealand, but they said it will be naive to consider Rohit Sharma's side "easy beats" in the five-Test Border-Gavaskar Trophy, beginning at Perth from November 22. The Tom Latham-led Kiwis blanked India 3-0, marking one of the lowest points in their Test history, also denting the chances of qualifying for the World Test Championship (WTC) final next year. "It does (series defeat has an impact), more for the Indian players and the Indian team internally. They have to be asking themselves pretty hard questions," former wicketkeeper batter Gilchrist told Fox Sports. "But I'm not expecting them to come out and be easy beats,

but I do think on the back of that loss and the fact that it was a clean sweep - I cannot remember when that's happened to them, just losing a series, let alone a clean sweep - I think that will raise some questions internally. "The pressure and the expectation and the desire from a passionate cricketing nation to see that change around, that'll ride heavily on those shoulders of all those players." Gilchrist said India has the wherewithal to regroup after the heavy setback. "There are a few ageing players (with the Indian team) who may start to even second guess themselves a little bit. There're some high-class cricketers in that Indian squad. It's going to be fascinating to see how they rebound from that challenge," he added. **WE NEED RUNS AGAINST BUMRAH, SIRAJ:** Warner said the series defeat



against the Black Caps will certainly be playing in Indian cricketers' minds. "It (the series defeat) helps the Australian guys. They're coming here after being beaten at home 3-0 for five Tests against the Australian boys, (who have) three world class quicks and a world class spin bowler, and I'd be nervous if I'm in their batting order. I would be nervous," said Warner. The left-hander felt that countering pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj would be key to Australia's success in the upcoming series. "The Australian top order needs to make runs against Bumrah and Siraj who are their spearheads. I think if Australia can get through those two gentlemen, there could be some big runs put on the board. "But we're going to have to come out with our chest out against India. We have lost our

last two series here against India (and) they have got a lot to play for." Warner also did not read too much into the modest form of Indian veterans like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli. "You have got Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Ashwin, Jadeja. You got these guys there who are in the back end of their careers. So, there's a lot to play for there, and whether or not they finish their careers this year or next year, they will want to finish on a high. "I know those guys very, very well, and they will be so determined to come out here and score big runs." Former Australian batter Mark Waugh said India will miss the services of seamer Mohammed Shami, who is still recuperating from a surgery. "If Mohammed Shami is not on the tour, that is a huge blow for India because I think their pace attack would worry us with Shami in there. He is a big loss," reckoned Waugh.



I've come to know the feeling of running the drinks really well: Will Young

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Replacing a player of Kane Williamson's stature can be a daunting task but Will Young, who played a pivotal role in New Zealand's historic 3-0 Test series win in India, saw it as an opportunity to create his own mark after "running the drinks" as a reserve batter for four years. If New Zealand's batting appeared thin with Williamson not making it to India for the first Test in Bengaluru due to injury, the 31-year-old Young banished any such doubts with his unbeaten 48 as the Kiwis hammered the hosts by eight wickets. As it became evident that Williamson would not make it to India in time to help New Zealand clear trials by spin at Pune and Mumbai, Young had given enough indications that he was ready for the challenge. "Since my debut about four years ago, I've been in and out through form (or) through selection. "I've been a reserve batter for a number of years now so I've come to know the feeling of running the drinks really well," Young told media here after New Zealand's historic win, insinuating that

he was always ready. "When I do get an opportunity to play, I'm more excited to go out and do my own thing in my own way and not try to replace Kane or whoever it might be, just play my own game and see it as a great opportunity rather than big boots to fill," he added. Young acknowledged the role Williamson played in New Zealand's training camps back home and also during his presence on the earlier assignments in the Indian subcontinent. "Unfortunately Kane's not here and if he was, he'd be a great person to lean into and to ask what he thinks in certain situations. We also had three really good camps leading into the series back home and he was at those camps. "But it's great at the moment because we've got fantastic batters all throughout our lineup and they've all got slightly different methods and on the day you've just got to pick what method you think will work and you've got to have the courage to back that and show your skills. "Yeah, I try not to bat like Kane, I try to bat like me and do it my own way," he added.

For New Zealand to beat India at their own game on spinning wickets was as special as their series win in this part of the world, and Young conceded scoring runs on turning tracks in Pune and Mumbai was more satisfying. "If you look at all three matches, there was different challenges in each. In Bengaluru, a lot of wickets fell to spin and then (in) Pune and Mumbai it was a lot more challenging against spin." "As a New Zealander coming over here and playing in Indian conditions, it's always going to be slightly more satisfaction of scoring runs against spin, so I'd suppose scoring runs in Pune or Mumbai felt more special," said Young, who ended the series as the third highest run-getter. With 244 runs at 48.80 across three Tests, Young finished behind India's Rishabh Pant (261 runs) and compatriot Rachin Ravindra (256 runs). However, his biggest contributions came in the third Test at Mumbai when Young's 71 and 51 across the two innings helped New Zealand become the first team ever to beat India 3-0 in their own backyard.

So proud of you: Ravindra reveals rare message from dad after NZ historic series win

PTI ■ MUMBAI

New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra revealed a rare text message he received from his father, expressing pride in the batter's achievements after the Black Caps notched a "special" Test series win in his parents' place of birth. New Zealand wrapped up a memorable tour of India, becoming the first team in history to register a 3-0 Test series sweep against the Asian giants in their own backyard. The 24-year-old, who was the star of the first Test, was born and brought up in Wellington but his familial roots are firmly entrenched in Bengaluru. "I haven't heard my dad say to me, 'so proud of you' often in my life, so it was nice to get that message when we won," Ravindra said on Sen Radio. The stylish left-hander's parents Ravi Krishnamurthy and Deepa hail from Bengaluru, while his grandparents T. Balakrishna Adiga, a noted educationist, and Poornima still stay in the Indian city. He revealed that his father was present to witness Ravindra's match-winning exploits first-hand in Bengaluru where he scored a century and an unbeaten 39 in his two innings to fashion New Zealand's eight-wicket win in the series opener.



"I had Dad watch the first Test in Bangalore in his hometown, which was nice, and I'm sure Mum was biting her nails in front of the TV, not moving an inch back home. "It's very special and to be able to do it in the country of (my parents') birth is amazing," Ravindra admitted. "Although I've always maintained I'm

100 percent Kiwi born and brought up, it's nice to get that reminder every now and again," he added. Ravindra ended the series as New Zealand's leading run-getter, collecting 256 runs at an average of 51.20. It was his father's passion for the game that inspired a young Ravindra to take

up cricket, waking him up at 5 a.m. Each day for throwdowns in the driveway. "Obviously I'm just very grateful for everyone in my inner circle. I was making him get up and he'd come and throw balls for me two hours before school. "Mum getting me ready every day for school, training and games - that unconditional love, which I'll never forget. That's stuff I'll never take for granted." New Zealand ended India's 12-year unbeaten home run in Tests by winning the first two matches. It is also their first-ever series victory in India since they started touring the country in 1955-56 under Harry Cave. The Black Caps also scripted history by becoming the first team to notch a 3-0 series win in India, winning the third Test by 25 runs in Mumbai on Sunday. "It was unbelievable. On the field, it was a different feeling. I think it's nothing like I've quite experienced before. "Just seeing everyone's elation, running towards each other. Ajaz's sixth wicket, and being in Mumbai and seeing all the boys together in a huddle jumping around. "It's hard to quite quantify, but it's pretty special," Ravindra said.

Shami's return to competitive cricket delayed

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Mohammed Shami's return to competitive cricket has been further pushed back after the veteran pacer was not named in the Bengal squad for the next two rounds of the Ranji Trophy against Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. Bengal will take on Karnataka at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium here from Wednesday, before travelling to Indore to take on MP from November 13. Shami was expected to play the fixture against Karnataka to test his fitness in a real-match situation as he bowled at full tilt at nets after India's recent Test match against New

Zealand here, though with bandage on his operated leg. On that occasion, he was also monitored by India's bowling coach Morne Morkel. Later Shami said during a promotional event that he was feeling "100%" at nets. "I had been bowling with half a run-up on and off since I can't put too much stress on my body. So, we decided that I would bowl properly, and I gave my 100%. "It felt great, and the results are good. Hopefully, I'll be back on track soon," he had said. India skipper Rohit Sharma had also opined against taking an undercooked Shami to Australia. "We don't want to bring undercooked Shami to

Not to play for Bengal against Karnataka, MP



Australia. We are keeping our fingers crossed," Rohit had said in Bengaluru recently. Other than Shami, Bengal will also miss the services of prolific opener Abhimanyu

Easwaran, wicketkeeper batter Abhishek Porel and pacer Mukesh Kumar, who are with India A squad in Australia. Pacer Akash Deep, who was part of the Indian team for the

recent series against New Zealand, was also not named in the state squad. However, veteran wicketkeeper batter Wriddhiman Saha, who has announced his retirement from cricket after the ongoing domestic season, has been named for the two matches. **Bengal squad against Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh:** Anustup Majumdar (capt), Wriddhiman Saha (wk), Sudip Chatterjee, Sudip Gharami, Shahbaz Ahmed, Writtick Chatterjee, Avilin Ghosh, Shuvam Dey, Shakir Habib Gandhi, Pradipta Pramanik, Aamir Gani, Ishan Porel, Suraj Sindhu Jaiswal, Mohammed Kaif, Rohit Kumar, Rishav Vivek.

'Superman' Wriddhiman, one of India's finest keeper-batter to retire

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Spectacular with the big gloves, quietly assured with the willow and yet happy to be in the shadows, Wriddhiman Saha, in his 40 Test matches for India, has certainly been more than the sum total of all his parts. But having been out of India reckoning for over three years now, the 40-year-old has decided to call it quits from the game at the end of his team Bengal's ongoing Ranji Trophy campaign. The announcement was made on his social media page late last night. "After a cherished journey in cricket, this season will be my last. I am honoured to represent Bengal one final time, playing only in the Ranji Trophy before I retire," Saha said. "Let's make this season one to remember," he added in a post that went up late on Sunday night, typically unambiguous from the

unassuming player. He never had the aura of a Mahendra Singh Dhoni or the insane daredevilry of a talented Rishabh Pant but Saha, with his hands as safe as a house, was more than a mere hyphen between the two powerhouse performers of Indian cricket. The 104 dismissals behind the stumps, including 92 catches in Tests, some of them absolutely splendid, Saha's three centuries and six fifties aren't always spoken about for their effectiveness. Neither the eight six-laden century in a losing cause for erstwhile Kings XI Punjab in the 2014 IPL final. But Saha, for the better part of the 17 years since his Ranji debut in 2007, was happy to stay out of the spotlight. Patience came easy to him as he had to wait nearly two years between his debut and second Test and nearly three years between his second and third Tests.



He was always that ever present understudy to Dhoni, knowing well that he will have to wait till the great man called time in whites. Saha was an old fashioned Indian keeper like Syed Kirmani or Nayan Mongia -- brilliant behind the stumps and a safe batter, who could be used as a floater in the middle order. Whether keeping up to R Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja on perennially under-prepared Indian tracks or gauging the wobbly seam movement of Ishant Sharma's deliveries, between 2015 and 2018, Saha was undoubtedly one of the world's best glovemen at work. And one can say that with assurance despite his contemporaries being Matthew Wade, BJ Watling, Mushfiqur Rahim, and Jonny Bairstow. There were moments behind the stumps that one simply cannot forget. A flying catch to pouch South

Africa's Faf du Plessis off Ashwin's delivery in front of silly point, which earned him the moniker of 'Superman WriddhiMan', was a moment of sheer brilliance. His keeping was so exceptional that despite an IPL hundred, three Test tons and a brilliant Irani Cup double ton in a tricky chase, his batting never got the due it deserved. And when Pant burst into the scene with his 'X-factor' batting, he was again confined to being the second keeper. Once Gabba happened, the writing was on the wall for Saha and Rahul Dravid, the new coach, in a frank discussion during the tour of South Africa decided to show him the mirror that at 38, it makes no sense to be a second keeper behind a 20-something. Having scored a fifty (vs New Zealand) in a preceding series and probably misunderstanding former BCCI president Sourav Ganguly's generic encouragement as an

assurance, his impregnable patient "defence" was breached as he fired some verbal salvos. A spat with a Cricket Association of Bengal office-bearer saw him leave for Tripura for a couple of years before coming back home for a final hurrah. His attitude towards life remained the same. From the time he was a 16-year-old, who came from North Bengal's Siliguri and stayed at a dingy PG in central Kolkata's Koley Market area, to the time he became a known figure with a posh South Kolkata apartment and a luxury car, all he wanted to do was complete his tasks and answer only in mono-syllables. Trust Virat Kohli to find that enduring. "You particularly feel happy when a team-mate like Saha does well. Such a nice person, never cries about anything, does not have a bad word to say about anybody, ready to bat at Nos 8, 9, or 10," the skipper had once said about his teammate.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Lucknow only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.