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# Delhi Police fails yet another rape victim in the Capital

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Evoking horrific memories of the 2012 Nirbhaya gangrape case, and the 2002 Maulana Azad Medical College student rape case that shook the Nation, three men allegedly gangraped a 34-year-old researcher and social worker at midnight on October 10, near Rajghat in the heart of the National Capital. The police arrested the third accused on November 4, the first two had been arrested on November 2 and October

30. When asked about why the police kept the matter under wraps for about a month, Deputy Commissioner of Police (southeast) Ravi Kumar Singh said that "the issue was sensitive amid the ongoing festival season. When the accused were caught, we shared the details to the public."

According to police sources, the sexual assault took place in a deserted area near the ITO metro station, and again in an autorickshaw near Rajghat. The victim who hailed from Odisha was

## CASES THAT HAUNT

### SWAROOP NAGAR RAPE CASE (2023)

A nine-year-old girl was abducted, raped and then strangled to death by her 52-year-old landlord, who dumped her body in a canal in outer Delhi's Swaroop Nagar on December 12, 2023. He was later arrested by the police.

### HAUZ KHAS VILLAGE RAPE CASE (2017)

In February 2017, a woman was raped by an acquaintance she had met at a party in the upscale Hauz Khas Village in Delhi. After the party, the accused offered her a ride home but instead took her to a secluded location and assaulted her. The accused was later arrested.

### CHHWALA GANG RAPE AND MURDER (2012)

A 19-year-old woman from Uttarakhand was kidnapped, gang-raped, tortured, and murdered in Delhi's Chhwala area. She was abducted while returning home from work and found three days later with severe injuries. She had been brutally tortured, and her body was discarded in a field. In 2014, the Delhi High Court sentenced three men to death for the crime. However, the Supreme Court later acquitted them.

### NIRBHAYA GANG RAPE (2012)

A 23-year-old physiotherapy intern was brutally raped and assaulted on a moving bus by six men, including a juvenile, on the night of December 16, 2012, which shook the entire nation. The attack

left her with severe internal injuries, and she succumbed to her injuries on December 29, 2012. All the accused were arrested and charged with sexual assault and murder.

### KHOONI DARWAZA RAPE CASE (2002)

The victim, a fourth-year student of the Maulana Azad Medical College (MAMC), was raped at knife point on the terrace of the Mughal monument 'Khooni Darwaza' in central Delhi on November 15, 2002. The trial court had awarded Rahul and Amit life imprisonment and acquitted two other accused, Ashok, of the charge of harbouring the accused, and Mohan Lal, of the charge of dishonestly receiving stolen property from the accused.

eventually left bleeding on the road. According to police, the victim had travelled to Delhi from Odisha on May 9, reportedly without informing her family who had filed a missing person's report in Puri. Police said the woman holds a postgraduate degree in social work from Utkal University of Culture, Bhubaneswar, has been a research fellow, and has over eight years of work experience in the social sector. The DCP said that a PCR call at 3.15 am on October

11 about a woman, wearing a red kurta, bleeding profusely from her wounds near Sarai Kale Khan. She was spotted by a Naval officer who was passing by. "At 3:15 am, the officer made a PCR call to the Sunlight Colony police station where he expressed concern that the girl might have been injured or subjected to wrongful assault. The police rushed her to AIIMS Trauma Centre where she disclosed that she was raped by three unknown men," he said.

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## National counter-terrorism policy soon: HM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said the Government will soon bring a national counter-terrorism policy and strategy to fight terrorism, terrorists and their ecosystem. Addressing an anti-terrorism conference here, Shah also said that while law and order is a state subject and states have the geographical boundaries and constitutional limitations, terrorism doesn't and hence all security agencies - Central and States - must work in close coordination, chalk out joint strategies and share intelligence.

He said the Government has come up with a vision on model anti-terrorism squad (ATS) and model special task force (STF) for the States and Union Territories, which, if adopted, will work as a



common structure and platform to deal with the menace of terrorism. "We need to work together to fight terrorism, terrorists and their ecosystem. And that's why, we will soon bring a new national counter-terrorism policy and strategy in which you all will play a key role," he said at the conference, which was attended by chiefs of State police forces and other top

security officials of states and the Centre. The Home Minister said the new policy will help states and central agencies to work in close coordination to deal with terrorism. On the model ATS and STF, he said the standard operating procedures (SOPs) are being shared with the states and they can be tweaked according to their respective requirements. Shah said to

make India developed by 2047 as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, everyone has to deal with all security challenges and have a unified terror-fighting ecosystem. "This (adopting model ATS and STF) doesn't reduce the rights of States," he said. The Home Minister said the Modi Government is committed to eradicating terrorism in the country and moving forward with a solid strategy against it. Security forces have to well equip young officers and use technology to combat terrorism, he said. Highlighting the achievements of the Modi Government against terrorism since 2014, during which terror incidents have come down by 70 per cent in comparison to the previous decade, Shah said now the shelf life of terrorists has decreased from two years to a few days.

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## Get ready to pay double penalty for stubble burning

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid worsening air quality in Delhi and neighbouring areas, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has updated air quality management rules on Thursday, doubling the penalty amount for stubble burning, effective immediately, under which farmers are required to pay an environmental compensation on the size of their land holdings. A notification to this effect came after the Supreme Court pulled up the government for 'toothless environmental laws' to curb Delhi's deteriorating air quality every winter. Under the new rules, farmers with less than two acres of land will face a fine of Rs 5,000. Those with between



two and five acres will be fined Rs 10,000, while farmers with more than five acres of land will be penalised Rs 30,000 for engaging in stubble burning. The revised rules come into effect immediately. Meanwhile, farmers' leaders from Punjab have strongly condemned the Centre's move of raising fines for

stubble burning and asked why the government was not providing crop residue management machinery to them to check farm fires. Reacting to the union government's move, farmers' unions pointed out that farmers never want to set the crop residue on fire but they are forced to do so for want of required machinery. They also asked why farmers were always being "targeted" for pollution, and asked the government about action taken against the industry for polluting the environment. Bharti Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan) general secretary Sukhdev Singh Kokrikalan slammed the Centre for its "anti-farmer" move of increasing fine on farmers. "We strongly condemn this decision," Kokrikalan said.

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## Ruckus continues in J and K Assembly

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The floor of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly was virtually converted into a battleground between the members of the Treasury and Opposition benches for the second consecutive day after the Speaker failed to take action against one of the legislators, who dropped into the well-displaying poster which highlighted the demand for restoration of Articles 370, 35-A and release of political prisoners.

As Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) members strongly protested and raised objections blaming the speaker for not preventing Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) Langate Sheikh Rasheed with a banner from roaming freely in the well of the house, pandemonium prevailed. Some of the members including Sajad Lone of the Peoples Conference, and Waheed Ur Rehman Para of the PDP came to blows with the BJP legislators while snatching the banner displayed by the MLA from Langate, the speaker ordered to marshal out some of the BJP legislators from the house.

As left-out BJP legislators along with the Leader of the opposition Sunil Sharma stood their ground in the house the speaker decided to adjourn the house without transacting any business. After a brief pause when the house was reconvened, it again witnessed acrimonious scenes. The speaker again adjourned the house till tomorrow.

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## Terrorists kill two Village Defence men

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Two members of the Village Defence Group (VDG) were reportedly shot dead by terrorists in the upper reaches of Kishtwar on Thursday. The bodies of two VDG members have not been recovered by the police till late evening. According to police, the slain VDG members have been identified as Nazir Ahmed S/O Mohd Khalil and Kuldeep Kumar S/O Amar Chand both residents of Ohli Kuntwara. Unconfirmed reports claimed both the VDG members were kidnapped during the day and their dead bodies, with marks of bullet injuries, were found in the evening. A lesser-known terrorist outfit Kashmir Tigers has also claimed responsibility for the attack while releasing images in social media.

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## Summer breaks rechristened 'partial court working days': SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has rechristened its traditional summer vacations as "partial court working days". The change assumes significance in the wake of the recent criticism from various quarters that the top court enjoys long breaks. The development was a part of an amendment in Supreme Court Rules, 2013, which have now become Supreme Court (Second Amendment) Rules, 2024, notified on November 5. "The length of the partial court working days and the number of holidays for the court and the offices of the court shall be such as may be fixed by the Chief Justice and notified in the official gazette so as not to exceed ninety-five days excluding Sundays," read the notification. It further stated that the Chief Justice may appoint one or more judges to hear during partial court working days or holidays, all admissions, after notice, regular matters of urgent nature or such other matters "as the Chief Justice may direct".



The existing system had the Supreme Court taking the summer and winter breaks each year. The SC, however, was not fully closed during these periods. During summers, "vacation benches" were set up by the Chief Justice to hear important and urgent matters. Notably, the term "vacation judge" has now been replaced with "judge" in the newly-amended rules. According to the recently-published 2025 Supreme Court calendar, partial court working days would start

from May 26, 2025 and end on July 14, 2025. Chief Justice DY Chandrachud had asserted that judges remained dedicated to their work even during vacations. "Judges are not gallivanting or goofing off during vacations. They are deeply committed to their work, even on weekends, often attending functions, visiting high courts, or engaging in legal-aid work," he had remarked at an event. In May, a top court bench of Justices B R Gavai and Sandeep Mehta said people criticising the apex court over long vacations did not understand that judges didn't have holidays even on weekends. The SC's view was prompted by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta sharing a similar sentiment. "All those who criticise that Supreme Court and high courts are on long vacations, they don't know how judges work," Mehta said when the court was hearing a lawsuit filed by the West Bengal government accusing the CBI of going ahead with its probe without securing the prerequisite state nod.

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## CHHATH PUJA BLESSINGS



Devotees during Chhath Puja festival, at the Ganga Ghat in Patna, Thursday

PTI

## Who ate my samosa? CID probe ordered

PTI ■ SHIMLA

Samosas and cakes meant for Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu were served to his security staff instead, the goof-up snowballing into controversy and necessitating a Criminal Investigation Department (CID) probe that termed it an "anti-government" act. Those responsible acted according to their own agenda, a highly placed official in the CID said in his note on the October 21 incident when the chief minister was visiting the CID headquarters. The brouhaha started when three boxes of the refreshments were brought from Hotel Radisson Blu in Lakkar Bazaar to be served to the chief

minister who had gone to the CID headquarters to attend a function. However, the eatables were served to the CM security staff, according to the enquiry report conducted by a deputy SP rank officer. The report stated that an officer of IG rank had asked a sub-inspector (SI) of police to get some eatables from the hotel for the CM's visit. The SI in turn directed an assistant SI (ASI) and a head constable to bring the refreshments. The ASI and the head constable fetched the refreshments from the hotel in three sealed boxes and informed the SI. The police officers in their statement said when they asked the tourism department staff on duty whether the snacks in the three boxes were to be served to the

chief minister, they said they were not included in the menu. The enquiry report said only the said SI, who deputed the ASI and the head constable with the task of getting the snacks from the hotel, was aware of the fact that the three boxes were for Sukhu. The lady inspector, to whom the food items were handed over, did not ask any senior officer and sent the refreshments to the mechanical transport (MT) section which deals with refreshments. The three boxes of refreshments exchanged several hands in the process. Interestingly, a highly placed official in the CID department wrote in his noting that all persons named in the enquiry report have acted in anti-CID and anti-government manner due to which the items could not be served to the VVIPs. They acted according to their own agenda, the note added.

## Indian Railways ensured lakhs of families united for Chhath

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

In an impressive feat of efficiency during the ensuing festive season of Chhath, Indian Railways this week recorded a historic milestone by transporting more than three crore passengers on one single day - November 4, 2024 - which adds up to more than the population of Australia and New Zealand. The passengers were transported from various regions of the country like Delhi, Mumbai, Surat, Bengaluru, Chennai and maximum number were bound to destinations in Bihar and Jharkhand where the Chhath festival is celebrated with great fervor and spirit. Three crore passengers boarded railways which is more than the population of Australian and New Zealand combined. A total of 120.72 lakh (19.43 lakh reserved and 101.29 unreserved non-suburban) passengers were carried in November 2024. The 180 lakh suburban traffic tackled by Indian Railways is the



highest record-breaking day for Indian Railways or could be a world record which will be verified in due course," a Railway spokesperson told The Pioneer. Approximately 7.5 Crore passengers were carried by national transporter to Bihar, Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand during the festive period, Durga Puja, Diwali, Chhath,

beginning October 1 to November 5 through special trains. Railways had to put in service a record 7666 special passenger train services to clear the rush during this period. In the same period last year 4,429 trips were operated. "This is 73 per cent more than last year," the spokesperson added. To cater to the returning passengers,

the Railways has scheduled a substantial number of special trains, ensuring smooth travel for the thousands of people returning from festive destinations. From November 8 to November 11, 2024, the Indian Railways will run special trains to manage the Chhath Puja return rush. The official said anticipating a similar rush for return journeys since Friday onwards a meeting was held at the Railway Board to channelise the process for safe and sure return and onwards journeys for which two railway divisions in Bihar, Samastipur and Danapur, have been asked to spruce up the arrangements. "Enhanced crowd management by putting in additional staff, security personnel, and volunteers deployed at stations to manage the large crowds and maintain order to avoid any Mumbai type mishaps on the platform. Special control rooms have been set up to monitor train punctuality, track delays, and ensure seamless coordination between stations and divisions," added the railway official.

# Husband booked for murder after retd judge's daughter falls to death

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A murder case has been registered following the death of Preeti, the daughter of a retired judge, who allegedly fell from a high-rise building in the PGI police station area on Thursday. The complainant, Preeti's father, claimed that his daughter did not jump but was pushed by her husband Ravindra Kumar Dwivedi, who had been extorting money from her and pressuring her to bring more funds to meet his needs. Preeti's mother added that Ravindra had wanted to repay an Rs 80-lakh loan by selling the flat. She also accused him of continuing to demand money from his in-laws even after the marriage, leading to considerable financial strain. "We paid a substantial amount after the marriage, but the demands never stopped. Ravindra used to beat Preeti and their two children. The

children would call us every day and tell us about the abuse," the complainant said. According to the retired judge, the couple's son called to inform them about the incident. "I rushed to the spot, but Ravindra did not allow me to meet the children. He and his family sent them to a relative's house," he alleged. Preeti, the daughter of the retired additional district judge, died after falling from the 10th floor of a building in Vrindavan Yojna, Sector-12, under suspicious circumstances on Thursday. The parents of the deceased accused Ravindra of pushing her to her death. The PGI police have registered a murder case against Ravindra Kumar Dwivedi. The retired judge described his daughter as a respectful woman who had always been devoted to her husband and in-laws, claiming that Ravindra exploited her innocence.

SP Tiwari, the retired judge, stated that Ravindra's uncle was a judge in Madhya Pradesh and that Preeti and Ravindra's marriage took place on 29 November 2012. "I gave my son-in-law a Rs 5-lakh cheque," Tiwari said. However, Ravindra's demands for money began almost immediately after the marriage, he alleged. The complainant added that he had raised his concerns with an acquaintance who had helped with the marriage negotiations, but was assured that no problems would arise. However, after the wedding, Ravindra's behaviour only worsened. Preeti's mother recalled that her daughter had always respected her husband and in-laws. The mother further mentioned a conversation with Preeti two days before the incident, during which she revealed that Ravindra was asking her to repay the Rs 85-lakh loan on

her flat. "Ravindra is blaming everything on the flat. He says his life is ruined because of it," her mother said while quoting her daughter. Preeti's mother consoled her daughter, assuring her that everything would be fine. However, the next day, when they went to visit Preeti, Ravindra refused to let them meet her. "When he saw us at the gate, he started abusing us and even the guard," she claimed. SP Tiwari said they had provided Rs 60 lakh as dowry and also bought a flat worth Rs 14 lakh in Mansarovar Yojana, which they gave to Ravindra. "When Ravindra tried to register it in his name, we objected. Once, there was a bank strike, and when we couldn't send the money, he started quarrelling. I told him we were extorting money like a goon, and since then, he became even angrier," Tiwari said.

# UP bags second place in water management, conservation

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh has received three prestigious awards in just four months for its outstanding work in water management and conservation. On Thursday, the awards were presented to the chief minister by department officials. UP secured second place nationally for its exceptional efforts in water conservation and management, and in ensuring tap water connections to every rural household. In October, President Droupadi Murmu presented this award, which was officially handed over to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Odisha took first place, while Gujarat and Puducherry shared the third place. As part of the Jal Jeevan Mission, Uttar Pradesh has also led the nation in providing tap water under the Har Ghar Nal Yojana, achieving the highest number of household connections. Additionally, the state received the SKOCH Gold Award on July 13 for its Ganga Swachhata Abhiyan and other river conservation efforts under the Swachh Ganga Mission. On September 27, Union Minister Giriraj Singh presented Uttar Pradesh with the Best Display Award for its impressive



exhibition showcasing the achievements of the Jal Jeevan Mission at the Noida International Trade Show 2024. This award was subsequently handed over to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath by department officials. On October 22, President Droupadi Murmu honoured Uttar Pradesh with the National Water Award for its outstanding contributions to water conservation and provid-

ing tap water to every rural household. The state secured second place in this category. The Namami Gange and Rural Water Supply department also unveiled a unique memento, which was presented to the chief minister on Thursday. During the ceremony, the Additional Chief Secretary of Namami Gange, Anurag Srivastava, handed over the awards to the chief minister.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath commended the efforts of the Namami Gange and Rural Water Supply officers, praising their achievements. He emphasised that Uttar Pradesh has reached this milestone in alignment with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and urged continued efforts to ensure the consistent supply of clean water to rural areas under the Har Ghar Nal Yojana.

# Roadways employee climbs tower to protest 'corruption'

Akhilesh takes dig at govt

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A contractual employee of Roadways climbed a tower while holding a petrol-filled canister in front of the Superintendent of Police (SP) office in the Gautampalli police station area on Thursday. He repeatedly threatened to immolate himself, which increased the pressure on the police to bring him down through counselling. His wife and children stood close by as police officers tried to persuade him, but he remained resolute. The fire brigade's hydraulic lift (crane) was then summoned. The assistant commissioner of police (ACP), Hazratganj, went up in the crane with the employee's son, managing to eventually convince the man. Although initially reluctant, he was finally persuaded and brought down safely. After the employee climbed the

tower, a crowd of passers-by gathered. Police and onlookers continued to reason with him until the ACP successfully brought him down. The protesting employee, Raju Saini, a resident of Aligarh, had come to the Janata Darbar with his family to file a complaint. Police recovered a complaint letter from his wife, alleging that officials in the Transport department were involved in corruption and regularly harassed employees. The letter claimed that Raju had been physically assaulted and that officials threatened to dismiss him. His wife stated that her husband was forced to drive a dilapidated bus, risking an accident, and that any resistance led to threats of dismissal and salary deductions on accusations of diesel theft. She added that their low income prevented them from providing their children with adequate education and basic needs, and alleged that many other drivers and conductors had been driven to suicide.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, on Thursday, attacked the Yogi Adityanath government over the chief minister's so-called claim of resolving every issue on top priority. The former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh shared a video of the person who climbed a tower when his problem was not solved. Sharing the video on social platform X, Akhilesh Yadav said in his post that this was the truth of the so-called court of the chief minister in Uttar Pradesh, where no hearing takes place. Frustrated by this, a complainant climbed the tower and was not ready to come down, he added. In his post, the SP chief "requested" the complainant not to put his life in danger in future, saying, what is the use of pleading to those who have neither kindness, nor compassion, nor love in their hearts. "Hope the government and administration will not behave in any undesirable manner with that person and will solve his problem," he added.

# Constable suspended for assaulting neurosurgeon

Kanpur (PTI): A police constable posted at the Chakeri police station has been suspended following allegations that he assaulted a neurosurgeon due to which his leg got fractured, police said on Thursday. A preliminary inquiry has also been initiated against the constable, Aryan, and instructions have been given to submit a report within a stipulated deadline, said Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Shrawan Kumar Singh. The constable has been suspended and further action against him will be taken after the report, he added. Neurosurgeon Himanshu Kumar, a resident of Patel Nagar, Chakeri, was on way to visit his patient when Aryan's motorcycle hit his car in the Lal Bungalow area, leading to an altercation between them two days back. Kumar was allegedly taken to a nearby police outpost where he was allegedly assaulted, due to which he suffered a fracture in his leg, the DCP said.

# New night patrolling plan to strengthen crime prevention

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To make night patrolling and zonal checking more effective in controlling criminals and preventing crime, the Lucknow police commissionerate has rolled out a new plan. Under this plan, an additional deputy commissioner of police (ADCP) will be appointed as the operational commander, and two assistant commissioners of police (ACPs) will be appointed as assistant operational commanders. Their responsibility will be to conduct zonal checks and provide immediate information when required. A spokesman stated that zonal checking would start at 11 pm and conclude at 6 am.

"The promptness and response time of the police personnel will be assessed, security equipment will also be inspected, and officials will ensure a police presence, paying special attention to suspicious individuals and PRV patrolling. Persons found at police stations without any records will now be logged in the checking register, and a report will be produced," the spokesman added. The night patrolling scheme was introduced on the instructions of the Police Commissioner of Lucknow, Amarendra Kumar Sengar, with the aim of controlling and preventing crime in the city. Instructions have been issued to strengthen zonal checks. According to the new order, an operational commander will be deployed every night from 11 pm to 6 am, along with two assistant operational commanders. These officers will be responsible for zonal checking and ensuring that no untoward incidents occur in the area. Under the directives from the police commissioner, the operational commander and assistant operational commanders will remain in close contact with night officers and additional inspectors, monitoring their activities. Police presence will be ensured at shops, dhabas, and tea stalls that remain open late at night to prevent anti-social activities. Every Saturday, surprise inspections will be carried out to assess the preparedness and response times of police personnel.

# Coordination officer attacked in college

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The coordination officer at Chandrabhanu Krishi Mahavidyalaya in Bakshi Ka Talab was allegedly attacked by a teacher and latter's aides over an old dispute on Wednesday. The victim, Dharendra Pratap Singh alias Ajay Singh of Mahigaon in Revamau, accused Manoj Singh of opening fire using his licenced pistol. The victim said he caught the pistol by its nozzle and pushed up to save himself and this resulted the bullet to hit the roof and he was saved. After this, the teacher and his companion attacked him on the head with the butt of the pistol and injured him. BKT police have registered a case against two accused. According to the complainant, college principal Gajendra Singh Chauhan called him to the office on Wednesday. "Mathematics teachers Manoj Kumar Singh, Durgesh Kumar Singh and Shivmangal Chaurasia were already present there. Manoj started misbehaving with me regarding a notice issued by the principal earlier. When I confronted him, Manoj and Durgesh beat me with kicks and punched me in the principal office," he stated in his complaint. He alleged that Manoj whipped out his licenced pistol and opened fire. "I grabbed the pistol and the bullet hit the ceiling. As chaos ensued, the accused ran away," he added. Police took Dharendra to hospital. Inspector Sanjay Singh said that a case had been registered against the accused. The principal expressed his inability to make a comment on the incident.

# 'BJP does divisive, hateful politics'

PTI ■ KARHAL

Samajwadi Party MP Dimple Yadav on Thursday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of promoting divisive and hateful politics. Speaking to reporters after a rally in support of Samajwadi Party candidate Tej Pratap Yadav in Karhal, the Mainpuri MP said, "The BJP seeks to divide and provoke society. The BJP government has betrayed every section of the society during its ten years in power at the Centre and eight years in the state." "The farmers' incomes haven't doubled and they are struggling to access DAP and other fertilizers. Young people are not getting jobs or employment opportunities," she added. The bypoll battle in Karhal involves Tej Pratap Yadav and his uncle Anujesh Yadav, who has been fielded by the BJP. Anujesh Yadav is the son-in-law of Samajwadi Party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav. The Samajwadi Party MP alleged that the BJP government has deprived the PDA (backward, Dalit, and minority communities) of its rights, but the PDA is now aware of the saffron party's deceit.



"THE BJP GOVERNMENT HAS BETRAYED EVERY SECTION OF THE SOCIETY DURING ITS TEN YEARS IN POWER AT THE CENTRE AND EIGHT YEARS IN THE STATE"

"Karhal will see a historic victory for the Samajwadi Party," Yadav asserted, according to a party statement.

"In the BJP government, injustice, oppression, inflation and corruption are at their peak. People from all sections of the society will unite to defeat the BJP's politics of hatred," she added. In another address, Badaun MP Aditya Yadav urged the voters to support Tej Pratap Yadav with a decisive majority. Karhal is considered a bastion of the Yadav clan, with former chief minister Akhilesh Yadav formerly representing the constituency in the assembly from 2022 before contesting and winning the Lok Sabha polls from Kannauj this year. The by-elections are scheduled for Phulpur, Ghaziabad, Majhwan, Khair, Mirapur, Sishamau, Katerhai, Karhal and Kundarki assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh. Except for Sishamau, all other seats were vacated as their former MLAs were elected to Parliament in the Lok Sabha polls this year. The Election Commission has changed the date for the by-elections on these nine assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh from November 13 to November 20 due to the Kartik Purnima festival and the Ganga Snaan. The results will be announced on November 23.

# RSS volunteers will remove obstacles in way of Sanatan, seers: Bhagwat

PTI ■ BANDA

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has said Sangh volunteers would act to remove any obstacles hindering Sanatan Dharma and the work of seers. He also warned that some forces are trying to weaken a rising India. Speaking at the birth centenary celebration of Pandit Ramkinkar Upadhyay at the Hanuman Temple complex in Chitrakoot, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Sarsanghchalak said, "But this is a resilient India, and it will continue to overcome all challenges. Sangh volunteers will remove all obstacles coming in the way of the work of Sanatan and saints using sticks (danda)." Commenting on the current state of the country, Bhagwat criticised "anti-national forces",

stressing that India has been built through hard work. "In the ongoing global conflicts, righteousness will prevail," he said, emphasising that adhama (unrighteousness) will inevitably be defeated by the strength of dharma and truth. He urged every Hindu to draw inspiration from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and fulfil their duty in building the nation. Bhagwat said various forces tried to obstruct the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, but divine power ultimately triumphed. "After 550 years, truth and righteousness have finally prevailed," he said. He shared that the RSS also faced hardships in its early days, including challenges related to basic needs like food, shelter, and space for gatherings, but the situation has

since changed. He expressed confidence that, united, India would continue its struggle against adversaries of Sanatan Dharma, moving toward victory. He emphasised, "India is a unifying nation." Calling for a united effort toward creating a new, developed nation, Bhagwat said, "We need not fear or tolerate injustice. Good and evil have always existed globally, and we must stand on the side of righteousness. Dharma is achieved through our actions." He further added that when society unites, it gains divine support. "Our nation's foundation was laid by the dedicated efforts of sages and seers. Despite our differences, we are fundamentally one people. India stands as the world's most secure and prosperous nation."

# UP showcases heritage at WTM in London

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Tourism organised a roadshow on the final day of the World Travel Market (WTM) in London. Visitors from the UK and across the globe were introduced to the spiritual riches of Ayodhya, Kashi, and Mathura, as well as the upcoming Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj. Uttar Pradesh Minister for Tourism and Culture Jaiveer Singh emphasised the importance of the global platform in promoting the state's diverse tourism offerings. The World Travel Market in London, one of the world's largest tourism expos, draws thousands of visitors annually. This year, Uttar Pradesh seized the opportunity to highlight its religious, spiritual,

and scenic destinations on the international stage. Starting on November 5, the three-day event saw the UP Tourism department set up a 60-square-metre booth featuring key sites such as Ayodhya, Kashi, Maha Kumbh, Sarnath, Kushinagar, and other iconic locations throughout the state. Engaging displays and interactive sessions offered attendees a chance to explore the rich cultural and religious landmarks of Uttar Pradesh. The response was positive, with many visitors expressing interest in visiting these destinations. On Thursday, the final day of World Travel Market, attendees learned about Uttar Pradesh's deep connection to Lord Rama and Krishna, the sacred city of Kashi on the

banks of the Ganga, as well as the state's national parks and tiger reserves. The showcase underscored that Uttar Pradesh offers not just spiritual journeys but also a wealth of natural beauty. Minister Jaiveer Singh highlighted the state's success in boosting domestic tourism and its ongoing efforts to attract international visitors. In addition to World Travel Market, Uttar Pradesh Tourism has represented the state at other major international travel events, including ITB Asia in Singapore, JATA in Tokyo, IFIM Top Resa in Paris, PATA in Bangkok, and the Korea International Tourism Show (KITS 2024), all aimed at establishing Uttar Pradesh as a premier global tourism destination.

# AKTU submits self-study report for NAAC grading

Lucknow (PNS): For the first time at Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University (AKTU), the self-study report for grading by NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) was submitted under the guidance of Vice-Chancellor Prof JP Pandey. "To fulfil the seven criteria established by NAAC, the criteria chair and team worked diligently and completed each section. The self-study report must be submitted within 45 days of the institutional information for quality assessment (IIQA) being approved by NAAC. The university requested an extension of 15 days and submitted the report within 60 days. After this, document verification and validation will be carried out by NAAC. Additionally, NAAC will gather feedback from 30 per cent of the students through the student satisfaction survey, which

will be sent by email using the data provided by the university. Marks will be awarded based on this feedback. Following this, the peer team from NAAC will visit the university, after which the final grade will be assigned," AKTU spokesperson Pawan Tripathi said. NAAC B GRADING FOR MAHARAJA BIJLI PASI GOVT PG COLLEGE Meanwhile, Maharaja Bijli Pasi Government PG College in Ashiyana has received NAAC grading, officials said. The evaluation was made by NAAC Team, Bengaluru, on October 22 and 23, and the report was sent to the NAAC evaluation headquarters on the same day. Officials said the college got NAAC B grading through email. Principal Prof Suman Gupta said it is the result of the hard work and dedication of all the faculty members.

# 3-day 'Trauma 24' kicks off today

Lucknow (PNS): The department of trauma surgery at King George's Medical University (KGMU) has announced "Trauma 2024", the 14th Annual Conference of the Indian Society of Trauma, focusing on trauma, acute care surgery, and critical care. It will be held from November 8 to 10 at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Convention Centre. Dr Sandeep Tewari from KGMU said the event will bring together trauma surgeons, critical care specialists, and healthcare professionals from across India and abroad. Dr Mayur Narayan (USA), Dr Olivia (USA), Dr Dan Whitley (USA), Dr MC Mishra (India), Prof Sushma Sagar (AIIMS, New Delhi), Prof Subodh Kumar (AIIMS, New Delhi), and Prof Amit Gupta (AIIMS, New Delhi), will lead sessions, present lectures, and engage in workshops, promoting academic exchange and global collaboration.

# SGPGI receives award for excellence in healthcare

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGI) has been awarded the 'FICCI Healthcare Excellence Award 2024' in the category of 'Excellence in Patient Service Delivery' for public hospitals. The award, conferred at a ceremony in New Delhi, recognises SGPGI's contribution to healthcare through its innovative Tele-ICU-Service initiative, aimed at addressing critical ICU shortages across Uttar Pradesh. Established in 2009 by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), the Healthcare Excellence Awards honour organisations and individuals who have demonstrated leadership in enhancing healthcare delivery through innovation, increased efficiency, and

improved patient outcomes. The awards evaluate participants based on three criteria: Innovation, Impact, and Sustainability & Scalability. Under the leadership of Director Prof RK Dhiman, SGPGI has consistently set new standards in healthcare excellence. This year, SGPGI participated in the 16th Healthcare Excellence Award under the stewardship of head of the hospital administration, Dr Rajesh Harshvardhan. The award was received by head of the emergency medicine at SGPGI, Dr RK Singh. The SGPGI-Tele-ICU-Service addresses ICU shortages by establishing a hub-and-spokes model that connects audio-visual-cloud-based continuous connectivity for 100 ICU beds across Uttar Pradesh, providing remote ICU support through cutting-edge telemedicine technology.

# Congress will face the same fate as Articles 370 and 35A: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Thursday, took a strong stance against Congress and the National Conference, condemning their call to reinstate Articles 370 and 35A.

Referring to the passage of a proposal in Jammu and Kashmir assembly for immediate restoration of Articles 370 and 35A in their original form, Chief Minister Yogi remarked, "Congress and its allies aim to drag the country and the Valley back into the flames of terrorism. They are unwilling to see Jammu and Kashmir's development and the promising future of its youth. The nation will never accept their divisive agendas. The 140 crore people of India stand firmly for the unity and integrity of the nation and are prepared to respond decisively to any threats."

He further cautioned that if Congress does not oppose this proposal, it may face the same fate as Articles 370 and 35A. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was addressing an event organised by the All India Bhojpuri Samaj at Laxman Mela Grounds here on the auspicious occasion of Chhath Puja. He highlighted the importance of Chhath Puja and underscored the need to safeguard national unity and integrity. "When we are divided by caste and religion, others rule over us," Yogi remarked.

He added, "While we come together through these festivals, some individuals living in India are undermining the country's essence. No true Indian should tolerate this. But when we, as 140 crore-strong, speak in unison, no force can challenge India."

Chief Minister Yogi said, "On August 5, 2019, Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi decisively eradicated terrorism in the



Kashmir Valley by abolishing Articles 370 and 35A. This historic decision, approved by Parliament, eliminated Jammu and Kashmir's special status from the Constitution. The world then witnessed a new, powerful India — peaceful but resolute in defending itself." He emphasised India's commitment to safeguarding its sovereignty and integrity, declaring that the nation is ready to make any sacrifice to protect its identity and unity.

Yogi strongly criticised Congress, highlighting how it introduced Article 370 into the Constitution despite Dr BR Ambedkar's opposition, thereby setting Kashmir on a path to violence and terrorism. He recalled the turmoil that followed, with widespread violence, targeted killings of Kashmiri pandits, and brutal attacks on anyone voicing support for India.

He said, "While Congress had initially labeled Article 370 a 'temporary provision', only Prime Minister Modi took the bold step to eliminate it. Today, Kashmir is on a path of progress,

with new educational institutions, hospitals, industries, and a renewed sense of security that has allowed previously displaced residents to return home."

However, Chief Minister Yogi condemned the resolution passed in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly by the Congress and National Conference to reinstate Articles 370 and 35A, describing it as a return to divisive and disruptive politics. He warned that Congress actions signal an intention to rekindle terrorism by undermining national unity.

Chief Minister Yogi reminded that Article 370, now abolished, cannot and will not return. It was the root cause of mass violence, terrorism and the massacre of countless innocent people, he said. He described it as a "blood-stained chapter", which once destroyed Kashmir's social harmony and beauty by fueling religious extremism and turning the region into a hub of terrorism.

Yogi issued a strong message to Congress and the National Conference, stating that their

actions in Kashmir reveal a dangerous disregard for national unity, which the nation will never tolerate.

He emphasised that India's 140 crore citizens stand firmly for the country's unity and integrity and are prepared to firmly oppose any efforts to undermine it.

He called on Congress to denounce the resolution passed in the Jammu and Kashmir assembly; otherwise, he warned, the party's fate could mirror the removal of Articles 370 and 35A in Kashmir.

Addressing the gathering in Bhojpuri, Chief Minister Yogi extended warm Chhath Mahapary greetings to all devotees, particularly acknowledging the devotion of mothers and sisters who observe the challenging fast.

He highlighted India's cultural uniqueness, noting the Bhojpuri community's significant contributions to its rich heritage. Describing Chhath as a festival celebrated across India, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasised its role in strengthening the heritage of Indian culture both nationally and globally. He remarked that festivals like Chhath instill pride in our cultural roots, offering a meaningful opportunity to honour the Surya Dev (Sun God), a symbol of life in Indian tradition.

Highlighting the Sun's essential role in sustaining all forms of life, Chief Minister Yogi noted that, through Chhath Mahaparva, people express gratitude to the Surya Dev and promote a message of linking the festival's sanctity with a sense of patriotism.

Deputy CM Brajesh Pathak, Legislative Council member Govind Narayan Shukla, Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh and Bhojpuri Samaj national president Prabhunath Rai were also present.

# Women offer 'arghya' to setting sun

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Huge crowds descended on the Laxman Mela ground on the occasion of Chhath Puja on Thursday. A large number of women dressed in their traditional finery were seen offering 'arghya' to the setting sun.

The vermilion, which extended from the tips of their noses to their hair, attracted the attention of all present.

With the colour code for the dresses being red and yellow, the entire ground seemed like a sea of the same colours.

As the sun set, the illuminated banks presented a picturesque scene with diyas floating on the surface of the water.

The evening witnessed over 150 artistes performing Bhojpuri songs. A large number of dignitaries were also felicitated on the occasion. Prabhunath Rai, the organiser of the festival and president of the All India Bhojpuri Samaj, said that the artistes sang for 18 hours straight.

A woman devotee, who had come from Rajajipuram, said that she enjoyed the experience of celebrating Chhath on the banks of the Gomti river. "It's a totally different kind of experience. I belong to Deoria but have settled at Rajajipuram in Lucknow. I have always celebrated the festival on the ghats," she said.

Yet another devotee said that with Chhath being a holiday, they were happy that the crowds would be fewer on the roads when returning home. "The crowds were huge on the banks of the river, and thankfully it is a holiday; otherwise, it would have been very



crowded," she said. Poonam Dubey, another devotee, shared her experience, saying that it was a difficult fast, but they could carry it out with ease because of the blessings of Chhath Maiya. "There is a lot of enthusiasm that we experience while observing the fast, and though there are many rituals involved, we are able to carry them out with perfection. Other members of the family also visit us to celebrate this festival. We sing songs on this occasion which praise Lord Surya and Chhath Maiya, and we apply long vermilion, the length of which signifies the longevity of the husband," she said. Neha Mishra, a housewife from Kaiserbagh, said that she was keeping the

fast for the very first time this year. "I have been married for 12 years and have never kept the fast because my mother-in-law would observe it. But now, as she has grown older, she advised me to keep the fast," she said. She mentioned that she felt energetic and happy after observing the fast. "I often suffer from migraines, but even though I am without water, I didn't face the problem. I would advise all women to keep this fast because it provides so much energy," she said. Kamesh Dubey from the Bhojpuri community said that although he had not kept the fast, he fully supported his wife. "For the past three days, I have been collecting all the puja samagri because it is a

tedious fast with many rituals demanding a number of things. There are so many fruits and food items that come from Bihar for this puja. For example, there is a fruit called 'suni', which is a kind of potato, and it is essential for the puja. Hence, I am extending all my help in conducting the puja," he added. Anju Pathak, another devotee, said that she had been keeping the fast for the past 22 years.

"I keep a number of fasts, but the kind of satisfaction I get from keeping this one is incomparable. Energy flows through the body even though one is fasting. I am so confident about this, and despite being without water, I feel I can do any kind of work," she said.

# 'Restricting Muslims from business activity in Kumbh area will hurt communal harmony'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party Member of Parliament from Sambhal, Ziaur Rahman Barq, has strongly opposed the demand of restricting the members of a particular community from doing business in the Maha Kumbh area in Prayagraj.

He cautioned that such a move could fuel tension between communities. Recently, the All India Akhada Parishad announced to restrict non-Sanatani shopkeepers, including Muslims, from setting up stalls at the Maha Kumbh venue, drawing sharp criticism from various quarters. Ziaur Rahman Barq expressed deep concern over the Akhada Parishad's decision to bar Muslim vendors from participating in the upcoming Maha Kumbh. He urged the government to act against those promoting such divisive actions. "If Muslims are excluded from the Maha Kumbh, it will only lead to similar actions at Muslim religious gatherings. We do not want this," he stated. Barq called for swift government intervention to prevent what he described as a dangerous trend.

The parliamentarian emphasised the need for the Yogi Adityanath-led government to intervene and take strict mea-

sures against such directives. He warned that allowing one community to exclude another could set a precedent, leading to similar retaliatory actions. "If this continues, tomorrow Muslim gatherings could also ban Hindu participation. This is not the path we should be taking," he said.

The parliamentarian criticised what he viewed as a disregard for the Indian Constitution. "It is unfortunate that such divisive attitudes persist in our society," he stated, expressing disappointment in the government's silence on the matter. Barq claimed that the lack of action indicates tacit support for communal divides, which contradicts constitutional values. "If the government truly respects the Constitution, it must act decisively to stop such practices," he added.

He cautioned that if these exclusionary practices continue, they could quickly spread beyond the Maha Kumbh. "Brotherhood within our communities is essential. If traditions like these become normalised, then restrictions will emerge on both sides. Today it is Hindu society starting this; tomorrow, it could be Muslim society," he noted, urging immediate corrective action to prevent further divisions.

# Govt empowering underprivileged children through education

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government is making dedicated efforts to improve the lives of underprivileged children by ensuring access to quality education. Through its free education initiative, the number of beneficiaries has been consistently rising.

In the academic session 2024-25, enrolment under this scheme saw a remarkable surge, with 1,14,196 children enrolled, a significant jump from 71,214 children in 2022-23. Moreover, over 5 lakh children across Uttar Pradesh are currently receiving education in private schools.

This progress is backed by the Yogi government's strategic investment in children's education. Over the past two financial years, Rs 436 crore has been reimbursed in fees, enabling schools to admit these children seamlessly and without financial barriers.

This step by the government is not only integrating underprivileged children into the mainstream of education but also contributing to shaping their future. The effective implementation and continuous improvement of the scheme clearly demonstrate the government's unwavering commitment to providing the right to education to the marginalised children of the state.

The state government is making every possible effort to provide quality education to underprivileged children. As soon as the



government took office in 2017, the RTE Act was expanded under this scheme. To bring transparency to the process, an online portal was launched by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), making the enrollment process digital and more effective.

Subsequently, from the academic session 2020-21, the scheme was also extended to rural areas, ensuring that more and more children across the state could benefit from it. As a result, parents are now able to apply online to nearby schools and take full advantage of this scheme.

In the academic session 2022-23, 71,214 children were enrolled, which has increased to 1,14,196 in the 2024-25 session. Additionally, over five lakh children across the state are now studying in private schools. To achieve this success, the government has increased its investment in children's education, paying Rs 436 crore in fee reimbursement over the past two financial years, enabling schools

to provide uninterrupted admission to these children. Minister of State for Basic Education (Independent Charge) Sandeep Singh informed that to ensure timely enrolment of children under the right to education, the application process for the 2025-26 session will be carried out in four phases. These phases will run from December 1, January 1, February 1, and March 1, until the 19 of each month.

"Lottery and enrollment dates have been set for each phase, ensuring there are no delays in the application process. To facilitate parents, help desks are set up in various districts. Awareness and encouragement of the application process are being supported through NSS and NCC volunteers in rural areas," he added. Singh also mentioned that district administrations are assisting by providing necessary documents, such as income certificates, caste certificates, and residence certificates, making the enrollment process smoother.

# SSB inspector dies as girder falls on him

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow (PNS): In a tragic incident, an inspector of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) lost his life while another sustained serious injuries on Thursday when a girder of an under-construction rail over bridge fell on them in Chhithaula area of Gorakhpur district, police said. An over bridge is being constructed by Uttar Pradesh Bridge Corporation for smooth movement of traffic at Nakha railway crossing between Bargadwa and Gorakhpur. After the completion of the pillar work, the work of constructing the over bridge over the railway line is going on. For this, the gutter brought by a truck was being unloaded by the crane on Thursday morning. At 10:30 am, Inspector Bijendra Singh Kothari and Inspector Malay Kundu, posted at the SSB sector headquarters, were going towards the fertiliser unit office from Bargadwa Square on a motorcycle. When they reached near the crane, its chain broke and the 10-quintal aluminium girder fell on Kothari who was riding the motorcycle and he died on the spot. Kundu, who was on the pillion, sustained serious injuries and was admitted to BRD Medical College hospital. The driver fled leaving the crane behind after the accident. Superintendent of Police (North) Jitendra Kumar Srivastava said that the search for the crane driver was going on and action was being taken after registering a case as per the complaint.

# UPSC approves removal of IPS Jasbir Singh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Indian Police Service officer Jasbir Singh, who came into news after tightening the noose around Raja Bhaiya, has been relieved from service after the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) approved the proposal to terminate his services, sources confirmed.

Jasbir Singh, a 1992 batch IPS officer posted in UP, was presently under suspension. ADG-rank IPS officer Jasbir Singh was suspended on charges of making statements and indiscipline. He was suspended for five years. He has filed an appeal with the President of India regarding his service.

As the superintendent of police of Pratapgarh, Jasbir Singh shot into limelight for tightening the noose around Raghuraj Pratap Singh, also known as Raja Bhaiya. In a conversation with a website in February 2019, Jasbir Singh had given several statements regarding the policies and functioning of the government. He had also raised questions on the policies of the government on many points, including issues related to his previous posting, encounter policy, transfer and posting of officers.

In his interview, he had even alleged that the government was paying him salary without taking any work. There

is no work in the rules and manuals, despite this, the staff is sitting there and being paid salary, he had stated.

Singh was posted as ADG (Rules and Manual) when he faced suspension. It is alleged that when a notice was issued to him in this regard and he was asked to reply, he instead went on leave. He did not even take permission from the senior officer to go on leave nor did he file his reply. After this, he was suspended.

When Jasbir Singh was superintendent of police of Pratapgarh and in the Food Cell, he tightened the screws on Raghuraj Pratap Singh alias Raja Bhaiya. He was in a lot of discussions during this time. During his posting as ADG (Home Guard), he raised the issue of corruption. After this, he was removed from Home Guard and posted as ADG (Rules and Manual). It is said that the government was not satisfied with the reply to the notice issued to him. On this basis, it was decided to relieve him from service.

While he was suspended, Singh kept getting half salary. Now that too will stop when his service ends. It is said that after the proposal to terminate his services has been approved by the UPSC, the chances of his service being restored are very less.

# 9-min video brings story of Lord Rama's exile to life

PNS ■ AYODHYA

In a bid to enhance religious tourism, the Yogi Adityanath government has introduced a unique initiative in Ayodhya, allowing visitors to experience the story of Lord Rama's 14-year exile through an immersive 3D video.

The 9-minute video, which depicts the struggles of Lord Rama's life, has been touching the hearts of visitors, evoking deep emotions as they witness his struggles and triumphs.

To facilitate this, a special Darshan Kendra has been established at Raj Dwar Park near Hanuman Garhi. This centre aims to offer a unique and spiritual experience, bringing the story of Lord Rama's exile to life in a way that resonates deeply with the devotees. After Lord Rama was seated in the grand tem-

ple in Ayodhya, the number of devotees coming for his Darshan has increased tremendously. In view of this, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is continuously investing in promoting religious tourism in Ayodhya. As part of this effort, the Ayodhya Development Authority has launched a virtual reality demonstration that brings to life the story of Lord Rama's exile.

This initiative is similar to the arrangements made at Kashi Vishwanath and Maa Vaishno Devi Bhawan, enhancing the spiritual experience for visitors. In just nine minutes, visitors experience the animated highlights of Ayodhya, Tamsa river, Bharat Milap, Laxman Hill, Anusuiya Mata Darshan, Dandakaranya, Panchvati, Dhanushkodi, Shri Ram's Surya Tilak in Lanka. A large number of devotees are flock-

ing to the Darshan Kendra, which has been equipped with advanced technology to enhance their spiritual experience.

Under an agreement with Tech XR Innovations Company, the centre now features 10 cameras, providing high-quality visuals. Devotees are also provided with headphones that offer excellent sound quality for an immersive experience.

Given the growing number of visitors from across the country and abroad, there are plans to establish more Darshan Kendras in the city. According to Chief Minister Yogi's vision, now the emphasis is also being laid on the process of providing darshan through virtual reality platforms in all the major areas, including Ayodhya. The process to connect 18 major pilgrimage sites through virtual reality has

already begun, with the shooting for this project now completed.

Key sites included in this initiative are Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple, Hanuman Garhi temple, Nageshwar Nath temple, Ram Ki Paidi, Chhoti Devkali temple, Rang Mahal, Surya Kund, Bharat Kund, Guptar Ghat, Badi Devkali temple, Kanak Bahwan temple and Dashrath Mahal temple. Vikas Tiwari, a visitor from Bikaner, described the experience as "rare and amazing", recommending that every devotee visiting Ayodhya should see it after Darshan of Lord Rama.

According to Ashwani Pandey, Vice-Chairman of Ayodhya Development Authority, the Darshan Kendra is part of an initiative to boost tourism. Currently, it is available as a demo, and over a thousand

people have already experienced it. Plans are in place to open more centres and expand offerings to include virtual viewings of religious events and sites, such as the Bhasma Aarti of Ujjain and locations like Mathar, Vaishno Devi, Omkareshwar and Bhimashankar. The initiative also includes a plan to show this 3D documentary to devotees sitting in the country and abroad. Agreements have been signed with three companies to develop an app that will provide subscribers with a VR device for a fully immersive experience. Additional Darshan Kendras are expected to open soon in Ayodhya.

Currently, the centre, which opened during Deepotsav, is free of charge, but a ticket price of Rs 100-150 will be introduced later, contributing to government revenue.

# Property dealer shot dead

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow (PTI): A 26-year-old property dealer was shot dead near the Jaddu Parsia petrol pump in the Deoria district, police said on Thursday.

Three unidentified motorcycle-borne assailants approached Nihal Singh from behind when he was on his motorcycle and fired at his head, the police said. Singh collapsed on the spot, after which the assailants fired two more shots before fleeing. Passersby rushed him to the hospital, where doctors declared him dead, they added.

"An FIR has been lodged against unidentified persons and teams have been constituted for a probe," Circle Officer (Barhaj) Aditya Kumar said. The killing sparked outrage among locals, who began to gather at the scene.

However, officials arrived with additional force to control the situation. Officials said Singh was a resident of Samogar village in Madanpur and the only son in his family. His father

Vishwajeet Singh works in Kuwait and had built a house in Deoria's Munshif Colony. Singh, who was involved in property dealings, was travelling from his village to the city on Thursday, an official said.

In another incident, upset over being mocked in public, a man in allegedly killed his sister-in-law in UP's Banda district five days ago and was arrested Thursday, police said.

Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Shivraj said that on the morning of November 3, the body of Asha alias Gudiya Kushwaha (30) was found in a cattle shed in Padmai village. A murder case was filed against an unknown person, and investigations began, he said. During the probe, it was found that Sunil alias Bukka Kushwaha (23), a resident of the same village, was the prime suspect. Upon being taken into custody and questioned, he confessed to the crime, the officer claimed. "Sunil admitted to being upset

with Asha, who was his sister-in-law. He claimed she often mocked him in front of others, which led him to commit the crime," Shivraj said. "On the night of November 2, he allegedly entered her room through the roof and struck her on the head with a bamboo stick and brick while she was sleeping. He then dragged her body to a cattle shed to conceal it, the ASP added.

# TWO BURNT ALIVE IN TRUCK COLLISION

A truck driver and his helper were burnt alive when two trucks collided and caught fire in the Hussainganj area of Fatehpur district, police said on Thursday. The incident occurred around midnight on Wednesday on the Fatehpur-Lucknow road. Additional SP Vijay Shankar Mishra said, Vinay Shukla (35), the driver of one of the trucks, and his helper, Ramraj Yadav (23), were burnt alive in the blaze.

# Devotees throng ghats, offer Sandhya Arghya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Thousands of devotees thronged various Ganga and Varuna ghats apart from some ponds, including the famous Surya Sarovar in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) premises, here on Thursday evening to offer Sandhya Arghya to Surya Bhagwan (Sun God) at sunset on the penultimate day of four-day Surya Shasthi festival, popularly known as Dala Chhath Puja.

Elaborate security arrangements were made at various ghats and ponds. Cops were also deployed in civil uniforms on the banks of Ganga river between Samneghat and Namohat near Rajghat. Additionally, the personnel of Water Police, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and PAC Flood Relief Squad kept a vigil on 88-odd Ganga ghats through boats. The activities of trouble makers and anti-social elements were monitored through drones and CCTV cameras installed at the major ghats. Vehicles, including two-wheelers, were not allowed to go to Ganga ghats.

The devotees began arriving at various ghats of Ganga and Varuna to secure space at the stairs. Rush was also seen at different ghats of Ramnagar, including Shastri and Balua ghats. Huge crowd of devotees gathered at the ghats such as Dashaswamedh, Rajendra Prasad, Ahliyabai, Man Mandir, Assi, Sheeta, Scindia, Panchganga, Nagva, Bhainsasur, Rajghat, Narad, Kedar, Hanuman, Ravidas and Tulsi Ghat. Apart from this, rush was also seen at Shastri and other ghats of Varuna river and at various ponds,



Devotees offering Sandhya Arghya at Surya Sarovar in Varanasi on Thursday evening.

including in BLW. For the last several days, there was a festive mood in the markets due to this festival which has become very popular in this holy city in the recent decades as thousands of families from different districts of Purvanchal (eastern Uttar Pradesh) and adjoining areas migrated here and settled in hundreds of new colonies in the outskirts of the city. Its popularity has led the district administration and police to make proper arrangements. For the last several days, the Nagar Nigam was trying to remove the silt collected at the stairs of ghats during the recent

## Chhath Puja celebrated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Chhath Puja was celebrated with great enthusiasm at IFFCO Ghiyanagar, Phulpur. The fasting women offered arghya to the setting sun and worshipped the sun. Chhath Puja is celebrated with great pomp every year in IFFCO. After the puja, prasad was distributed. This occasion symbolises reverence and respect for nature, sun and water. The

IFFCO township administration had made special arrangements. Cleaning was also done at puja ghats. Prominent among those present on the occasion were Vineeta Kudesia, Arun Kumar, Satish Singh, CB Singh, Pankaj Pandey, Vijay Yadav, Anurag Tiwari, Robin Ranjan, Dharmendra Singh, Rama Kant Singh, Jaishankar Yadav, VK Verma and Ashok Srivastava with their families.

floods through dozens of pumps apart from launching a massive cleanliness drive. For making elaborate security arrangements, many teams of National Disaster Relief Force were deployed in the city ghats from the two in Chandauli across the Ganga river equipped with all necessary safety equipment and water ambulance. In view of Chhath, the NDRF personnel were deployed at Ganga ghats to take responsibility for the security and medical care of the devotees. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of 11th Battalion NDRF, Manoj Kumar Sharma,

said that many teams were deployed in the Ganga in Varanasi and each team consisted of 25 to 30 personnel. The NDRF rescue personnel were deployed at all major ghats with water ambulances, divers, paramedics, deep divers, deep diving suits, life jackets, oxygen cylinders and other necessary rescue equipment. The NDRF rescue personnel along with rescue motor boats and water ambulances continued patrolling the Ganga for the safety of devotees. Trained MFR (Medical First Aid and Response) personnel were also present on all boats. Meanwhile Additional District Magistrate (City) Alok Kumar Verma said strict action will be taken against those who reserved places on the ghats by writing the name of government offices/employees/police stations etc in view of Chhath Puja. The administration has taken the step as it has come to notice that an attempt was made to reserve it by writing the name of government offices/employees/police stations etc on the 'vedis' (altar) made for worship at certain ghats. Apart from this, places have also been reserved by writing the name of specific departments on the ghats.

The ADM (City) said all ghats and public places of Varanasi district are used by the common people in general, during the festival of Chhath, it is improper and illegal to reserve places on the ghats by writing the name of government offices/employees/police stations etc. He has given strict instructions that if any such act is done by any government employee/department, then taking adverse cognisance of it, strict action will be taken against the concerned.

## Driver, cleaner burnt alive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A dumper driver and a cleaner were burnt alive after two dumpers collided head on in front of RVS Public School in Husainganj police station area of Fatehpur on Lucknow Road late on Wednesday night. After the incident, both the vehicles caught fire which led to killing of driver and cleaner of empty dumper on the spot. They were identified as driver Vinay Shukla (35) and cleaner Ramraj Yadav (23), residents of Kherwa under Shivratna Ganj police station, Amethi. Police rushed to the

spot and sent bodies for an autopsy. Further action was being initiated in the matter, police said. Meanwhile a man was killed while three others were injured when an e-rickshaw collided head on with a bike on Kairda Road under Chhibramau Kotwali police area of Kannauj on Thursday morning. On the other hand, two car-borne people were killed while two others rescued by villagers after their vehicle fell into a ditch at Gadhwera village culvert under Bara Sagwar police area of Unnao late on Wednesday evening.

## Former pradhan's body found

Prayagraj (PNS): The body of a former pradhan was found lying near Gauhania bypass under Ghurpur police station of Yamuna Nagar on Thursday. Rajesh Kumar Patel alias Khanna Pradhan (50) of Koili Tara Mazra of Mankawar Gram Sabha of Ghurpur police station area, was the eldest of four brothers and was involved in farming as well as social service.

He had been the village head 10 years ago. His son AK Patel said he had gone for a morning walk as usual and after some time information about his body lying on the side of the road near Gauhania bypass was received. SHO Aditya Singh said suspicion of murder was expressed in the complaint received from son. However, investigation is being done.

## Governor to inaugurate exhibition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Governor Anandiben Patel will inaugurate the Craftroots Kanpur Exhibition at the Lajpat Bhawan here on Friday. Addressing mediapersons, Anar Patel (Founder of Gramshree & Craftroots) said Craftroots, proficient handicraft organisation enriching the lives of over 35,000 artisans across 22 states in India, will organise the exhibition from November 8 to 12. She said this exhibition will give the opportunity to the 80+ artisans to rep-

resent their 70+ unique Indian crafts. Besides, there will be live demonstrations of crafts such as Pattachitra (Odisha), Lac Bangle (Rajasthan), Glass Art (Uttar Pradesh) and live pottery (Gujarat). She said Craftroots Kanpur exhibition promises an extraordinary blend of cultural significance with rich Indian traditional culture and values. Visitors get a thrilling experience of witnessing the process of on-set live crafts. This amplifies the acknowledgement of artisans' skills and dedication.

## Family found dead: Police looking for missing relative

PTI ■ VARANASI

Two days after a family of five was found dead in Varanasi, police are trying to trace a relative who has gone missing since the incident and will question three tenants who have been traced in Mumbai, an official said.

According to Bhelupur Station House Officer (SHO) Vijay Shukla, a relative of the family, Vicky, who works in Bengaluru and had come to the city for Diwali, is missing and his mobile phone has been switched off. The tenants were, however, traced to Mumbai, he said. The incident occurred in the Bhaidani area on Monday night, when Rajendra Gupta's wife Neetu Gupta (45), their sons Navendra (25) and Subendra (15), and daughter Gaurangi (16) were shot dead while asleep, the official said. Officials initially zeroed in on Gupta, a liquor businessman who had a murder case pending against him since 1997 and was out on bail, as the main suspect and launched a search for him.

"But later, his body was found in an under-construction house in the Rohaniya area," the SHO said. Rajendra's mother told the police that there were daily disputes between her daughter-in-law and son due to ongoing family issues, he added.

Three youths from Bihar — all aged 22-25 — who had been living on rent in Rajendra's house were traced to Mumbai, said Shukla. "The police have reached them. They will also be questioned," he said. Police said they are working to ascertain the motive behind the killings.

## MLA distributes Ayushman cards

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

MLA Neelkanth Tiwari distributed Ayushman cards to the beneficiaries at Shree Shiv Prasad Gupta (SSPG) Divisional Hospital, Kabirchaura on Thursday in a special camp to make Ayushman cards for the elderly above 70 years of age in the district. Speaking on the occasion, he said beneficiaries will be able to avail free treatment facility of up to ₹5 lakh under this scheme by getting admitted to any registered hospital. During this, he made the card of Birdupur resident Awadhesh Kumar Singh himself from his mobile and also informed the people present about it and said the beneficiaries should make their Ayushman cards themselves from the mobile. He said the only eligibility criteria for getting benefits under this scheme is that the age of the person should be 70 years or more. This has been determined on the basis of age recorded in Aadhaar which will be the only document for enrollment. Chief Medical Officer (CMO)



MLA Neelkanth Tiwari issuing Ayushman card to an elderly woman at SSPG Hospital in Varanasi on Thursday.

Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said such camps will continue to be conducted in the coming days so that maximum number of elderly people can get benefits. He said Android mobile users will be able to download this app from Play Store and iPhone users will be able to open it from HSTP site. Apart from this, such elderly people can now get their Ayushman card made through self-registration from Ayushman App or from Ayushman Mitras or Panchayat Sahayaks in Jan Seva Kendra, panchayat secretariats or through CHOs,

kotedars and ASHA workers in Ayushman Arogya Mandir. Additional Chief Medical Officer and Nodal Dr S S Kanaujia said during the day, Ayushman cards of 85 elderly people have been made in the camp and 756 cards have been made in the entire district. He said Aadhaar-based e-KYC will be mandatory for issuing enrolment of Ayushman cards for eligible senior citizens of both existing and new families. Additional shared top-up cover of up to ₹5 lakh per year will be provided for senior citizens aged

70 years and above in families already covered under AB PM-JAY.

**TCT CONFERENCE:** Two cardiologists from Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) participated in this year's TCT conference (Transcatheter Cardiovascular Therapeutics) held in Washington DC (USA) recently. Prof Vikas Agrawal, Head of the department and Dr Soumik Ghosh, Associate Professor were the part of the delegations representing BHU, Varanasi. While Prof Agrawal presented his research paper on distal trans-radial approach for coronary angioplasty, Dr Soumik Ghosh presented two challenging cardiac interventions highlighting the importance of using IVUS and OCT imaging techniques during angioplasty/stenting. TCT is the world's premier educational meeting focussing on interventional cardiovascular medicine, where all scientists and physicians specialising in cardiovascular medicine congregate to share latest research and surgical techniques.

## Ganga Mahotsav from Nov 12

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A meeting was held in the Collectorate Auditorium here on Wednesday under the chairmanship of District Magistrate S Rajalingam for the successful organisation of Ganga Mahotsav from November 12 to 14 and Dev Deepawali on November 15. On the occasion he instructed the officers concerned to ensure complete cleanliness, medical, parking and security arrangements in the organisation of Ganga Mahotsav to be organised by the Tourism and Culture department at Assi Ghat, Rajghat, Rajendra Prasad Ghat and Namohat. Major cultural programmes will be held at Assi Ghat. In view of the cultural programmes, the DM gave necessary instructions for all necessary preparations at Assi Ghat along with adequate security arrangements as well as barricading towards the river. He directed the officers to secure better arrangements for the convenience of the public coming to the cultural programme.

According to him, laser show and fire show will also be held at Ganga ghats during Ganga Mahotsav. He directed the officers concerned to ensure proper cleaning of ghats as well as complete lighting arrangements. Maximum public participation should be ensured for lighting diyas on Dev Deepawali. Ambulance arrangements should also

be made in and around the venue in case of contingency. There should be adequate lighting arrangements on all buildings as well as bridges and overbridges and all intersections. Proper branding of the programme should be ensured at bus stations, railway stations and airport. Security arrangements will be made by the police department for projection mapping and laser show at Chet Singh Ghat on November 15 itself.

Temporary toilets for women should be arranged for lighting lamps on the other side of the Ganga bank on the Dev Deepawali day. Security, medical and fire fighting arrangements must be made for tourists/devotees/public for lighting lamps on the banks of the Ganga. Arrangements for lighting lamps will be made by Smart City at Namohat. On the Dev Deepawali day, after the Kartik Purnima bath, arrangements for timely cleaning of all ghats should be ensured for lighting lamps. Vice-Chairman of Varanasi Development Authority (VDA) Akshat Verma, Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal, Additional District Magistrate (City) Alok Kumar Verma, Additional District Magistrate (ADM/Protocol) Prakash Chandra, Deputy Director (Tourism), NDRF officials and representatives of committees of various ghats were present in the meeting.

## CSJMU achieves milestone

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University (CSJMU), Kanpur, is proud to announce its inclusion for the first time in the highly respected QS Asia and QS South Asia Rankings for the very first time. The 2025 QS Asia University Rankings indicate that CSJMU is ranked in the 801-850 band among Asian universities. Also, CSJMU has been ranked 263 in the Southern Asia region. This ranking indicates the university's position among South Asian institutions, highlighting it as a new entrant in this competitive regional ranking. This score is derived from multiple weighted indicators, each assessing different aspects of the university's performance. This achievement is a major milestone for the university, reflecting its commitment to high-quality education, impactful research, and community service in India and beyond. The QS Asia and South Asia Rankings are among the most respected university ranking systems worldwide. Managed by the global organisation QS (Quacquarelli Symonds), these rankings assess universities based on important factors like academic reputation, faculty-to-student ratio, research quality, and student employability.

It focuses on universities across Asia, recognising those that excel in teaching, research and international engagement. It highlights top universities in South Asia based on their quality of education, research influence and community impact.



Vice-Chancellor, CSJMU Kanpur, Prof Vinay Kumar Pathak

The QS World University Rankings is based on a range of indicators, each with a specific weight. The Academic Reputation indicator, which measures how scholars view the university, carries the highest weight at . This is followed by Employer Reputation which assesses how employers rate the job readiness of graduates. Together, these two make up half of the score, showing the importance of both academic and employment outcomes.

The other factors include faculty student ratio and citations per paper. Faculty student ratio looks at the level of academic support for students, while citations per paper shows the research impact of the university's publications. Smaller weights go to papers per faculty and staff, as well as international student exchange indicators. These various percentages combine to give a balanced score, reflecting the university's academic reputation, research output, student support and global engagement. Moving forward, CSJMU can focus on enhancing its international col-

laborations, research output, and student diversity to improve its standing in the QS rankings. Targeting increased faculty publications, research funding and higher citation impact could significantly boost its research reputation, a crucial QS metric. Additionally, by strengthening student and faculty exchange programs and expanding partnerships with global institutions, CSJMU can enhance its international profile, attracting more international students and faculty. Pursuing these steps could open the door for CSJMU to aim for higher placement in the QS Asia Rankings and eventually strive for entry into the QS World University Rankings, establishing itself as a prominent institution not only in India but globally.

Vice-Chancellor Prof. Vinay Kumar Pathak expressed his gratitude, saying, "We are deeply thankful to Chancellor Anandiben Patel for her unwavering support, motivation and invaluable guidance that have been instrumental in achieving this prestigious rank. This accomplishment in the QS Southern Asia rankings not only elevates the university's stature but also opens new avenues of opportunity for our students, enhancing their global competitiveness and exposure." He added, "Moving forward, our focus is on further elevating the institution's standing to achieve recognition in the world rankings. This ranking is a stepping stone in our journey, as we strive for excellence in research, teaching, and innovation on a global scale."

## Conspiracy to divide and get votes: Azad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

National President of the Azad Samaj Party Chandrashekar Azad who reached Prayagraj, lashed out at CM Yogi Adityanath's statement 'Batenge to Katenge' (If divided, we will be destroyed). He said, "This is just a conspiracy to divide and get votes." Chandrashekar said, "If there was no judiciary in the country, the government would have proved all its lies and crimes to be true. Dalits and Muslims are being oppressed." Chandrashekar had come to campaign in support of party candidate Shahid Khan in the Phulpur by-election. He said the land of Phulpur is the land of Bahujan movement and struggle. Allahabad has been the land that gave the country a prime minister. "We will make up for all the shortcomings in the 2024 by-election. I am confident that we will win the election here with the blessings of the weaker sections," he said. He added, "Azad Samaj Party has to be strengthened by taking everyone along. We have to fight against unemployment and raise our voice against the atrocities being committed on the poor. Bulldozers are being run on the houses of poor people, all these issues have to be raised." On the question of the threat to his vote bank from Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati, Chandrashekar Azad said, "We are not in any danger from her, she is elder to me and I respect her." Nagina MP Chandrashekar Azad started his talk with CM Yogi Adityanath's statement 'Batenge to Katenge'. He said, "Such words are spreading poison in the society. The public has to decide. They are being distracted from the main issues by giving the slogan of 'katenge-batenge'. No one is talking about unemployment and inflation." Chandrashekar said "if we study, we will move forward and walk together... only this will take the country on the path of progress". He also condemned the journalist's murder in Fatehpur and lathi-charge on lawyers in Ghaziabad.

## Preparations underway to make Kashi's Dev Deepawali a fusion of tradition & modernity

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Yogi government is expanding the global reach of Sanatan Dharma by enhancing Kashi's Dev Deepawali celebrations with grandeur and innovation. Following the success of Ayodhya's Deepotsav, preparations are underway to make Dev Deepawali in Kashi an extraordinary fusion of tradition and modernity. Cultural preservation will shine alongside technological marvels, with historic ghats showcasing 3D projection displays of the sacred stories of Sanatan Dharma.

At Chet Singh Ghat a 30-minute laser show will depict the divine glory of Shiva and the origins of Maa Ganga, scheduled for three captivating performances. Now recognised as a state fair, Dev Deepawali's charm has grown, blending ancient traditions with modern artistry. Deputy Director of the Tourism Department, Rajendra Kumar Rawat, said that a 3D projection mapping laser show will be held at Chet Singh Ghat. This show, centered on the descent of Maa Ganga and the glory of Lord Shiva, will run for half an

hour and is scheduled for three broadcasts. He added, "This year, Kashi will celebrate Dev Deepawali on November 15, with the banks of the north-flowing Ganga illuminated by 12 lakh diyas, extending from the paved ghats to the eastern shore and lighting nearby ponds and lakes. Public participation will enhance the festivities, along with an eco-friendly green fireworks display across the Ganga from Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham, filling Kashi's skies with vibrant colours and reflections of tradition and reverence.

## Seminar on 'Kashi Vaibhav' from today

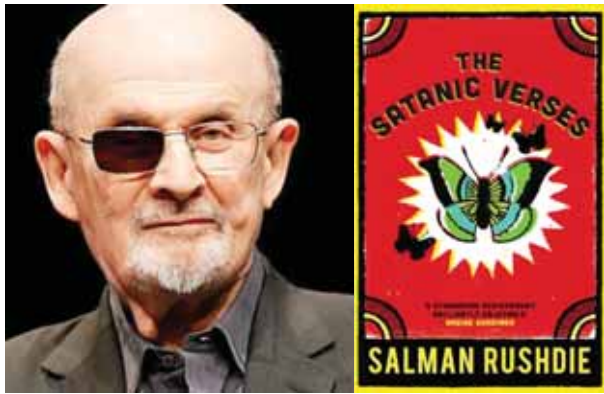
Varanasi (PNS): A three-day international seminar on 'Kashi Vaibhav: A Historical Discussion' is going to be organised by the History Department of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) from November 8 to 10 at the Centre for the Vedic Science of the university. The inaugural ceremony of this seminar will be organised at the centre on Friday at 10am. This international seminar will be attended by eminent scholars, historians, cultural experts, environmentalists and administrative officers from various fields, who will share their research and experience on various subjects and present their views on the rich heritage of Kashi. This seminar will be attended by Vice-Chancellor of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University Prof Bihari Lal Sharma, President of Indo-Sri Lanka International Buddhist Association (Sarnath) Dr K Siri Suredh Therio, Netherlands' Prof Mohan Kant Gautam, Canadian academician and writer Hemraj Ramdatt, America's Anthony A. Manbodhe, Prof Maruti Nandan Tiwari, Prof Rana

PB Singh, Prof Vijayalakshmi Singh and other educationists and thinkers. The Head of the History Department, Prof Ghanshyam said in this seminar, there will be an in-depth discussion on the cultural, social, economic and spiritual aspects of Kashi. Along with this, topics like fairs and festivals of Kashi, folk arts, role of various communities, economy of Kashi, medical tourism, environment, conservation of river Ganga, art and music gharanas, image of Kashi from international perspective, literature and modernisation of Kashi will be discussed. The objective of the seminar is to pave the way to preserve the heritage of Kashi and maintain its rich splendor with modernity. He said that all the preparations for the seminar have been done. The programmes will be organised in a systematic manner at the scheduled time and place. Conveners of the seminar, Dr Satyapal Yadav and Dr Seema Mishra said that more than 100 research papers are expected to be presented.

# Delhi HC closes plea against ban on Rushdie's The Satanic Verses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has closed the proceedings on a petition challenging the Rajiv Gandhi government's decision in 1998 to ban the import of Salman Rushdie's controversial novel, *The Satanic Verses*, after authorities failed to produce the relevant notification. The court noted it has to be presumed that such a notification does not exist. In an order passed on November 5, a bench headed by Justice Rekha Palli observed that the petition, which was pending since 2019, was therefore infructuous and the petitioner would be entitled to take all actions in respect of the book as available in law. The Centre banned the import of the Booker Prize-winning author's *The Satanic Verses* for law-and-order reasons in 1988, after Muslims across the world



viewed it as blasphemous. Petitioner Sandipan Khan had argued in court that he was unable to import the book on account of a notification issued by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs on October 5, 1988, banning its import into the country in accordance with the Customs Act, but the same was neither available on any official website nor with any of the authorities concerned. "What emerges is that none of the respondents could produce the said notification dated 05.10.1988 with which the petitioner is purportedly aggrieved and, in fact, the purported author of the said notification has also shown his helplessness in producing a copy of the said notification during the pendency of the

present writ petition since its filing way back in 2019," the bench, also comprising Justice Saurabh Banerjee, observed. "In the light of the aforesaid circumstances, we have no other option except to presume that no such notification exists, and therefore, we cannot examine the validity thereof and dispose of the writ petition as infructuous," it concluded. Besides assailing the ban notification, the petitioner had sought to set aside other related directions issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1988. The petitioner had also sought directions to enable him to import the book from its publisher or international e-commerce websites. During the course of the proceedings in the court, authorities had said the notification was untraceable, and therefore, could not be produced.

# CPCB rejects Lancet study linking air pollution to 33,000 deaths in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) opposed the findings of a Lancet study in the National Green Tribunal (NGT), which claimed poor air quality had severely affected mortality rates in 10 major Indian cities. Claiming the study's data may not be "absolute," the CPCB said the deaths couldn't be attributed to pollution alone and that the satellite data and modelling techniques used for extrapolations in it may not necessarily represent the "realistic Indian scenario." The NGT had taken suo motu cognisance of a newspaper report quoting the study, which stated approximately 33,000 annual deaths were linked to air pollution levels that exceeded the World Health Organisation guidelines. The study examined the cities of Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune, Shimla, and Varanasi.



In its reply dated November 4, the CPCB said the study analysed the daily average Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5 concentrations at one square kilometre spatial resolution across the country between 2008 and 2020. It also used mortality records from each municipal corporation in the 10 cities. "The study concludes that short-term PM2.5 exposure was associated with a high risk of death in India, even at concentrations below the current Indian PM2.5 standard. These associations were stronger for locally generated air pollutants.

However, the study has limitations," claimed the CPCB report. According to the pollution control board, the "variability in the strength of death registration systems across different states and cities" and the analyses of "cause-specific mortality" as "the international classification of disease codes" was not done by the authors for most cities. "In the absence of cause of death data, several extrapolations of data take place. Therefore, the deaths cannot be attributed to air pollution alone and thereby may not portray a correct

comparison," it claimed. Regarding the adverse health impact of PM2.5 and other pollutants, the CPCB report said air pollution was one of the factors affecting respiratory ailments and associated diseases. It said an individual's health was also influenced by several factors, including food habits, occupational habits, socio-economic status, medical history, immunity and heredity. "Ground monitors-based data and satellite study-based data have been used for PM2.5 measurements using a generalised model...Satellite data and modelling techniques used for extrapolations may not necessarily represent the realistic Indian scenario and that such an analysis may not be absolute," it added. The CPCB said cities exceeding the national ambient air quality annual standards for PM10 concentrations for five consecutive years had been designated as non-attainment cities.

# SC: No change in Government recruitment rules, after process starts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Bringing transparency in government recruitments, the Supreme Court (SC) on Thursday held that rules of the game for appointment in Government jobs cannot be changed midway unless the procedure permits so. A five-judge Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud said recruitment process commences from the issuance of advertisement calling for applications and ends with filing up of vacancies. "Eligibility criteria for being placed in the select list notified at the commencement of the recruitment process can't be changed midway through the recruitment process unless the extant rules so permit or the advertisement which is not contrary to the extant rules so permit," the bench said. The bench, also comprising Justices Hrishikesh Roy, P S Narasimha, Pankaj Mishra and Manoj Misra, unanimously held if change of criteria is permissible



under the extant rules or advertisement, it would have to meet the requirement of Article 14 (right to equality) of the Constitution and satisfy the test of non-arbitrariness. "Recruiting bodies subject to the extant rules may devise appropriate procedure for bringing the recruitment process to its logical end provided the procedure so adopted is transparent, non-discriminatory, non-arbitrary and has a rationale nexus to the object sought to be achieved," Justice Misra said while pronouncing the verdict. The bench said that extant rules having statutory force are binding on the recruiting bodies both in terms of procedure and eligibility.

"Placement in the select list gives no indefeasible right to appointment. The state or its instrumentality for bona fide reason may choose not to fill up the vacancy," it said. However, the bench clarified if vacancies exist, the State or its instrumentality cannot arbitrarily deny appointment to persons who are in the zone of consideration in the select list. The top court said that if the extant rules or the advertisement provides for setting of benchmarks for different stages of recruitment process and if any such benchmark is set, the same should be stipulated before the commencement of the recruitment process. "But if the extant rules or the advertisement inviting application empowers the competent authority to set benchmarks at different stages of the recruitment process, then such benchmarks may be set anytime before that stage is reached so that neither the candidates nor the valuator/examiner/interviewer is taken by surprise," the bench said.

# SC refuses to transfer Kolkata rape-murder case trial outside West Bengal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to transfer the rape and murder trial pertaining to a doctor in Kolkata outside West Bengal. A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud said the trial court judge had sufficient powers to order another investigation upon feeling it necessary after examining the evidence. The top court also examined the sixth status report filed by the CBI in relation to the case of rape and murder at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, but refrained from making observations saying the probe was underway. The apex court noted that a Kolkata court had framed charges against prime accused, Sanjay Roy, on November 4 and a day-to-day trial in the case would start November 11 onwards. During the hearing, the National Task Force (NTF), formed to create a protocol over the safety of health professionals, submitted its

report in the apex court. The top court directed the NTF's report to be shared with all states and union territories and posted the hearing after four weeks. The top court on October 15 questioned the West Bengal government over the hiring of civic volunteers in the state and sought data on their recruitment and appointment process. On August 22, the SC pulled up the Kolkata police over the delay in registering the case of unnatural death of the deceased, calling it "extremely disturbing" while frowning upon the sequence of events and the timing of its procedural formalities. The top court had constituted a 10-member NTF to formulate a protocol for ensuring the safety and security of doctors and other healthcare professionals. Terming the incident as "horrific," the SC court had censured the state government over the alleged delay in filing of the FIR and allowing a crowd of thousands to vandalise the state-run facility.

# 840 tonne onions arrive in Guwahati via rail for distribution in Northeast

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday said 840 tonnes of onions have arrived by rail rake in Guwahati to boost availability of the key kitchen item in northeastern states. In an official statement, the Department of Consumer Affairs said it "maintains tempo of bulk disposal as a shipment of 840 tonnes onion by rail rake arrived at Changsari Station in Guwahati on November 5, 2024". Onion is being distributed by the NCCF (National Cooperative Consumers' Federation) in various districts of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and other northeastern states. "This will ensure wider availability of onions in north-eastern states ensuring its availability at a very reasonable price to consumers," the statement said. Bulk transportation of onions from Nashik to major destinations like Delhi, Chennai and Guwahati by rail rake has been adopted for the



first time this year for a more cost-effective and efficient disposal. On October 18, 1,600 tonnes of onion was dispatched from Nashik by Kanda Express and arrived at Kishanganj Station in Delhi on October 20, 2024. That apart, on October 23, 840 tonnes of onion had been dispatched from Nashik by rail rake, which arrived at Chennai on October 26, 2024. A shipment of 840 tonnes of onion by rail rake to Delhi arrived on October 30, 2024. Another rail rake of 840 tonnes was dispatched on October 30, 2024, to Guwahati for disposal in Assam and other northeastern states.

"Bulk disposal of onions in major mandis has helped in augmenting availability and in bringing down the prices," the department said. The government had procured 4.7 lakh tonnes of rabi onion for the price stabilisation buffer this year, and started releasing from September 5, 2024, through retail sales at Rs 35 per kg and also through bulk sales in major mandis across the country. To date, over 1.50 lakh tonnes of onion in the buffer has been dispatched from Nashik and other source centres to consuming centres through trucks by road transport and rail.

# International climate funding increases, but billions more needed for adaptation, says UN

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

International public finance to help developing countries adapt to climate change increased from USD 22 billion in 2021 to USD 28 billion in 2022, but there remains a huge gap between what is needed and what is being delivered, according to a new UN report. At the UN climate conference in Glasgow in 2021, developed nations were urged to at least double their adaptation funding for developing countries from about USD 19 billion in 2019 by 2025. The UN climate summit in Dubai in December 2023 repeated this call, asking developed countries to report progress in 2024.



The "Adaptation Gap Report 2024: Come Hell and High Water" from the United Nations Environment Programme on Thursday said even achieving the Glasgow Climate Pact goal would only reduce the adaptation finance gap, estimated at USD 187-359 billion per year, by around 5 per cent. Earlier in the day, European climate change agency

Copernicus said it is almost certain that 2024 will be the warmest year on record and the first with an average temperature at least 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, following the second-warmest October in history. UNEP's Emissions Gap Report, released last month, said the world is on course for a catastrophic temperature rise of 2.6-3.1 degrees Celsius this century without immediate and major cuts to greenhouse gas emissions. "Global average temperature rise is still below 1.5 degrees Celsius, yet climate change is already hitting communities across the world hard, particularly the most poor and vulnerable. And it will get much worse... So, it is for good

reason that UNEP's Adaptation Gap Report 2024 calls on nations to dramatically increase efforts to adapt to climate change, starting with a commitment to act ambitiously on adaptation finance at COP 29," UNEP's Executive Director Inger Andersen said. She said the enormous gap between adaptation finance needs and flows means that the world is failing to adapt to current impacts - with adaptation planning slowing and implementation falling behind. According to the report, 171 countries now have at least one national adaptation policy, strategy, or plan in place. Of these, 51 per cent have a second, and 20 per cent have a third.

# Parliamentary panel had recommended staggered vacations for SC, HCs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court's move to rechristen its traditional summer vacations as "partial court working days" comes months after the government forwarded recommendations of a parliamentary committee on staggered vacation for judges to the secretary general of the apex court and registrars general of 25 high courts for "appropriate consideration." The change made by the Supreme Court (SC) assumes significance in the wake of the recent criticism from various quarters that the SC enjoys long breaks. The development was a part of an amendment in Supreme Court Rules, 2013, which have now become



Supreme Court (Second Amendment) Rules, 2024, notified on November 5. "The length of the partial court working days and the number of holidays for the court and the offices of the court shall be such as may be fixed by the Chief Justice and notified in the official gazette so as not to exceed ninety-five days excluding Sundays," read the notification.

Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal had informed the Lok Sabha earlier in August that the standing committee on law and personnel had referred to former Chief Justice of India RM Lodha's suggestion that instead of all judges going on vacations, all at one time, individual judges should take their leave at different times of the year so that the courts are constantly open and they are always present to hear cases. The committee was of the opinion that Justice Lodha's suggestion on the court vacations should be considered by the judiciary. "Accordingly, the recommendation of the Rajya Sabha DRPSC (department-related standing committee) in

respect of the aforementioned subject was forwarded by the government to the Secretary General, Supreme Court and all Registrars General of the respective High Court for appropriate consideration," Meghwal had told the House. In its action taken report tabled in Parliament in February, the committee then chaired by late Sushil Modi had asked the government to press the Supreme Court and the 25 high courts to share their response at the earliest on its recommendation that judges can go for "staggered" vacation keeping in mind the huge pendency of cases. The action taken report of the committee was based on its earlier report on "Judicial Processes and Their Reforms".

# India's climate policies expected to reduce CO2 emissions by around four billion tonnes by 2030: Report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India's current climate policies are projected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by around four billion tonnes between 2020 and 2030, and drive a 24-per cent reduction in coal-based power generation, according to a new report. This is significant considering the fast-developing South Asian country, now the fifth-largest economy in the world, had committed to reducing emissions by one billion tonnes by 2030 at COP26 in Glasgow. The study by Delhi-based independent think tank Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) said policies for India's power, residential and transport sectors have already

saved 440 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (MtCO2) between 2015 and 2020. According to the report, in the power sector alone, policies promoting renewable energy are expected to drive a 24 per cent decline in coal-based electricity generation by 2030, relative to a no-policy scenario. This is equivalent to avoiding 80 GW of coal-based power plants, which would have otherwise been installed to meet India's burgeoning power demand, CEEW said. At present, India generates around 71 per cent of its electricity using coal. Further, with strategic support and competitive tenders, the share of combined solar and wind power in India's energy mix is projected to rise to 26 per cent by 2030 and 43 per

cent by 2050, up from only around 3 per cent in 2015. This shift will decisively reduce reliance on coal, which is currently the source of nearly half of the country's total carbon dioxide emissions. This transition is crucial for bending India's emissions curve downward, but achieving net zero by 2070 will require even more ambitious action. India has been pushing for a higher share of renewables in its energy mix, increased adoption of electric vehicles and improved energy efficiency in domestic air-conditioning and lighting. It has also launched programmes like the National Solar Mission, the FAME I and II schemes, the Standards and Labelling scheme and the UJALA programme, which



will continue to affect future energy demand and supply. Arunabha Ghosh, CEO, CEEW, said, "India has demonstrated formidable climate leadership over the past decade, from scaling renewables to advancing energy efficiency and electric mobility through policies. This

has not only diversified our energy mix and doubled down on energy security, but also created new markets and significantly cut carbon dioxide emissions. "The road to net zero needs bolder action and the foot cannot be taken off the pedal now. To enable the global

south's efforts, COP29 must ensure climate finance flows to developing countries like India, without riders. This would deepen renewable markets and a sustainable future for all." In the transport sector, the CEEW study has found that policies, such as the FAME (2015-2022) schemes, have set the stage for significant growth in the Electric Vehicle (EV) market. Projections show that by 2030, electric two-wheeler and four-wheeler sales could account for 19 per cent and 11 per cent of their respective segments. This could lead to a 13 per cent reduction in oil and gas demand in this decade. By 2050, these figures are expected to rise dramatically to above 65 per cent for both EV categories, resulting in a 55

per cent reduction in the sector's oil and gas demand relative to the no-policy scenario. In the residential sector, the 2006 Standards and Labelling programme has led to significant energy efficiency improvements in air-conditioning and cooling. The study has found that air conditioning-related electricity consumption in Indian households is projected to double between 2020 and 2030, and then soar by almost 10 times by 2050. This growth would be driven not just by hotter summers and higher incomes but also due to lower electricity prices, supported by higher renewable energy penetration. The UJALA programme -- by promoting and distributing more than 36.7 crore energy-

efficient LED bulbs since 2015 -- is projected to reduce residential lighting electricity use by 48 per cent by 2030 and 59 per cent by 2050 relative to the no-policy scenario. Vaibhav Chaturvedi, senior fellow, CEEW, and the lead author of the study, said, "Our findings show that current policies have set India on the right path. New policies that build on existing climate policies are already being formulated to accelerate efforts to meet the 2070 net-zero target." Immediate steps should include scaling up investments in renewable energy, enhancing the domestic Carbon Credit Trading Scheme and focusing on energy efficiency in key sectors like industry, transport and buildings, he added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## A turning point

While the US-India relationship is poised to deepen in defence and trade, there will also be hurdles in some areas

Donald Trump's return to the presidency brings a new chapter in US foreign policy that holds considerable implications for India. The outgoing Biden administration though not averse to India had reservations about the way domestic politics was shaping in India. But with Trump at the helm of affairs that reservation may quietly go and the Trump administration may go an extra mile to accommodate New Delhi. Trump's victory could reshape strategic alliances, redefine trade relations and impact key regional dynamics that matter to New Delhi. The US-India defence relationship saw considerable progress during Trump's previous tenure. He promoted India as a key strategic partner in the Indo-Pacific to counterbalance China's rising influence, leading to initiatives such as increased military sales and the signing of defence agreements, including BECA (Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement). Trump's victory may reinforce these policies, as he is likely to continue focusing on Indo-Pacific security. A renewed



push for defence cooperation, joint military exercises, and arms deals could bolster India's military capabilities in the region.

However, not all his policies may be to India's liking. In his earlier tenure, Trump prioritised American industry, his trade policies often led to increased tariffs and renegotiations that impacted India. His "America First" approach pressured India into trade reforms to reduce the US trade deficit. This time, India might face similar pressures, particularly in the technology and pharmaceutical sectors, but could also see openings to negotiate more favourable terms, especially if Trump seeks to reduce dependency on Chinese goods. There

is potential for renewed trade deals, but both sides will likely need to balance protectionism with mutual growth. Trump's previous immigration policies, which included tighter visa regulations, impacted the Indian IT workforce, particularly regarding H-1B visas. If his administration continues down this path, it could further restrict Indian tech talent. However, there may be room for negotiation to secure beneficial terms for skilled Indian workers, especially if Trump seeks closer ties with India on other fronts. Both Trump and India share a common concern over China's assertive actions in Asia. Trump's firm stance against China aligns with India's interests, especially in light of the India-China border standoff. Trump's support for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" and his scepticism towards Chinese trade practices resonate well with India's own strategic goals. Under Trump, the US could be a more vocal supporter of India's position on regional issues, potentially even playing a bigger role in multilateral forums like the QUAD. Trump's stance on energy independence for the US could be beneficial for India's energy security goals. Trump's victory offers both opportunities and challenges for India. For India, the priority will likely be to build on common ground, particularly in areas where interests align, and work diplomatically to address any points of contention.

### PICTALK



A trader with his camel at the annual Camel Fair at Pushkar, in Ajmer

# Donald Trump's historic comeback



KALYANI SHANKAR

With a Republican majority in the Senate, Trump re-enters the White House with renewed authority, poised to reshape both American politics and global dynamics



The much-awaited US presidential election ended on November 5, and former President 78-year-old Donald Trump triumphed by winning the White House. This would be his second inning and an extraordinary comeback for Trump. He will be the 47th president of the US. Reactions to Trump's election performance started coming in even before the final votes were counted in the US some leaders, like Israel's, showed enthusiasm as they dealt with an ongoing multi-front war. Others like Ukraine President Zelenskyy expressed anxiety. In contrast, some of America's long-standing European allies expressed anxiety about the election results. It was a nail-biting wait. Vice President Kamala Harris and Donald Trump were virtually tied in the polls, adding to the suspense. The odds that the race comes down to a few swing states are high, further prolonging the anticipation. Trump vowed to remove Democrats from the White House by defeating Kamala Harris. Kamala lost to Trump, just like Hillary Clinton lost in 2016. Clinton was the first woman nominated for president by her party. Trump built

a diverse group of voters, more than any Republican nominee in the last 20 years, even though he ran a campaign that was racially charged and attacked immigrants. Trump's election is not just a national event, but a global one. Its impact will be felt not only in American politics but also in global affairs, particularly in the ongoing Middle East and Ukrainian conflicts. The historic polls have denied a chance for a woman to preside over the White House. Vice President-elect JD Vance has an Indian connection as his wife, Usha, is an Indian. In the last 20 years, the most recent Republican presidential candidate to win the nationwide popular vote was George W Bush in 2004. This historical context is crucial as it underscores the unique nature of the US election process. In 2000, he won the Electoral College and the presidency but lost the popular vote to Al Gore. Donald Trump became president in 2016 by securing more than 270 votes in the Electoral College, a system where each state is assigned a certain number of votes based on its population. Despite losing the popular



ITS IMPACT WILL BE FELT NOT ONLY IN AMERICAN POLITICS BUT ALSO IN GLOBAL AFFAIRS, PARTICULARLY IN THE ONGOING MIDDLE EAST AND UKRAINIAN CONFLICTS

vote to Hillary Clinton by more than 2.8 million votes, Trump's victory in key states gave him the necessary Electoral College votes. In 2020, Trump lost the Electoral College and the popular vote to Joe Biden by over 7 million. The final results of the 2020 election hinged on the meticulous absentee ballot procedures in four crucial swing states - Arizona, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. These procedures, which can take days to conclude, hold the key to the outcome as they determine the validity of votes cast by mail. It was these battleground states and their absentee ballots that ultimately decided Trump's win. Donald Trump won the presidency in 2016 by getting more than 270 votes in the Electoral College. However, he lost the popular vote to Hillary Clinton by over 2.8 million votes. In 2020, Trump lost the Electoral College and the popular vote to Joe Biden by more than 7 million votes. With Trump's victory, the fears of potential violence have been allayed. The predicted disturbances during the oath-taking ceremony of President Biden in

January 2021 are less likely to occur. The power transition is expected to be peaceful, bringing a sense of reassurance to the nation. Trump was not willing for a smooth transition in 2021 claiming the results were not correct and he was cheated by becoming the victim. Trump's victory can be attributed to the diverse issues he addressed, such as immigration and the economy. In this election, Trump not only secured the White votes but also a diverse group of voters, a testament to the complexity and diversity of the American electorate. Exit polls show that nearly 20 per cent of Trump voters were people of colour. In his first election in 2016, only about 13 per cent of his voters were people of colour. Simultaneously, Republicans have snatched control of the Senate, propelled by wins in West Virginia and Ohio. Democrats previously held a narrow majority in the Senate. It will make Trump's job easy. (The writer is a popular columnist currently travelling the US; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### TRUMP WINS AGAIN

Madam — It's Trump again in America and the Americans cast their votes for reclaiming the presidency for Trump over Kamala Harris, and probably the voters were colourblind by giving an edge over to Trump to lead again. The last few weeks were certainly a grinding one for Trump and Harris and it was an evenly poised battle till the end. When Biden opted himself to bring in Kamala Harris into the fray, it was appreciable on the part of Harris to put up a brave fight to win over the hearts of voters in a closely contested election in America. The voters' keenness was visible even on election day while the voters continued to queue, adding to the record-breaking 84 million early ballots already submitted. Though the economy, immigration, and the preservation of democracy were among the pressing issues driving the voters to the polls, Trump gained momentum in his campaign after the attempt of assassination and was probably lucky enough to escape for a rebirth as the President again by winning the Presidency. By his victory, the Americans may have to wait for some more time to elect their first female president, which has been eluding the country for a long time.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

#### ARTICLE 370 CONTROVERSY

Madam—The present NC-Congress Govt in J and K is posing a grave danger to the parliamentary democracy and the constitution and thus be sacked forthwith for taking up and passing a resolution for restoration of Article 370, which was abrogated by the Parliament of Bharat. As everybody knows the problems it created in the way of integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of Bharat and ultimate elimination of Kashmiri Pandits from the valley with continuing Jihadi Terror till date. The Supreme Court unnecessarily interrupted into the matter and forced premature election in the state,

### Canada must take action



A propos to "Cowardly attack" published on November 6. The violence at Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton is reprehensible, and it has once again exposed Canada's inept handling of a sensitive situation. The

Trudeau government has been burning bridges with India after Nijjar's murder last year. On one side, he says that every Canadian has the right to practice his or her faith freely, but sadly, he cannot protect them and provide safety.

When the Canadian government can appoint India-designate terrorists like Pannun, Sandeep Singh Sidhu, and Sgt Harinder Sohi in the government or government agencies, then nothing better can be expected out of the Trudeau government. Canada, which otherwise proudly claims to be a peace-loving nation, has to deal strictly with all those elements who are destroying communal harmony and public order. Trudeau cannot allow to spew venom against India in the name of freedom, and he will have to salvage India-Canada ties before it is too late.

Bal Govind | Noida

which was limping back to normal steadily under the central rule. Muslims in the valley are still against Bharat and Hindus while expecting everything to be free from the state and are still intolerant against the return of Pandits in the valley. The regiment that supports the restoration of Art. 370 cannot be allowed to run the affairs of the state. The Supreme Court should be told in no uncertain terms not to interrupt J&K affairs any more.

Jai Prakash Gupta | Ambala Cantt

#### INDIA BIDS FOR OLYMPICS

Madam — India has taken a concrete step towards hosting the Olympics and Paralympics by formally expressing interest in hosting the big ticket events. The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) officially submitted a Letter of Intent to the Future Host Commission of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), formally expressing India's interest in hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2036, officially known as the Games of the XXXVI

Olympiad. India's top sports administrators, including IOA President PT Usha, were at the Paris Olympics earlier in the year to lobby for the country's selection. There have been reports that India would push for the inclusion of indigenous disciplines like yoga, kho kho and kabaddi if the bid is successful.

IOC President Thomas Bach had also supported India's case, claiming that there was a "strong case" for India to host the Olympic Games. In the process, India joined nine other countries that have expressed interest in hosting the 2036 Games. The 10 countries that have shown initial interest in hosting the 2036 Games include Mexico (Mexico City, Guadalajara-Monterrey-Tijuana), Indonesia (Nusantara), Turkey (Istanbul), India (Ahmedabad), Poland (Warsaw, Krakow), Egypt (New Administrative Capital), and South Korea (Seoul Incheon).

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Gen Z: Hyper-connected yet shallow relations

In an age where friendships are as easy as a "follow" or a "like," Gen Z finds itself paradoxically more isolated than ever

In a world where friendships are just a tap away, Gen Z is paradoxically more connected and yet more alone than ever. With countless social media networks, endless group chats, and online "friends," you'd think they'd feel fulfilled. But under the endless likes, comments, and selfies, there's a haunting emptiness. I often meet young people who, despite their vast online networks, feel utterly isolated. They are connected to everyone, yet truly close to no one. Take Rhea, a 22-year-old with a picture-perfect online life. Her feed is filled with smiling photos, exotic vacations, and witty captions. But behind this flawless facade lies a young woman scarred by painful experiences. She lost her father at five, faced years of abuse, and carries a deep, invisible wound. Rhea carefully hides this pain, crafting an online persona that feels safe and acceptable. "I keep thinking if I post the right picture, maybe I'll finally feel like I belong," she admitted once, her voice breaking. Yet the emptiness doesn't fade. Her online "friends" see



the bright exterior, but none see the broken girl within. Another story is of Arjun, a young man shaped by a chaotic home and constant content bombardment. Now 20, he spends hours scrolling through his feed, comparing himself to others who appear effortlessly perfect. "Everyone seems so complete," he said, "but I feel like I'm failing." In a crisis, Arjun realises he has no one to truly rely on. His friendships, based on memes and brief exchanges, feel hollow when life gets tough. The endless scrolling only deepens his loneliness, as he sees everyone's best

moments while silently suffering through his worst. Rhea and Arjun's stories echo a painful truth for many in Gen Z. Friendships today are often shallow, based on convenience rather than commitment. They form and dissolve easily, leaving young people adrift in a sea of acquaintances who vanish when things get real. This generation's friendships are filtered through screens, built on quick likes and superficial messages. The traditional bonds of trust and time are slipping away, leaving behind connections that feel fleeting and, ultimately, empty.

What's missing here is depth — the kind of friendship that stands the test of hardship, that offers warmth and understanding beyond a screen. For Rhea, there's a wounded inner child who craves a friend who will listen and care beyond the "perfect" image she shows online. For Arjun, there's a desperate need to find a friend who sees his struggles, not just his shared posts. As a society, we need to understand that true friendship isn't about quick exchanges or temporary validation. It's about sharing real moments, both joyful and painful. It's about listening, being there, and caring without conditions. Perhaps, as Felice Buscaglia once said, "It's not enough to have lived." True living means creating joy, sharing love, and holding each other through life's storms. Until Gen Z learns to build friendships beyond the screen, they'll remain in search of bonds that can truly make them feel seen, safe, and understood. (The writer is a psychologist and mindset coach; views are personal)



KAVITA KABIRA



## FIRST COLUMN

## UNDERSTANDING THE MIND OF GOD

Aligning our actions with divine wisdom can only steer us through life's hardships



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We want to live a nice life, but we do not know how. Individually, we all try but come up short except for a few, who seriously take shelter of God. Because God only can make a difference. A big percentage of us, if not all humans, are aware of God but are unable to become serious about making a proper attempt to link with God – the Creator. I will try in this article to get you interested in getting started in this noble act. I am using similes and contrasts – the usual ways to compare. And I have chosen an example of a businessman for this purpose. God is the Creator; we are aware of this fact. A businessman is a prime mover for a business venture. God creates the entire solar system. In the case of a businessman, he starts small and tries to grow it into a vast business empire.

A businessman is intrinsically small, i.e., will always remain small, no matter how big his business empire may become. God is incomprehensibly big and will always be. Our problem is to think of God to be a person like us, just as He incarnates to teach us what is proper for us. Our ignorance is not limited to this fact only but extends to what we know. A businessman falsely assumes that what he knows about a business is sufficient.

What happens? Many businesses fail. What he could have done? He could have prayed to God for guidance. God would have given him instructions through mediums, those around him. And the business would have succeeded, because God is omniscient, i.e., He



knows past, present and future also; God always knows what will work. God is also omnipresent, i.e. present everywhere all the time. A businessman tries to replicate and over-stress himself frequently. God can help if one remains in His shelter. Then, it becomes God's business, literally so. The businessman will get a partner, who owns everything in the first place.

All businesses face challenges of many kinds because this earth's planet is a place of misery. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 8.15) Smooth sailing is out of the question. When God – the Controller gets involved, then, success is guaranteed, no matter what challenges come. The Omnipotent God takes care of them. A businessman is limited to what his 'karmaphalas' (fruits of past 'karmas') ordain. We can understand this by the fact that the extent of success of a business is widely varied. All work hard but destiny rules. With God in the picture, He becomes the 'Karta' (doer). My business survived even in the extreme conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. We even paid bonuses to our employees in this period, because God is involved. Where do many businesses falter?

They don't follow 'dharma' (the highest religious/moral principles). And God is all for upholding dharma. So there is no help from God. You cross 'maryada' (acceptable limits) and face the music. Failed businessmen blame their luck for it. It is true because that was ordained. Bad luck could have been nullified if one had pleased God by staying within the dharma.

The conclusion is to start with accepting that God is one and incomprehensibly big, and we are small parts of Him. We should take shelter from God and remain there. Then, we will be best served in whatever proper, i.e. according to dharma we do. God will guide help, and even micromanage our lives.

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

## Trump 2.0: What lies ahead in his second term



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

For ardent supporters, it's a long-anticipated victory, a "Make America Great Again" revival, while critics recoil at the reality of his return



He's back. Brace yourselves: Donald Trump is set to reclaim the White House as the 47th President of the United States. He would become the first president since Grover Cleveland in 1892 to serve two terms that were not consecutive. Love him or loathe him, this moment is nothing short of historic. For his supporters, it's a long-awaited reckoning; for his critics, it's a nightmare realised. Hollywood elites—George Clooney, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Oprah Winfrey among them—are likely stewing in disbelief, unable to reconcile with the stark message that America is prepared to usher in another Trump era. Meanwhile, personalities like Megyn Kelly and Tucker Carlson bask in the triumph of what they perceive as the return of their "Messiah," the man who vowed to Make America Great Again. This is democracy in action, like it or not. In his first victory speech, Trump wasted no time hammering home his agenda: "I will not let my supporters down," he declared. "America's future will be bigger, better, bolder, richer, safer, and stronger than it has ever been." Bold words, indeed. Yet the question hangs—what will the cost of 'greatness' be in a nation this divided? This time, he returns stronger, fortified by allies like Elon Musk, while other titans—Jeff Bezos, for one—strive to remain neutral. Yet the fallout is profound. Influential voices such as Robert Kagan, a staunch advocate of liberal internationalism and husband of the American diplomat Victoria Nuland, have resigned, signalling that the ground is shifting. For mainstream media—outlets like The New York Times, NBC, and CNN—the election results are a rebuke they cannot ignore. These media powerhouses, which for years wielded narratives against Trump, now face a public that feels increasingly alienated from the polished, elitist stories they've been fed. The trust gap widens as citizens see the chasm



THIS IS DEMOCRACY IN ACTION, LIKE IT OR NOT IN HIS FIRST VICTORY SPEECH, TRUMP WASTED NO TIME HAMMERING HOME HIS AGENDA. "I WILL NOT LET MY SUPPORTERS DOWN," HE DECLARED

between elite narratives and their lived realities. Trump's second term will likely turn a blind eye to the domestic affairs of other nations, signalling potential cuts in funding to so-called civil society organisations and other international interests maintained by the US State Department and its clandestine bodies. Immigration policy, too, could see a harsher edge, as tensions over border security and the influx of immigrants under Biden intensify. This stricter stance could stoke the fires of domestic unrest as Americans grapple with yet another transformation of national priorities. The war in Ukraine may come to an end sooner rather than later, potentially through a bitter compromise with Russia, as many countries in Europe may not align with Trump as they did under the Biden administration. However, if Ukrainian President Zelenskyy has a different understanding of the situation, it may be time for him to seriously consider pursuing the Chinese peace proposal. Meanwhile, the conflict in West Asia is likely to pause, but tensions could rise, possibly leading to new forms of attacks on Iran. The relationship between Iran and the Trump administration will be crucial in determining the future scenario in West Asia, as decisions made in this context could significantly alter the region's geopolitical dynamics. One should not forget that it was during Trump's first administration that Qasem Soleimani, an Iranian military officer who served in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, was assassinated in Baghdad, Iraq, using a reaper drone (Predator B).

Soleimani was a key enabler of Iranian actions, and even now, he is widely regarded as a major influence in Iran and its alliances. On the home front, the controversial Project 2025 blueprint stands as a bold bid to remodel US government institutions in line with a nationalist, ultra-conservative vision. Critics warn of an authoritarian slide. Trump himself claimed he had "no hand in the policy," even as his campaign speeches echoed its themes. Dismantling regulatory agencies, installing ideologically driven personnel, and consolidating executive power—such moves could test the very checks and balances that underpin the American system. The potential cost? A dramatic weakening of civil liberties, environmental protections, and democratic norms, is likely to spark deep political divisions and civil unrest. If realised, this vision would also redefine America's role on the global stage. The "America First" doctrine, which shaped Trump's prior foreign policy, may once again destabilise multilateral efforts on urgent issues like climate change, nuclear disarmament, and trade. Trump's rhetoric could erode US alliances, and as Washington retreats from the mantle of democracy promotion, a vacuum forms—one that China, no doubt, is eager to fill. Worth noting is Trump's first note during his visit to the CIA headquarters, right after becoming the 45th president. Mainstream narratives often painted him as dismissive of the intelligence apparatus, but Trump's note challenged that view, acknowledging the agency's

importance. Now, as political winds shift, Trump is rumoured to be eyeing Kash Patel, an Indian-American with roots in counterterrorism and intelligence reform, as his new CIA head. Patel's controversial stance on challenging the so-called "deep state" marks a radical shift in US intelligence policy—likely a step towards Trump's broader agenda of power consolidation within the federal government. Patel, known for his book Government Gangsters: The Deep State, the Truth, and the Battle for Our Democracy, is expected to tackle intelligence reform head-on, aligning with Trump's vision of shaking up entrenched power structures. A second Trump administration would also stoke tensions with China, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, where US-China rivalry is reaching new heights. Trump's hawkish stance on Taiwan and the South China Sea could signal increased military presence, arms deals, and strengthened alliances with Japan, South Korea and India. The administration is likely to challenge China's Belt and Road Initiative and impose sanctions on Chinese firms, aiming to limit Beijing's influence. Smaller nations in the region, meanwhile, could find themselves stuck in a high-stakes dilemma—aligning with the US risks Beijing's wrath while leaning towards China risks Washington's ire. With Trump redefining US foreign policy, these nations may face an impossible choice in a tightening geopolitical vice. (The writer is a journalist and author; Views are personal)

## PM-Vidyalaxmi: A yet another 'Modi Kee Guarantee' for learners

The Government has initiated this financial aid programme to harness the potential of the youth from the weaker sections

India has the largest number of millennials and Gen Zs in the world. This population constitutes a critical mass for increasing GER in higher education from the current 28 per cent to 50 per cent by 2035 as envisaged in NEP-2020. Moreover, India's working population in the age bracket of 15-64 is nearly 68 per cent. The current demographic dividend will not be available for a longer period as the youth population will turn old and thus will become non-productive. Precisely for this reason, PM Modi called the current time window in the lifespan of Bharat the 'Amrit Kaal' and has given a clarion call for making it 'Viksit' by 2047 through self-reliant measures. Skilled youth are in high



RAGHAVENDRA P TIWARI

demand the world over and this trend will always remain as skilling, upskilling and reskilling will always be required to cope with ever-evolving job profiles in the workplace. However, owing to the economic transformation that the nation has witnessed over the last decade, living standards have greatly improved leading to an enhanced cost of living. And, education is no exception.

The Central Government has taken several initiatives to ensure hassle-free access to quality higher education, especially regarding NEP-2020 implementation. These include multidisciplinary and learning outcome-based curriculum for holistic learning; innovative pedagogy (experiential learning, internship, field immersion, etc); evaluation to test the learning outcomes; Academic Bank of Credits; Multiple Entry-Exit; Dual degree, joint degree and twin degree programmes; emphasis on Indian Knowledge System and Universal Human Values, etc. The latest edition to the long list is the PM-Vidyalaxmi scheme to provide collateral-free, guarantor-free financial loans to needy meritorious stu-

dents covering all categories to ease them from financial constraints for pursuing quality higher education. Approved by the Cabinet on November 5, 2024, as a Deepawali Gift to the nation, PM-Vidyalaxmi is a mission mode, simple, transparent, student-friendly and fully digital mechanism to facilitate easy access to loans to meritorious students admitted in, to begin with, top 860 quality higher education institutions. This initiative provides a single-window integrated platform for students seeking educational loans to apply for it and to track their applications. PM Vidyalaxmi will add to the scope and reach of earlier initiatives of the current government for maximising access to quality higher education for socially deprived sec-



tions of society. Under this scheme, students will be eligible to obtain collateral-free, guarantor-free loans from banks and financial institutions to cover the full amount of tuition fees and other expenses to be incurred for pursuing academic programs. Under PM Vidyalaxmi, the government will also provide a 75 per cent credit guarantee of outstanding default for loan amounts up to 7.5 lakhs to support banks to

expand coverage. The scheme will also provide for 3 per cent interest subvention on loans up to Rs 10 lakh during the moratorium period for those students having an annual family income of Rs 8.00 lakhs and are not covered under any government scholarship of interest subvention. This will be in addition to full interest subvention already offered to students with up to Rs 4.5 lakhs annual family income. Interest subvention will be paid through E-vouchers and Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) wallets. An outlay of Rs 3,600 Crore has been made available for the period from 2024-25 to 2030-31, and 7 lakh fresh students are expected to get the benefit of this interest subvention during the above timeslot. PM-Vidyalaxmi will supple-

ment the two components of the scheme of Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Protsahan (PM-USP), namely, the Central Sector Interest Subsidy (CSIS) and Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme (CGFS) for education loans, already offered by the Ministry of Education. Under the PM-USP-CSIS, students pursuing technical/professional courses from approved institutions. PM Vidyalaxmi, in a nutshell, is an entirely new scheme launched for empowering youth, especially of the middle class, with necessary financial support for pursuing the education of their choice. The scheme will operate in tandem with PM-USP to provide financial support to all deserving students to pursue quality higher education and techni-

cal/professional education in select quality Higher Education Institutions in India. The newly launched scheme, apart from making quality higher education available to meritorious students, will ease the impounding stress of students opting for loans and will enable them to fully concentrate on learning. Kudos to PM Narendra Modi and Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for launching a new learner-centric scheme for spearheading the implementation of NEP-2020. PM Vidyalaxmi is in fact, a confluence of Vidya, the Goddess of Knowledge, and Laxmi, the Goddess of Wealth! (The writer is Vice Chancellor, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda; views are personal)

# After protests, BJP leader withdraws slur on Sharad

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After vociferous protests and severe flak from various quarters, a chastened BJP MLC Sadabhau Khot on Thursday expressed regret and withdrew his scurrilous remarks against NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar.

Khot's regret came a day after he spoke about Pawar's illness and surgeries that the latter had undergone in the past, in the presence of deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnis at an election rally.

"Sharad Pawar says he wants to change the face of Maharashtra... Does he want to make Maharashtra look like his own face?" Khot had asked, while speaking at an election rally.

Khot's remarks against Sr Pawar had triggered public uproar so much so that NCP (SP) supporters staged protests against Khot and BJP in Pune and other places,



demanding an unconditional apology from him.

Coming down heavily on Khot for his remarks against the NCP (SP) chief, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut dubbed the BJP MLC as a 'poodle of Fadnis'.

"The people of Maharashtra are watching everything and will teach the BJP an appropriate lesson for the insults heaped on a senior leader like Sharad Pawar whom even Prime Minister Narendra Modi considers a 'mentor'"

Raut said.

Taking serious exception to Khot's statement, State NCP chief Jayant Patil said that the BJP MLC's remarks reflected the 'crooked mentality' of the BJP-MahaYuti leaders.

Not to be outdone, even NCP (AP) chief and deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar - whose party is a constituent in the ruling MahaYuti - condemned Khot's remarks against the NCP (SP) chief which "were not in line with Maharashtra's culture".

Ajitdada, as Ajit Pawar is known in the state political circles, called up Khot and gave his peace of mind.

He warned Khot to be careful about the choice of his words and not to indulge in "below-the-belt" criticism against anyone.

"We have been taught by Maharashtra's first chief minister late Y B Chavan not to use uncivilised language against political rivals. You may make allegations and counter-allegations, but not indulge in personal attack like Khot has done.

I told him that his remarks are unacceptable and it is wrong to make such personal attacks against a senior leader like Pawarsaheb," Ajitdada said.

Later, talking to media persons, an embarrassed Khot said: "I regret having made such remarks.

I am withdrawing my remarks, and this will never happen again in future."

# RG Kar: Doctors expected more from SC, CBI

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Bengal junior doctors fighting for justice in the Kolkata lady doctor rape and murder case betrayed dejection following Supreme Court's refusal on Thursday to transfer the trial out of Bengal as also the regular long gaps between hearings.

"We had hope on the judiciary... we still repose faith in it as we have nowhere else to go but the question is how long Abhaya (as the victim has been pseudo named) and her family and the citizens, particularly the women of Bengal will wait to get justice if delivery of justice gets delayed... justice delayed is justice denied," said one of the junior doctors even as one of their leaders Doctor Kinjal Nanda once again gave out a call for citizens' march on November 9.

Another doctor said, "we being doctors ourselves have an idea of what is rape and what is gang rape... putting all the evidences together and the fact how the evidences were tampered... the CBI should have been more comprehensive... we don't say it



is not efficient... we expected stronger directions from the Courts if there was any doubt of the Agency being pulled from behind from doing its duty."

Incidentally the prime accused Sanjoy Roy had earlier told the media for the first time that he was being framed and that the State Police department had forced him to keep silent. "I have been forced and threatened into silence by the Department... this Government is falsely framing me... I have not committed rape or murder," he had told the media a couple of days ago from inside

Chandrachud said the trial court had sufficient powers to order another investigation upon feeling it necessary after examining the evidence.

A postgraduate lady doctor of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata had in the small hours of August 9 been brutally raped and murdered triggering a nationwide stir and worldwide condemnation of how a woman was victimized thus inside her work place.

Though the CBI which has been investigating the case following a Calcutta High Court order had arrested several other persons including Sandip Ghosh the former Principal of the RGKMCH and an officer in-charge besides another doctor and a security guard those arrests had been made on ancillary charges and not the main case.

This, where as medical experts and former police and CBI bosses --- like Upen Biswas who cracked the Bihar animal husbandry case --- repeatedly demanded a wider investigation taking into view the facts of tampering of evidences.

# Poll manifesto: Shiv Sena (UBT) promises to scrap Dharavi redevelopment, Barsu refinery projects

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a development that has put the BJP-led ruling MahaYuti in a spot of bother, the Opposition Shiv Sena (UBT) on Thursday

promised to scrap two major projects -- the Dharavi redevelopment project in Mumbai and Barsu super-refinery project in Ratnagiri district, if the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) come to power in the

state. Making an announcement to this effect at a function organised to release his party's manifesto, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray said: "We will scrap the existing tender for the Dharavi redevelopment project

in Mumbai. We will also scrap the super-refinery project at Barsu."

The scrapping of Dharavi and Barsu are two of the promises made in the manifesto of the Shiv Shiv Sena (UBT). "We will

give houses to Dharavikars in Dharavi and they would also be able to do business there," Uddhav said.

The other promises made in the Sena (UBT)'s manifesto include free education for male stu-

dents, stabilising prices of essential items, construction of temples of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in each of the 36 districts of the state and scrapping of cluster development of Koliwad and Gaothans.

The release of the manifesto came a day after the Congress released its five Assembly poll guarantees to the people of the state, at a joint rally of the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA).

Apart from its welfare measures, the Shiv Sena (UBT) has laid emphasis on the scrapping of Dharavi redevelopment project in Mumbai and Barsu super-refinery project in Ratnagiri district.

# National counter-terrorism policy soon: HM

From page 1

He said due to the joint efforts of State and Central Governments, violence has been controlled to a great extent in Jammu and Kashmir, Naxal-affected areas and the northeastern states in the last 10 years. Shah asked representatives of the state police forces at the conference, most of whom are DGP-rank officers, to invoke the anti-terrorism law Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) wherever required.

The Home Minister said the Central government's anti-terror probe agency National Investigation Agency (NIA)

utilises UAPA in all terror cases and as a result so far out of 632 cases registered by it, charge sheet has been filed in 498 cases, conviction in almost 95 per cent. He asked the police chiefs of the States to establish a synergy down to the level of police stations and set up a strong ecosystem against terrorism.

Shah said a 25-point integrated plan has been prepared to stop the funding of terrorism, including jihadi terror and Left Wing Extremism. He said the scope of Multi Agency Centre (MAC), an intelligence gathering mechanism, was expanded, and SOPs were created under it to monitor

cyber security, narco terror and emerging radical hotspots, which has led to success in preventing many crimes before they happen.

Shah said he has given medals to 11 NIA officers for their hard work and successes and it is just a small recognition of their extraordinary contribution in the fight against terror. "Their contribution and dedication is much bigger and more inspiring than this medal." The two-day anti-terror conference, which began here on Thursday, is expected to further enhance coordination among agencies to strengthen India's security bastion.

# Summer breaks rechristened 'partial court working days': SC

From page 1

"People who criticise, don't understand that we don't have holidays on Saturdays and Sundays. There are other assignments, conferences," remarked Justice Gavi.

The long summer breaks in the SC were a part of the colonial era. During the British rule, judges who were unable to handle the summer heat would sail back to England or mountains, only to return during the Monsoon.

# Shah Rukh Khan gets death threat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI/RAIPUR

Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan has received a death threat, and a demand for Rs 50 lakh, Mumbai police said on Thursday, adding an extortion case has been filed in this connection. The Mumbai police have summoned a lawyer from Raipur as the threat call was made from a phone number registered in his name, a senior police official from the Chhattisgarh capital said. The lawyer told the police that he lost his phone last week

and had filed a police complaint, the official said. The threat to Shah Rukh Khan follows a series of threats issued to fellow actor Salman Khan, allegedly from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. "Bandra police station received a call threatening Shah Rukh Khan and asking for Rs 50 lakh. An offence has been registered. No arrest has been made yet," a senior police official said.

A case has been registered by the Bandra police under sections 308(4) (extortion involving threats of death or serious injury) and 351(3)(4) (criminal intimidation) of



Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) against the caller who threatened Shah Rukh Khan, the official said. Police teams have been dispatched to various places for further investigation, he said.

While there was no confirmation from Mumbai

police on reports that the call was made from Chhattisgarh, a Raipur police official said their counterparts from the Maharashtra capital on Thursday served a notice to a man from the city in connection with it.

As part of their investigation into the threat to Shah Rukh Khan, Mumbai police visited Raipur and summoned a man, identified as Faizan Khan, who lives within the limits of Pandri police station here, Raipur Senior Superintendent of Police Santosh Singh told PTI. Police had earlier identified the man as Faiyaz Khan.

# Environment ministry doubles stubble...

From page 1

The ministry notified the Commission for Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas (Imposition, Collection and Utilisation of Environmental Compensation for Stubble Burning) Amendment Rules, 2024, for doubling of environmental compensation imposed against stubble burning. The amended rules were notified under the Commission for Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021, and will come into effect immediately, without a draft being placed in the public domain for public consultation.

As many as 12,514 burning events were detected in the six states between September 15 and November 6, according to the satellite data monitored by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI). Majority of cases were reported from Punjab (5041), followed by Haryana (888), Uttar Pradesh (1544), Delhi (12), Rajasthan (1332) and Madhya Pradesh (3697). However, the number of fire counts in Punjab have dropped significantly from 19,463 reported last year to 5,041 this year.

The environmental compensation rates were first fixed by the National Green Tribunal's principal bench in a November 2015 order. Taking cognisance of the contribution of stubble fires to Delhi-National Capital Region's (NCR) air pollution, the NGT had ordered Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi-NCT governments to impose these penalties.

Besides amending the rules to double the penalties for burning farm stubble, the Ministry also notified the Environment Protection (Manner of Holding Inquiry

and Imposition of Penalty) Rules, 2024. It laid down the process of filing complaints with pollution control boards, the Commission for Air Quality Management, and offices of the Union environment ministry.

It also laid out the process of holding an inquiry on complaints against environmental pollution and that of adjudicating such complaints. Stubble burning also contributes to it, along with rising levels of emissions from vehicles, industries and waste-burning in and around the National Capital. The government has been urging farmers to shift to more sustainable ways of managing the stubble, which has also significantly brought down the number of fire counts over the years.

According to a Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) analysis, the city experiences peak pollution from November 1 to 15 when the number of stubble-burning incidents in Punjab and Haryana increases. Major factors behind stubble burning include the paddy-wheat cropping system, cultivation of long-duration paddy varieties, mechanised harvesting that leaves standing crop stubble in the field, labour scarcity, and the lack of a viable market for crop residue.

Studies estimate that during peak burning periods, farm fires contribute up to 30 per cent of PM levels in the Delhi-NCR region and surrounding areas. However, according to senior environmentalist Sunita Narain, the episodic burning of crop residue by farmers in winter is not the primary concern for poor air quality in Delhi-NCR. Instead, the persistent and major sources of pollution within the city, including transport and industries, are more worrisome.

# Two Village Defence men shot...

From page 1

The VDG members act as force multipliers in the far-flung areas of the Jammu region assisting ground forces during search operations and maintaining a tight vigil in and around their villages.

For a long time, they were complaining about the lack of sophisticated weapons and recently the government fulfilled their demand by providing them with the latest weapons.

The government of India had decided to provide the latest weapons to Village Defence Guards in the form of SLR. Earlier the VDG had 303 guns, but now they are equipped with modern SLRs.

# Another gangrape in the National Capital

From page 1

The victim is a dedicated researcher, facilitator, and community leader, the police disclosed. "She holds a Master's degree in Social Work from Utkal University of Culture, Bhubaneswar, she has actively contributed to various developmental organisations. She also worked as a Research Fellow at Kalinga Network for Living with HIV/AIDS, Community Leader at Women Power for Sanitation Awareness, and Counsellor at One Stop Centre, Puri in Odisha," the police said.

The DCP said, "On October 10, the accused, 32-year-old Parmod alias babu, who is an alcohol addict closed his shop as per his usual routine and got drunk. He noticed a girl sitting nearby. Shortly after, another accused, 29-

year-old Mohammad Shamsul who is a physically handicapped beggar, and also an alcoholic arrived at the scene. Both accused persons conspired to sexually assault the girl, assuming she was 'mentally unsound' and an easy target." The accused first raped the girl by forcibly dragging the girl to a deserted area near the ITO metro station. While they were committing the heinous crime, a 28-year-old auto driver Prabhu Mahto witnessed the incident and joined them. He forced the girl in his auto (bearing registration number DL 1 RAA 9327) and raped her near Rajghat. After the incident, the accused dumped the victim on the secluded ring road from where she walked in a semi-nude state to Sarai Kale Khan.

Nearly a month after she was brutally raped, the victim is still undergoing treatment at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi. After her initial statement, the victim could not cooperate further with the investigation or hospital staff due to her fragile mental condition.

"As she was not able to share vital clues, thus during the operation, special permission was taken from the management staff of AIIMS Trauma Centre, and a woman officer Sangeeta took cover as a social worker, while a native Odia woman took cover as a nurse and they were assigned to take care of the victim to try to build trust and gather crucial information from her," the DCP said.

He said that Sangeeta won over her trust and was able to

get some important details from the victim, the involvement of an unknown autorickshaw driver who allegedly dumped her after the rape and two other persons, one of who had a physical handicap.

"The victim was unable to reveal other crucial details regarding the time and place of the incident due to her mental health challenges and trauma from the incident," he said. With the limited details, a total of 10 police teams were formed and more than 700 CCTV cameras were reviewed along with the verification of more than 150 suspected auto-rickshaws through the combinations of visible and non-visible digits.

"On October 30, police arrested Prabhu Mahto, and subsequently, Pramod Babu and Mohammad Shamsul

were also identified and arrested on November 2 and November 4, respectively," the officer said.

A missing person report was registered by her parents on June 9 at Kumbharpada police station in Puri. After she came to the city, she was residing with one of her acquaintances. "However, during her stay, the victim began to exhibit 'abnormal behaviour'. On being intimidated by the friend, staff of Kishangarh police station informed the victim's family. However, she denied going back to Odisha with her family and also ended her temporary stay.

Thereafter, she took temporary shelter at public places like bus stops, railway stations and foot over bridges and severed all contact with her family," a police officer said.

# Ruckus continues in J and K Assembly

From page 1

The Assembly on Wednesday passed a resolution asking the Centre to work out a Constitutional mechanism for restoring special status to Jammu and Kashmir that was revoked on August 5, 2019. The resolution was hailed by Valley-based political parties while it prompted protests by the main opposition BJP which demanded its rollback.

Reacting to the developments in the house, the BJP said it was "unfortunate" that the ruling National Conference has "compromised the integrity" of the assembly, and made a "joke" of democracy by bringing a resolution that questions a decision of the country's Parliament.

"This is a fraud, a drama that has been attempted with the people of J-K," BJP MLA from Ramnagar, RS Pathania, told reporters after the Assembly was adjourned for the day following an uproar over the special status resolution.

"Article 370 is history now. The Supreme Court has said that there is nothing like special status. It is as simple as that. This assembly which is a statute under the Reorganisation Act cannot question Parliament and the Supreme Court. There is no question of that," he said.

Pathania said the resolution, which was passed through a voice vote by the assembly on Wednesday, was "a piece of paper, a piece of scrap," and "even if a peon or a clerk receives it, he will throw it into the dustbin."

Interacting with the media outside the Assembly hall, Leader of the Opposition, Sunil Sharma, also blamed the Speaker for "allowing" Sheikh Khurshid into the well of the House with a banner. "An MLA was allowed with a banner. Is there any such precedence in this House? The speaker and the assembly staff allowed him. He (the Speaker) turned on the microphones of the treasury benches to show

that he was the speaker of the NC and not of the House. The House was turned into a fish market," Sunil Sharma said.

When asked if the BJP members had stood at the tables of the assembly, the LoP said the opposition members had no choice as they were not allowed to speak. "LoP was standing and his microphone was turned off. Our MLAs were marshalled out, so what option do we have?" he said. "I challenge Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to show the article under which the NC is demanding special status for J-K," Sunil Sharma said, adding the article says it is a temporary provision till the Indian Constitution is fully implemented in J-K.

"There is nothing called special status. Special status is (National Conference founder) Sheikh Abdullah's Constitution which is there in the Gupkar house of (NC president) Farooq Abdullah in which it is written that Kashmiri Pandits be thrown

out from here and killed," he said.

"What has happened on August 5, 2019, is now history. Special status cannot be repeated (restored) now," the LoP added.

Referring to the conduct of the deputy chief minister Surinder Choudhary and minister Satish Sharma - both of whom are from Jammu, BJP MLA RS Pathania said, "There are some Jaichands from Jammu, but they have been exposed now." "People have understood what they did. They have kneeled before the pro-Pakistan and pro-separatist narrative. This narrative is a fraud and there is no legal or constitutional basis of that narrative. This narrative has resulted in the killings of security forces personnel and civilians," the MLA said.

Referring to the brawl that took place in the assembly between the BJP MLAs and the marshals, BJP MLA Sham Lal Sharma said the blame lies with Speaker

Abdul Rahim Rather. "The members do not have the right to bring such posters inside the assembly. We wanted to know how the speaker allowed that. Where was the security check? The situation in J-K is such today that if there is any doubt on any member, then he should be searched, he can bring anything inside." "It started from there, so the fault lies with the Speaker. The banner should have been snatched away from him. He should have been marshalled out like the members of the BJP were," he said.

The BJP MLA from Chenani, Balwant Singh Mankotia, while referring to the fresh resolution moved by PDP, Peoples' Conference and others, said this is "emotional blackmail" of the people. "We will not allow the people of J-K to be befooled. We will not allow the NC, Congress and Kashmir-centric parties to emotionally blackmail the people," he said.

Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather on Thursday rejected the BJP demand for either rolling back the special status resolution passed by the House or stepping down, and said if the party does not have faith in him it should bring a no-confidence motion.

He also rebuked the party for its "cheap sloganeering" and said he cannot tolerate members entering into the Well of the House and stomping over the national emblem placed on the Assembly Secretary's chair. "They (BJP) are asking the Speaker to take back the resolution. The Speaker does not have the powers. Anything passed by the House can only be undone by the House itself. Speakers cannot do it. The Speaker has limited powers in these issues... he has to preside, count and give decisions based on the facts before him," Rather said.

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# Trump has vowed to shake some of democracy's pillars

AP ■ WASHINGTON

American presidential elections are a moment when the nation holds up a mirror to look at itself. They are a reflection of values and dreams, of grievances and scores to be settled. The results say much about a country's character, future and core beliefs. On Tuesday, America looked into that mirror and more voters saw former president Donald Trump, delivering him a far-reaching victory in the most contested states. He won for many reasons. One of them was that a formidable number of Americans, from different angles, said the state of democracy was a prime concern. The candidate they chose had campaigned through a lens of darkness, calling the country "garbage" and his opponent "stupid," a "communist" and "the b-word." The mirror reflected not only a restive nation's discontent but childless cat ladies, false stories of pets devoured by Haitian immigrant neighbours, a sustained emphasis on calling things "weird," and a sudden bout of Democratic "joy" now crushed. The campaign will be remembered both for profound developments, like the two assassination attempts on Trump, and his curious chatter about golfer Arnold Palmer's genitalia. Even as Trump prevailed, most voters said they were very or somewhat concerned that electing Trump would bring the US closer to being an authoritarian country, where a single leader has unchecked power, according to the AP VoteCast survey. Still, 1 in 10 of those voters backed

him anyway. Nearly 4 in 10 Trump voters said they wanted complete upheaval in how the country is run. In Trump's telling, the economy was in shambles, even when almost every measure said otherwise, and the border was an open sore leeching murderous migrants, when the actual number of crossings had dropped precipitously. All this came wrapped in his signature language of catastrophism. His win, only the second time in US history that a candidate won the presidency in non-consecutive terms, demonstrated Trump's keen ear for what stirs emotions, especially the sense of millions of voters of being left out — whether because someone else cheated or got special treatment or otherwise fell to the ravages of the enemy within. That's whom Americans decisively chose. The centuries-old democracy delivered power to the presidential candidate who gave voters fair warning he might take core elements of that democracy apart. After already having tried to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power when he lost to President Joe Biden in 2020, Trump mused that he would be justified if he decided to pursue "the termination of all rules, regulations, and articles, even those found in the Constitution." This, in contrast to the oath of office he took, and will again, to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution" as best he can. One rough and decidedly imperfect measure of whether Trump might mean what he says is how many times he says it. His direct threat to try to end or suspend the Constitution was largely a one-off. But the 2024 campaign was thick with his vows, rally after rally, inter-

view after interview, that if realised would upend democracy's basic practices, protections and institutions as Americans have known them. And now, he says after his win, "I will govern by a simple motto: promises made, promises kept." Through the campaign, to lusty cheers, Trump promised to use presidential power over the justice system to go after his personal political adversaries. He then raised the stakes further by threatening to enlist military force against such domestic foes — "the enemy within." Doing so would shatter any semblance of Justice Department independence and turn soldiers against citizens in ways not seen in modern times. He's promised to track down and deport immigrants in massive numbers, raising the prospect of using military or military-style assets for that as well. Spurred by his fury and denialism over his 2020 defeat, Trump's supporters in some state governments have already engineered changes in how votes are cast, counted and affirmed, an effort centered on the false notion that the last election was rigged against him. On Tuesday, Trump won an election in the time of a Democratic administration. The effort to revise election procedures will now be fought out by states in his time. Yet another pillar of the system is also in his sights — the non-political civil service and its political masters, whom Trump together calls the deep state. He means the generals who didn't always heed him last time, but this time shall. He means the Justice Department



people who refused to indulge his desperate effort to cook up votes he didn't get in 2020. He means the bureaucrats who dragged their heels on parts of his first-term agenda and whom Trump now wants purged. Trump wants to make it easier to fire federal workers by classifying thousands of them as being outside civil service protections. That could weaken the government's power to enforce statutes and rules by draining parts of the workforce and permit his administration to staff offices with more malleable employees than last time. But if some or all of these tenets of modern democracy are to fall, it will be through the most democratic of means. Voters chose him — and by extension, this — not Democrat Kamala Harris, the vice president. And by early measures, it was a clean election, just like 2020. Eric Dezenhall is a scandal-management expert who has followed Trump's business and political career and correctly predicted his wins in 2016 and now. He also foresaw that the criminal cases against Trump would help, not hurt, him. Sussing out what Trump truly intends to do and what might be bluster is not always easy, he said. "There are certain things that he says because they cross his brain at a certain moment," Dezenhall said. "I don't put stock in that. I put stock in themes, and there is a theme of vengeance." So it remains to be seen whether America will get two special days Trump has promised. Upon taking office again, he said, he'll be a "dictator," but only for a day. And he's promised to let police stage "one really violent day" to crack down on crime with impunity, a remark his campaign said he didn't really mean, just as his peo-

ple said he wasn't serious about subverting the U.S. Constitution. The voters also gave Trump's Republicans clear control of the Senate, and therefore majority say in whether to confirm the loyalists Trump will nominate for top jobs in government. Trump controls his party in ways he didn't in his first term, when major figures in his administration repeatedly frustrated his most outward ambitions. "The fact that a once proud people chose, twice, to demean itself with a leader like Donald Trump will be one of history's great cautionary tales," said Cal Jillson, a constitutional and presidential scholar at Southern Methodist University whose new book, "Race, Ethnicity, and American Decline," anticipated some of the existential issues of the election. "Donald Trump's actions will be as divisive, ill-considered, and mean-spirited in his second term as in his first," he said. "He will undercut Ukraine, NATO, and the U.N. abroad and the rule of law, individual rights, and our senses of national cohesion and purpose at home." From the political left, any threats to democracy were not on the mind of independent Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont when he offered a blistering critique of the Democratic campaign. "It should come as no surprise that a Democratic Party which has abandoned working people would find that the working class has abandoned them," he said in a statement. "Will they understand the pain and political alienation that tens of millions of Americans are experiencing?" He concluded: "Probably not." For his part, Trump says he is

intent on restoring democracy, not tearing it down. There was nothing democratic, he and his allies assert, in seeing military leaders defy the elected commander in chief, whether the issue was troop deployments or his wish for a splashy military parade. Or in seeing Democratic presidents establish immigration policy and vast student loan relief through executive action, bypassing Congress. But that case is built from the ground up on the lie of a stolen 2020 election, his machinations to stall the certification of that vote and his mob's bloody attack on the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. He comes to office intending to pardon some of the people convicted for that riot and perhaps clear himself of criminal cases against him. Guardians remain. One is the Supreme Court, whose conservative majority loosened the leash on presidential behavior in its ruling expanding their immunity from prosecution. The court has not been fully tested on how far it will go to accommodate Trump's actions and agenda. And which party will control the House is not yet known. The Republican's victory came from a public so put off by America's trajectory that it welcomed his brash and disruptive approach. Among voters under 30, just under half went for Trump, an improvement from his 2020 performance, according to the AP VoteCast survey of more than 120,000 voters. About three-quarters of young voters said the country was headed in the wrong direction, and roughly one-third said they wanted total upheaval in how the country is run. By Trump's words, at least, that's what they'll get.

## I concede this election, but not the fight: Harris

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Shortly after conceding the presidential race to Donald Trump, Vice President Kamala Harris urged supporters to accept the election results and pledged to ensure a peaceful transfer of power to the Republican leader. In an emotional concession speech at her alma mater Howard University, 60-year-old Harris said the "light of America's promise will always burn bright" and vowed to keep up the "fight" that fuelled her campaign. "My heart is full today — full of gratitude for the trust you have placed in me, full of love for our country, and full of resolve," she said in an attempt to lift the spirits of her supporters. "The outcome of this election is not what we wanted, not what we fought for, not what we voted for. But hear me when I say, the light of America's promise will always burn bright," she added. "I know folks are feeling and experiencing a range of emotions right now. I get it. But we must accept the results of this election," she said, adding that a fundamental principle of democracy is to accept the election outcomes. Harris said she spoke to President-elect Trump and congratulated him on his victory. "I told Trump that we will help him and his team in their transition and that we will engage in a peaceful transition of power," she said. "In our nation, we owe loyalty not to a president or a party but to the constitution of the United States," she added. "While I concede this election, I do not concede the fight that fuelled this campaign," Harris said. Harris also called on her supporters not to give up their fights to protect the country's foundational principles. "Sometimes the fight takes a while, but that does not mean we will not win; the important



**"Sometimes the fight takes a while, but that does not mean we will not win; the important thing is don't ever give up"**

thing is don't ever give up," she said. In the election, 78-year-old Trump pulled off an incredible comeback wresting 291 electoral college votes as against Harris' 223 in a fierce contest that almost left the Americans with two world views. While Harris projected herself as an "agent of change," Trump constructed a campaign on people's concerns over economy and immigration. "The fight for freedom, opportunity, for fairness and dignity of all people will continue,"

Harris said in her address. The vice president said she will never give up the fight for democracy, rule of law and for equal justice. "The fight for our freedom will take hard work, but as I always say we like hard work; the fight for our country is always worth it," she said. "I know many people feel like we are entering a dark time, but for the benefit of us all, I hope that is not the case," she added. The mood at the rally was incredibly sombre. The crowd of what appeared to number several thousand was very quiet. Harris campaign aides stood to one side of the stage as she spoke and exchanged hugs, including Jen O'Malley Dillon, David Plouffe, and Brian Fallon. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and DC Mayor Muriel Bowser were seen conversing in the crowd. Several of Harris's younger family members were wiping away tears as they left the rally.

## Biden calls Trump to congratulate him on his victory

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden on Thursday made a phone call to president-elect Donald Trump and congratulated him on his victory, the White House said. Biden also spoke over the phone with Vice President Kamala Harris and congratulated her on her historic campaign, the White House said. In his call with Trump, Biden expressed his commitment to ensuring a smooth transition and emphasised the importance of working to bring the country together. "He also invited president-elect Trump to meet with him in the White House. The staff will coordinate a specific date in the near future. Tomorrow, President Biden will address the nation to discuss the election results and the transition," the White House said. "President Joe Biden called President Donald J. Trump to congratulate him on his victory and extended an invitation to the White House to ensure a smooth transition between the current administration and the incoming administration. President Trump looks forward to the meeting, which will take place shortly, and very much appreciated the call," Steven Cheung, Trump Campaign Communications Director, said. Meanwhile, President Joe Biden on Wednesday applauded Vice President Kamala Harris for leading a historic campaign under extraordinary circumstances. "What America saw today was the Kamala Harris I know and deeply admire. She's been a tremendous partner and public servant full of integrity, courage, and character," Biden said in a statement. "Under extraordinary circumstances, she stepped up and led a historic campaign that embodied what's possible when guided by a strong moral compass and a clear vision for a nation that is more free, more just, and full of more opportunities for all Americans," he said. "As I've said before, selecting Kamala was the very first decision I made when I became the nominee for president in 2020. It was the best decision I made. Her story represents the best of America's story. And as she made clear today, I have no doubt that she'll continue writing that story," he said. "She will continue the fight with purpose, determination, and joy. She will continue to be a champion for all Americans. Above all, she will continue to be a leader our children will look up to for generations to come as she puts her stamp on America's future," Biden said.

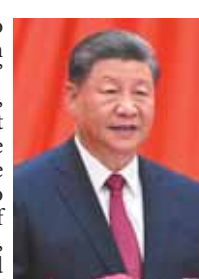


## US should find 'right way' to manage differences, says China

PTI ■ BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday congratulated President-elect Donald Trump on his election victory and called for China and the US to find the right way to manage the differences by strengthening dialogue and communication. Trump won the US presidential election for a second term on Wednesday in one of the most remarkable comebacks in American electoral history. Xi, in his congratulatory message to Trump, called for the two countries to strengthen dialogue and communication, properly manage differences and expand mutually beneficial cooperation, official media reports here said. "I urge China and the US to expand mutually beneficial cooperation," Xi said. "I call for the right way for China,

and the US to get along in the new era," he said, adding that both the countries, the top two economies of the world, should strengthen dialogue and communication. History teaches that China and the United States gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation, Xi said, noting that a stable, sound and sustainable China-US relationship serves the two countries' shared interests and meets the aspirations of the international community. He expressed the hope that the two sides will uphold the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation," Chinese Foreign



strengthen dialogue and communication, properly manage differences and expand mutually beneficial cooperation. Also on Thursday, Chinese Vice President Han Zheng congratulated J D Vance on his election as vice president of the United States, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. As the results of the US presidential elections poured in on Wednesday pointing to a sweeping victory for Trump, who pursued a tough policy against China in his first term including clamping tariffs on over USD 380 billion Chinese exports to the US, Beijing reacted guardedly and said that it respects the choice of the American people. Our policy towards the United States has been consistent and we will continue to view and handle the China-US relations in accordance with the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation," Chinese Foreign

## UK PM Starmer covers defence, security in first call with Trump

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer touched upon a range of topics, including defence and regional security, during his congratulatory phone call with US President-elect Donald Trump after a "historic" election victory. During the call on Wednesday evening, both leaders agreed to work towards strengthening the "incredibly strong" US-UK special relationship and committed to ensure the bilateral ties continue to thrive. "The Prime Minister offered his hearty congratulations and said he looked forward to working closely with President-elect Trump across all areas of the special relationship. From defence and security to growth and prosperity, the relationship between the UK and US was incredibly strong and would continue to thrive for many years to come, the leaders agreed," a Downing Street

spokesperson said. Starmer is said to have also reflected on the situation in the Middle East and "underscored the importance of regional stability." They went on to discuss their recent meeting at Trump Tower when Starmer was in New York for the United Nations General Assembly. "The leaders fondly recalled their meeting in September, and President-elect Trump's close connections and affinity to the United Kingdom and looked forward to working with one another," Downing Street added. The phone call came after a heated first exchange between Starmer and the newly elected UK Leader of the Opposition Kemi Badenoch in the



House of Commons. The Conservative Party chief challenged the Labour leader over his party volunteers having flown in to support the campaign of Trump's Democrat rival Kamala Harris. "I am very sure that President Trump will soon be calling to thank him for sending all of those north London Labour activists to campaign for his opponent," Badenoch taunted. "It is absolutely crucial that we have a strong relationship — that strong, special relationship, forged in difficult circumstances — between the US and the UK. We will continue to work, as we have done in our four months in government, on issues of security, our economy and global conflict," Starmer responded. Earlier, Starmer had been forced to stress that any party activists in the US during the election campaign were there as volunteers on their own time. Badenoch also raised the risk of

## European leaders assess how Trump will affect their fortunes

AP ■ BUDAPEST (HUNGARY)

Around 50 European leaders, including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, will be reassessing their trans-Atlantic relations in the hope that Donald Trump's second US presidency will avoid the strife and political pitfalls of his first administration. Further compounding an already complicated situation, Germany — Europe's troubled economic juggernaut — sank into political crisis after German Chancellor Olaf Scholz fired his finance minister. It raises the spectre of an election in a few

months and yet another standoff between the emboldened hard right and the establishment parties in Europe. Those two combined "adds even more pepper and salt to this situation," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said. But the US election fallout still took centre stage. "Our relationship with the US is essential and we are ready to deepen it," European Council President Charles Michel said. The 27 nations from the European Union bloc will be meeting in a separate summit as soon as other leaders from the United Kingdom,



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, center, and Latvia's Prime Minister Evika Silina, right, arrive for the European Political Community (EPC) Summit at the Puskas Arena in Budapest, Hungary, on Thursday. AP/PTI

Turkey and the Balkans leave in the evening. During his election campaign, Trump had threatened anything from a trade war with Europe to a withdrawal of NATO commitments and a fundamental shift of support for Ukraine in its war with Russia — all issues that could have ground breaking consequences for nations across Europe. Summit host and ardent Trump fan, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, said early Thursday he already had a phone call with the incoming president overnight, announcing that "We have big plans for the future!"

So did hard-right Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who lauded the "deep and historic strategic partnership that has always tied Rome and Washington." That partnership came under constant pressure during Trump's first term, from 2017-2021. Trump's administration slapped tariffs on EU steel and aluminum in 2018, based on the claim that foreign products, even if produced by American allies, were a threat to US national security. Europeans and other allies retaliated with duties on US-made motorcycles, bourbon, peanut butter and jeans, among other items.

The impact of the US election result could be felt in Europe for years to come, on issues including the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, as well as migration and climate change. Among the leaders due to attend on Thursday is Zelenskyy, who is expected to make another plea for more aid as his country fends off Moscow's invasion. The timing is laden with significance as Trump has vowed to end the war "within 24 hours" of being elected — something leaders in Kyiv interpret as an impending evaporation of US support following Trump's win.

# Supreme Court orders liquidation of grounded Jet Airways' assets



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court (SC) on Thursday exercised its extraordinary constitutional powers and ordered the liquidation of grounded air carrier Jet Airways' assets. A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra set aside the National

Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) decision upholding the resolution plan of Jet Airways, which approved the transfer of its ownership to Jalan Kalrock Consortium (JKC). Pronouncing the judgement for the bench, Justice Pardiwala allowed the plea of the State Bank of India (SBI) and other creditors against the NCLAT decision that

upheld the resolution plan of Jet Airways in favour of JKC. It said the liquidation of the air carrier was in the interest of creditors, workers and other stakeholders. The bench came down on the NCLAT, which the SC held disregarded the court's 2023 ruling. "We have no doubt that the NCLAT acted contrary to settled legal principles..."

NCLAT incorrectly interpreted our order," the court noted in the judgment. The fundamental concern is not only to do substantial justice but also to bring speedy disposal of dispute, it further noted.

The court used its powers under Article 142 of the Constitution which gives it the power to make orders and decrees to ensure complete justice in any matter or cause pending before it.

The NCLAT on March 12 upheld the resolution plan of the grounded air carrier and approved the transfer of its ownership to JKC. The SBI, Punjab National Bank (PNB) and JC Flowers Asset Reconstruction Private Limited had challenged the NCLAT verdict.

Additional Solicitor General (ASG) N Venkataraman appeared for the SBI-lead lender of Jet Airways, while Senior Advocates Mukul Rohatgi and Gopal Sankaranarayanan represented the Successful Resolution Applicant (SRA) Jalan Kalrock Consortium (JKC). In the past, Jet was the second largest carrier in India.

# Markets snap rally ahead of Fed interest rate decision



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Benchmark Sensex and Nifty tumbled more than 1 per cent on Thursday after a two-day rally as investors remained on the sidelines ahead of the US Federal Reserve interest rate decision and unabated foreign fund outflows. The BSE Sensex tanked 836.34 points or 1.04 per cent to settle at 79,541.79. During the day, it slumped 958.79 points or 1.19 per cent to 79,419.34. The NSE Nifty dropped 284.70 points or 1.16 per cent to finish at 24,199.35. From the 30-share Sensex pack, Tata Motors, Tech Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, JSW Steel, Sun Pharma, Asian Paints, IndusInd Bank and ICICI Bank were the major losers.

State Bank of India emerged as the only gainer from the pack. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,445.59 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled higher while Tokyo ended lower. European markets were trading in positive territory. Wall Street ended significantly higher on Wednesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.33 per cent to USD 74.67 a barrel. The BSE benchmark jumped 901.50 points or 1.13 per cent to settle at 80,378.13 on Wednesday. The Nifty soared 270.75 points or 1.12 per cent to 24,484.05.

# Q3 rural consumption volume outgrows urban markets by two times: NielsenIQ report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Urban and rural markets have shown a sequential recovery in consumer demand and rural areas continue to surpass urban areas in volume growth across most regions of India, according to a report from data analytics firm NielsenIQ.

According to the latest NielsenIQ's FMCG Quarterly snapshot, the Indian Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry witnessed a 5.7 per cent value-based growth and 4.1 per cent volume growth on a 1.5 per cent price growth in the July-September quarter.

"Urban consumption growth in Q3 24 was 2.8 per cent, while rural growth increased to 6 per cent from 5.2 per cent in the previous quarter, 2X faster growth than urban," the report said. Small and medium FMCG companies had a rebound after facing a decline in some quarters. They had faster growth helped by the food segment in comparison to large FMCG giants in terms of value and volume.

In the September quarter results leading FMCG companies including HUL, Nestle, Dabur, and Tata Consumer Products have reported a softness in the demand from the

urban market, mainly on account of high food inflation. According to industry observers, the urban market contributes to around 62 to 65 per cent of FMCG sales and the rest is from the rural market, which is largely dominated by food products and small offerings.

Moreover, in the September quarter, the FMCG industry also had "slight improvement" on the volume front sequentially, the report said.

"Food consumption growth increased to 3.4 per cent in Q3'24 compared to 2.1 per cent in Q2'24," it said.

This uptick in volume growth is largely attributed to staple categories such as edible oils, packaged atta, and spices despite price growth.

"In Home & Personal Care (HPC) categories, the consumption growth stabilised at 6 per cent in Q3' compared to Q2'23 at 6.7 per cent," it added. This stabilisation in consumer demand for HPC categories, which includes categories such as skin cleansers, shampoo, body lotion, shower gel, toothpaste, laundry detergents etc, was observed in both urban and rural markets. Small manufacturers recovered from the decline of the last three quarters and grew faster than big companies, helped by a sharp recovery in volume growth.

# HDFC raises lending rate on select maturity

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

HDFC Bank on Thursday raised the marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR) by 5 basis points (0.05 percentage points) on select maturity. The benchmark one-year tenor MCLR, which is used to price most consumer loans like auto and personal, has been retained at 9.45 per cent, according to the bank website. The overnight MCLR has risen to 9.15 per cent from 9.10 per cent, while the one-month rate has been increased by 5 basis points to 9.20 per cent. Rates on other buckets have been left unchanged.

# Vedanta, Oil India bag critical mineral blocks

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Vedanta Group has won four blocks while state-owned Oil India Ltd (OIL) bagged one in the fourth round of critical mineral blocks auction, the government said on Thursday.

While Vedanta bagged vanadium and graphite mine in Arunachal Pradesh, cobalt, manganese and iron (polymetal) mine in Karnataka, Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) -- a subsidiary of Vedanta -- won tungsten and associated minerals block in Andhra Pradesh and a tungsten mine in Tamil Nadu. Oil India Ltd has bagged graphite and vanadium block in Arunachal Pradesh, the government said.

Vedanta Ltd had earlier bagged two critical mineral blocks in Karnataka and Bihar in the second and third



auction rounds. Mamco Mining Pvt Ltd and Orissa Metaliks Pvt Ltd are the other two companies that have bagged blocks in this round of auction.

"The Ministry of Mines has successfully concluded the auction of eight critical mineral blocks, launched under tranche IV of the auction of critical and strategic mineral blocks," an official statement said. Following the issuance of the

Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) for 21 mineral blocks on June 24, the auction attracted strong interest from industry stakeholders.

"After the evaluation of technical bids, 10 mineral blocks advanced to the second round of e-auction, which included three first attempt blocks and seven second attempt blocks," the mines ministry said.

These blocks contain deposits of strategic minerals such as

phosphorite, graphite, and vanadium, essential for high-tech and green energy applications.

Auction process for the eight blocks have successfully concluded and for the remaining two blocks the process will be completed by December 2.

With the auction of these critical mineral blocks, the total number of successfully auctioned critical and strategic mineral blocks has reached 22. The fourth round of auction has marked a beginning for the Northeast into India's mineral auction landscape, with four maiden blocks successfully auctioned.

Significantly, this tranche features the first successful auction of a tungsten and two cobalt blocks. These minerals are essential for high-tech, defence, and energy storage applications.

# JK Lakshmi Cement reports revenue drop

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

JK Lakshmi Cement has reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 19.24 crore for the second quarter ended September 30, 2024 on account of drop in sales realisation.

The company had posted a profit of Rs 95.87 crore in the July-September period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing from JK Lakshmi Cement Ltd (JKCL), a flagship company of JK Organisation.

Its revenue from operations was down 2.16 per cent at Rs 1,234.29 crore in the September quarter. It was at Rs 1,574.53 crore in the year-ago period.



Total expenses of JKCL were at Rs 1,263.01 crore, down 1.27 per cent in the September quarter of FY25. JKCL's total income, which includes other income, was also down 2.17 per cent to Rs 1,242.67 crore.

During the quarter, JKCL's sales volume declined 1.40 per cent to 18.66 lakh tonnes. "The profitability of the company for the quarter has been impacted due to a sharp drop in sales realisation in our primary markets," Vinita Singhania, chairperson &

managing director said. The cement industry has witnessed a decline in sales realisation due to falling cement prices on a year-on-year basis.

The company, however, remained bullish in its outlook for the sector based on the government's spending on infrastructure projects.

"Given government's focus on infrastructure development and higher budgetary allocation and various other Initiatives for housing and road development, the outlook for the cement sector is positive in the coming year," it said. Shares of JK Lakshmi Cement Ltd on Thursday were trading at Rs 772 per scrip on BSE.

# Nissan cuts jobs as sales tank

AP ■ TOKYO

Nissan reported Thursday a loss for the latest fiscal quarter as its vehicle sales sank while costs and inventory ballooned, prompting the Japanese automaker to slash 9,000 jobs. Chief Executive Makoto Uchida said he was taking a 50 per cent pay cut to take responsibility for the dismal results, while promising that a turnaround was coming.

Nissan Motor Corp announced a global workforce reduction of 9,000 people, or about 6 per cent of its more than 1,33,000 employees, as well as a plan to slash global production capacity by 20 per cent.

Uchida declined to say which regions will be affected by the cuts or give specifics.

For the latest quarter through September, Nissan racked up a 9.3 billion Yen (USD 60 million) loss, a reversal from the 190.7 billion Yen profit recorded the same quarter a



year ago. Quarterly sales fell to 2.9 trillion Yen (USD 19 billion) from 3.1 trillion Yen.

Uchida acknowledged Nissan didn't respond quickly or flexibly enough to global changes, including market tastes and soaring raw material costs.

"I take this situation very seriously," he told reporters. "Nissan will restructure its

business to become leaner and more resilient." Nissan models did not sell well in the US, one of the most lucrative auto markets in the world that's recently been dominated by Ford, Toyota and Tesla.

All aspects of Nissan's operations and plans will be under review, Uchida said. Nissan, based in the port city of Yokohama, reported fiscal first half sales revenue of 5.98 trillion Yen (USD 39 billion), edging down 1 per cent from the more than 6 trillion Yen the same period last year.

Its April to September profit totaled 19.2 billion Yen (USD 124 million), declining sharply from the 296.2 billion Yen earned over the six months last year.

Nissan lowered its sales revenue forecast for the fiscal year through March 2025 to 12.7 trillion Yen (USD 82 billion) from an earlier projection for 14 trillion Yen (USD 91 billion).

It did not give a net profit forecast, citing uncertainty. It promised to give a profit forecast as soon as possible. Earlier, Nissan was forecasting an annual profit of 300 billion Yen (USD 1.9 billion).

The company misread the trend on hybrid and electric vehicles, Uchida further added. "We did start to understand this trend towards the end of last fiscal year," he said, adding that making some changes to core models didn't go as smoothly as planned.

Nissan now expects to sell 3.4 million vehicles around the world in the fiscal year ending in March 2025, down from an earlier projected 3.65 million vehicles. The new number is about the same that Nissan sold last fiscal year.

Nissan said it's appointing a chief performance officer tasked with turnaround decision-making, who will begin his job next month.

# ED searches premises of Amazon, Flipkart vendors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate Thursday conducted searches against some of the "main vendors" operating on platforms of e-commerce giants Amazon and Flipkart as part of a foreign investment "violation" investigation, official sources said. A total of 19 premises of these "preferred" vendors located in Delhi, Gurugram and Panchkula (Haryana), Hyderabad (Telangana) and Bengaluru (Karnataka) were covered as part of the action, the sources said.

It is learnt that the ED inspected documents and took copies of some from the premises of about six such vendors who were not named. The sources said a probe has been initiated by the federal agency under the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) after it received several complaints against the



two large e-commerce companies where it is alleged that they were "violating India's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rules by directly or indirectly influencing the sale price of goods or services and not providing level playing field for all the vendors". There was no immediate response from the two e-commerce companies. Meanwhile, the

Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) welcomed the ED action.

"The CAIT, along with several other trade bodies, has been raising these issues for the past few years. I welcome the Enforcement Directorate's actions as a step in the right direction," CAIT secretary general and BJP MP from Delhi Praveen Khandelwal said in a statement.

He claimed that the the

Competition Commission of India (CCI) had also issued "penalty notices" to Amazon and Flipkart, and their "preferred" sellers, for "engaging" in anti-competitive practices that have adversely affected small traders and 'kirana' (grocery) stores.

The CAIT and mainline mobile retailers' association AIMRA had also petitioned the CCI sometime back seeking immediate suspension of operations of Flipkart and Amazon as they

alleged that the companies engaged in predatory pricing and were burning cash to offer heavy discounts on products. These practices, in turn, are creating a grey market of mobile phones, causing losses to the exchequer "as players in the grey market evade taxes", they had said. The CCI is already looking into the practices of e-commerce companies.

# Scindia rules out spectrum auction pitch by Ambani, Mittal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Communications minister Jyotiraditya Scindia has said the spectrum for satellite broadband will be allocated and not auctioned as sought by Indian billionaires Mukesh Ambani and Sunil Mittal. The statement is being seen as a potential win for Elon Musk's Starlink.

The satellite broadband spectrum will however be not given free and sector regulator TRAI will fix a price for the resource, he told PTI in a text and video interview.

"Every country has to follow the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), which is the

organisation that lays out the policy for spectrum in space or satellites, and the ITU has been very clear in terms of the spectrum being given out on an assignment basis. In addition, if you look across the world today, I cannot think of a single country that auctions spectrum for satellite," Scindia said.

India is a member of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a UN agency for digital technology.

Musk's Starlink and global peers like Amazon's Project Kuiper back an administrative allocation. While Ambani's Reliance Jio has been vocal



about the need to allocate such spectrum through an auction to provide a level playing field to legacy operators who buy airwaves and set up infrastructure like telecom towers. Mittal, last month at an industry event, where Prime

Minister Narendra Modi was also present, articulated the need to use bidding for such allocation.

Jio and Bharti Airtel - India's largest and second-largest operators, respectively - feel that giving away the satellite broadband airwaves at a pre-decided price by the government will create an uneven playing field since they had to compete in an auction to get spectrum for their terrestrial wireless phone networks.

The two are vying for a piece of the satellite broadband segment as well. Musk-led Starlink is demanding administrative

allotment of licences in line with the global trend as it looks to tap into the world's fastest-growing mobile telephony and internet market.

Scindia said the Telecom Act of 2023 passed in December has put the matter in 'Schedule 1', which means that the Satcom spectrum will be allocated administratively.

Such an allocation will be at a government-decided price, and allow foreign firms like Starlink to offer voice and data services. If the spectrum were to be auctioned, it would have made it costlier for Starlink to roll out services. Starlink has applied for a

licence to start operations in the country.

Scindia, however, offered no clues on the fate of his application. The minister said that the regulatory process is very clear and transparent.

The new Telecom Act has been passed, and the Satellite spectrum is very clearly a part of that in schedule one, he pointed out.

"...We are open to looking at the application of any entity that wants to invest in India at this point in time. I think only one or two licenses have been given out. And whoever else wants to participate, India is surely going to welcome that," the minister said.

# INBRIEF

## VIT-AP UNIVERSITY HOSTS IHEF 2024

AMRAVATI: VIT-AP University today hosted its first-ever International Higher Education Fair (IHEF) 2024, bringing together prestigious educational institutions from abroad to showcase graduate, research, and professional study programs.



## POWERGRID POSTS PAT

Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID) has announced the Unaudited Financial Results for the quarter and half year ended 30th September 2024. At the end of Q2FY25, the total transmission assets of POWERGRID and its subsidiaries stood at 1,78,195 ckm of transmission lines, 279 substations strategically placed across the country.



## THE RAMAYANA

## A CONTEMPORARY REVIVAL

Dushyanth Sridhar's Ramayanam is a contemporary translation that makes the ancient epic accessible to modern readers, preserving its themes of love, duty, and human relationships

BY KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

My first-ever foreign tour was to Indonesia in 2011 as an Indian delegate to attend an international workshop on the Tsunami Early Warning System. I was put up at Hotel Borobudur in Jakarta by the hosts, the UNDP. While the workshop was from 8 am to 6 pm (with an hour-long lunch break and two high-tea sessions each of 15 minutes' duration), the delegates were free after the day's engagements. What caught my attention was the Ramayana Ballet staged daily in the ballroom of the hotel. Since admission was restricted by tickets, I had to collect the details from the hotel staff about the show.

A hotel staff member told me that Ramayana Ballet was a daily event not only in this star hotel but in most of the islands in the archipelago. "The story is the same as that played out in India. Maybe the dance and music associated with the Ramayana are different from what they are in your country," he said.

Lord Anjaneya (Hanuman) was the mascot of the 1997 edition of the South East Asian Games held in Jakarta. This shows the kind of reverence with which the commander of the Monkey Brigade is held in Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Nicholas Kazanas, director, OMILOS Meleton Cultural Institute, Greece, in his 2011 lecture held at Madras University, said that the Rig Veda is the oldest published literature of science and culture in the world and the Ramayana and Mahabharata are not mere epics but chronicles of events. We Indians are still to accord the due status to these works. But for Ramanand Sagar and B. R. Chopra, who took the initiatives in making television series about the Ramayana and Mahabharata



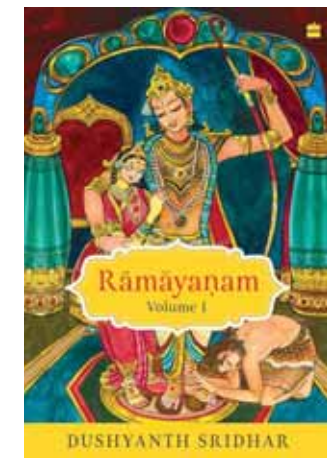
which were telecast through Doordarshan, these epics would have been forgotten long ago. I can still remember the cynicism on the faces of the Left Liberals when these works were aired by Doordarshan. Our contempt for our own culture and tradition inspired Wendy Doniger, the modern-day Lucille Ball (of I Love Lucy fame), to write The Hindus: An Alternative History. She had to meekly surrender and withdraw the book following a suit filed by Dinanath Batra under Section 295A of the IPC. The lady had to withdraw the book lest she would have to undergo imprisonment and pay a hefty

amount for offending sentiments of religious communities.

The Sanatanis do not react to the insults meted out to them by self-styled intellectuals who publish all kinds of nonsense against the culture, literature, and great epics of India. Many "scholars" have tried to tarnish Indian culture. The name that comes to mind is that of A. K. Ramanujan, who authored an essay "Three Hundred Ramayanams; Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation". Ramanujan, known as a poet and scholar of Indian literature and linguistics, portrayed Lord Rama and Sita as siblings and

this upset the believers. Batra himself approached the court and dragged the essay by Ramanujan to the court demanding it be withdrawn from the undergraduate curricula of Delhi University, and the academic council removed the same from the syllabus. The move by the University antagonised the Left intellectuals who described Batra's action as Fascist. It is in this background that Dushyanth Sridhar, a young Vedic scholar, chose to translate the Ramayanam by Valmiki into English. Sridhar is familiar to people in South India as a leading Harikatha artist (an art

form of telling stories from the Puranas and that too with eloquence). The dying art of Harikatha Kalakshepam got a new lease of life thanks to scholars like Sridhar. His latest work Ramayanam Translation proves that his achievements in the field of Vedic literature are not a flash in the pan and Sridhar is here to stay for many decades. Volume one of the book has Ayodhyakhanda (Ayodhya Canto) and concludes with Lord Rama mourning the passing of his father, King Dasaratha. The information about Dasaratha's death was conveyed to him by Bharata and his entourage who went to the



"THE STORY IS THE SAME AS THAT PLAYED OUT IN INDIA. MAYBE THE DANCE AND MUSIC ASSOCIATED WITH THE RAMAYANA ARE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT THEY ARE IN YOUR COUNTRY"

forest pleading with Rama to return to Ayodhya and take over the reins of the kingdom. The remaining volumes are expected shortly, and it is worth waiting to read how Sridhar has portrayed Lord Anjaneya and other characters. What is unique about the Ramayana is the theme Mata, Pita, Guru, Deivam (Mother, Father, Teacher and God) - a statement that makes it unambiguously clear that it is through the first three named that one is led to spirituality and truth, the two terms that encompass God. The Indian system of knowledge makes it clear that the Guru is as

important as mother and father. For Rama, Sage Vasishtha was the God incarnation because he had his education under him. A student organisation in Kerala has put flex boards in all college campuses and schools stating that "Teachers are not Gods. Students are not slaves!" This is what information technology and artificial intelligence of the modern day propagate.

Sridhar, having directed a Sanskrit movie Sakuntalam, displays his prowess in movie making in the book. The intercuts between what happened after Rama's return to Ayodhya from the Vana Vasa and spurning his royal consort in the jungles as the beginning of the story is intriguing. But more than that, what stands out is Dasaratha's consultation with other Kings about who should be the future emperor of Ayodhya. It is not a namesake discussion but a serious exchange of views. The Kings wanted Rama to be coronated as the next emperor, and they had their own reasons for their stance. It is not like the meetings of the working committees and political affairs committees summoned to sign on the dotted line choosing the son/daughter handpicked by the family patriarch as his heir apparent.

We learn new and newer things each time we read the Ramayana. Sridhar's mission is to take the Ramayana to the new age youth who may not be well-versed in Sanskrit. He has edited 24,000 shlokas from Valmiki's Ramayana and made it easy for the modern-day youth to comprehend the great epic. People do not just read the Ramayana; they comprehend the work and learn new things each time they go through the work.

What adds to the beauty of the book is the caricatures by Keshav, formerly working with a newspaper known as the English edition of Deshabhimani, the CPI(M) mouthpiece. Now over to you, dear readers.

NEW ARRIVALS

NOVEMBER MUST-READ  
Publisher: Niyogi Books

Citizen Charles

By MUSTANSIR DALVI  
(PRICE: ₹299, PAGES: 204)

Citizen Charles is the first biography of architect Charles Correa (1930-2015), exploring his profound impact on Indian modernism. The book traces his journey from Art Deco Bombay to his advocacy for urban equity in post-independence India, highlighting his commitment to ensuring decent housing and public spaces for all citizens. Through triumphs and challenges, this monograph reflects on Correa's legacy as a pioneering architect who merged contemporary design with Indian culture.

Shyam Benegal: Film-maker of the Real India  
By ARJUN SENGUPTA  
(Price: ₹299, Pages: 248)

Shyam Benegal: Film-maker of the Real India delves into the life and career of one of India's most acclaimed filmmakers. With a career spanning five decades, Benegal has been a pioneer of alternative cinema, using film to expose societal inequalities and injustices. This book examines his evolution as a filmmaker, exploring his choice of subjects, cinematic techniques, and philosophical perspectives. It also features a chapter dedicated to his work in television and an exclusive interview discussing his craft. Accessible and insightful, this monograph offers a valuable analysis of Benegal's contributions to Indian cinema and cultural history.

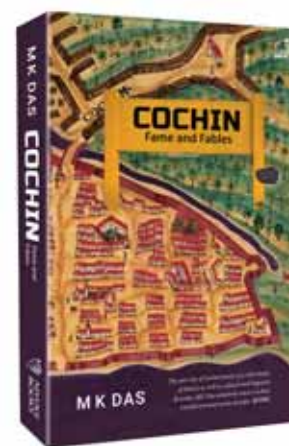
## From Port to Cultural Gem

Cochin, once a small fishing village, is now a vibrant city rich in culture and history. In 'Cochin: Fame and Fables', M.K. Das shares the stories of its people and the events that shaped its identity, showing how this city has embraced change while holding onto its roots, writes SAKSHI PRIYA



Welcome to Cochin, a city alive with stories. Set along Kerala's stunning coastline, this vibrant place has witnessed countless changes over the centuries. Once a small fishing village, it grew into a bustling port that attracted traders from around the globe. 'Cochin: Fame and Fables' by M.K. Das takes readers on a journey through this remarkable city, revealing the rich history and diverse cultures that have shaped it. In his book, M.K. Das captures Cochin's spirit, sharing stories of its people and the challenges they faced. Through his words, we discover how the city has transformed while staying true to its roots. Das examines Cochin's role in the spice trade, which made it a major trading hub. Known as "black gold," pepper attracted traders from Rome, Arabia, China and eventually Europe. In the chapter "Birth of a City," Das explains how Cochin's location along the Malabar Coast turned it into a gateway for both commerce and culture. The spice trade brought prosperity but also made the city a target for foreign powers, with pepper trade playing a role in diplomacy and negotiations. A major theme in 'Cochin: Fame and Fables' is the impact of colonisation. The Portuguese, Dutch and British each

sought control over Cochin's valuable trade routes and resources. Das describes how these foreign powers altered the city's governance, trade, and architecture. Despite the disruptions, Cochin's people adapted and resisted, maintaining a distinct cultural identity while navigating these political shifts. This theme of resilience underscores the book, as Das shows how the city's people absorb outside influences while preserving their roots. The author paints a vivid portrait of the Maharajas of Cochin, modest rulers who focused on the well-being of their people. Unlike the luxuries typically associated with Indian royalty, the Maharajas of Cochin emphasised unity and harmony, providing a peaceful coexistence among the city's diverse communities. Another focus of Das's research is the broader impact of global trade. The discovery of the Cape of Good Hope route expanded Cochin merchants' access to international markets, allowing the city's economy to flourish beyond traditional trade routes. These shifts reinforced Cochin's position in international trade. Cochin's religious and cultural diversity stands out as well. Known for inclusivity, the city has welcomed people of various



ABOUT THE BOOK

Book : COCHIN : Fame and Fables  
by M K DAS

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faiths for centuries. Das describes the coexistence of Hindu temples, Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, highlighting a long history of religious tolerance and diversity that has given Cochin a unique character. Das also explores Cochin's architectural heritage, a blend of traditional and colonial influences. The city's architecture serves as a visible record of its history, with ancient structures standing alongside colonial buildings, illustrating its journey and adaptation over time. In the book's final chapters, Das reflects on Cochin's modern identity, connecting its historical legacy with its current role as a cultural and economic

hub. He argues that Cochin's resilience and openness to new influences continue to define it today, suggesting that understanding the city's past is essential for appreciating its present. 'Cochin: Fame and Fables' is a well-researched account that captures the essence of a city with a rich and complex history. Das braids together themes of trade, culture and resilience, offering readers an insightful look into Cochin's evolution. For those interested in Indian history, colonialism or cultural exchange, this book provides a comprehensive view of a city that has retained its identity while embracing change.

# INDIA'S SECOND LINE STARS LOOK FOR A BREAKAWAY SERIES AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA

PTI ■ DURBAN

As India firmly embraces a transition phase, a clutch of second line stars such as Sanju Samson and Abhishek Sharma will be hoping for a breakaway series in the four T20Is against South Africa, starting with the first contest here Friday. It is imperative for them to shed the tag of sidekicks and establish themselves as the first-choice players in this format.

The recent home T20I series against Bangladesh was a precursor. Samson received a chance to open consistently against the neighbours, and he made most of it slamming a 47-ball 111.

In the post-Rohit Sharma era in T20Is, Samson would like to further buttress his claim for a regular opening slot with a few fruitful outings against the Proteas.

This is an important series for Abhishek as well. The dashing left-hander showed his impressive skills while hammering a 47-ball hundred against Zimbabwe at Harare in July, but his other six international innings have produced -0, 10, 14, 16, 15, 4. Abhishek will be keen to be more consistent to safeguard his place, and he will also be looking to be more penetrative with his left-arm spin. Tilak Varma offers a similar case. The left-hander has somewhat fallen off the radar after making a solid beginning to his T20I career against the West Indies in August 2023.



Since then, his 12 outings in the shortest format have produced just one fifty and has not featured in the blue jersey after appearing against Afghanistan earlier this January. So, the Hyderabad will be keen to impress the selectors with some meaningful efforts against the Africans, and he has also started using his off-spin more regularly.

This series also offers an excellent opportunity for wicketkeeper batter Jitesh Sharma, who has slipped a few rungs below in the pecking order, and spinner Varun Chakravarthy, who impressed against Bangladesh taking five wickets, to keep themselves afloat over the competition. The selectors will also closely monitor how a new-look pace bowling unit

- Arshdeep Singh, Avesh Khan, Vyshak Vijaykumar and Yash Dayal - fare against South Africa. While Arshdeep and Avesh have their moments at the top-level, Vyshak and Dayal will look to carry their success in domestic circuit and in the IPL to international cricket. Ramandeep Singh, who was retained by Kolkata Knight Riders after a productive IPL

2024, will be eager to replicate his success here. Ramandeep brings to the table exciting multiple skillsets - a daring batter down the order, useful medium pacer and a gun outfielder. The seniors in the side like skipper Suryakumar Yadav, all-rounders Hardik Pandya and Axar Patel, the only member from the Test side

here, will be hoping for a strong outing so that India can apply some balm over the wounds from their recent home series defeat against New Zealand.

On a personal level, four players - Arshdeep, Avesh, Jitesh and Vyshak - will want impact outings here after not getting retained by their respective franchises ahead of the IPL mega auction November 24 and 25.

All other 11 players in the side have managed to get a retention from their IPL teams.

South Africa will be looking to add a touch of revenge to the series after losing to India in the T20 World Cup final in June, the last time these two sides met.

**Teams (from)**

**India:** Suryakumar Yadav (C), Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson (WK), Rinku Singh, Tilak Varma, Jitesh Sharma (WK), Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Ravi Bishnoi, Arshdeep Singh, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Avesh Khan, Yash Dayal.

**South Africa:** Aiden Markram (c), Otneil Baartman, Gerald Coetzee, Donovan Ferreira, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Patrick Kruger, Keshav Maharaj, David Miller, Mhlahi Mpongwana, Nqaba Peter, Ryan Rickelton, Andile Simelane, Lutho Sipamla (3rd and 4th T20Is), and Tristan Stubbs.

## Jurel shines, Rahul fails as India A flounder bounce test



PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Dhruv Jurel showcased his sound technique and cool temperament while wickets fell like ninepins at the other end in another shoddy batting display by India A on the opening day of the second unofficial Test against Australia A at the iconic MCG on Thursday. Jurel (80 off 186 balls), who came to bat in the third over scored nearly half of India A's paltry first innings total of 161 in 57.1 overs with only other batter to cross 20-run mark was Devdutt Padikkal (26). Veteran KL Rahul (4), opening the batting, done in by a peach of a delivery from Scott Boland (1/51 in 15 overs). Michael Neser (4/27 in 12.2 overs), one of the finest and unluckiest among contemporary Australian pacers, dealt a telling blow in the opening over from which India A couldn't recover. At stumps, Australia A were 53 for 2 in reply with Mukesh Kumar again looking best among Indian bowlers. What stood out during the day was Jurel's composure and ability to play late, using soft hands. When there was extra bounce, he would quickly loosen his bottom hand grip to ensure that the ball didn't go to slip or gully region. He judged the length perfectly and the flicked six off Boland was a

treat to watch. While Rishabh Pant is the first-choice wicketkeeper batter, Jurel's ability to leave deliveries on length should put him in a better position than Sarfaraz Khan in the middle-order batter role. It was also the day when one got an indication that India senior team might bank on Rahul's experience of opening the innings if Rohit Sharma skips a match. However, Boland got him with a perfectly pitched delivery that straightened to take his outside edge. But Rahul would be any day better than Abhimanyu Easwaran (0) who is increasingly looking out of sorts at this level. This was after Neser bowled a hostile opening over with Easwaran left in a complete tangle to a well-disguised short ball that ballooned to gully. In-form Sai Sudharsan (0) then got a Neser delivery that was aimed at his midriff and he tried to fend it, resulting in a regulation catch in the slips. Skipper Rituraj Gaikwad's suspect technique got exposed when he jabbed with hard hands at a delivery that bounced a tad extra from length to be caught at slips. Nitish Reddy (16) played the most indiscreet shot as he tried to dance down the track to counter the steep bounce, getting ousted by Beau Webster.

## Sinner and Alcaraz headline the ATP Finals with Djokovic out

AP ■ TURIN (ITALY)

Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz are poised to add another entry into their rapidly developing rivalry when the ATP Finals open Sunday without any members of the Big Three for the first time in nearly a quarter century. The top-ranked Sinner and No. 3 Alcaraz evenly split the year's Grand Slam titles between them with two apiece and it would be fitting if the pair meet again in Turin.

And since Alcaraz was overtaken by Alexander Zverev in the rankings this week, the Spaniard could be placed in the same round-robin group as Sinner. The draw for the eight-man event is scheduled for later Thursday.

After the round-robin stage, the top two finishers in each group advance to the semifinals. The other qualifiers are: Zverev, Daniil Medvedev, Taylor Fritz, Casper Ruud, Alex de Minaur and Andrey Rublev.

The big name missing is that of defending champion Novak Djokovic, who withdrew on Tuesday due to an unspecified injury.



23 years since Djokovic, Federer and Nadal missed the finals. Not since 2001 has the finals been held without at least one of Djokovic, Roger Federer or Rafael Nadal. This season also was the first since 2002 without at least one Grand Slam title for a member of that trio.

Djokovic has won the ATP Finals a record seven times. He beat Sinner for the title last year. Federer, who announced his retirement in 2022, won the event six times after making his debut in 2002; Nadal, who is retiring after

playing in the Davis Cup the week after finals, was the runner-up twice at the finals but never won it. Sinner withdrew from last week's Paris Masters due to a virus and showed up early in Turin for training.

"This is for me the main event of the end of the year," Sinner said. A final decision in Sinner's doping case is still pending. As an Italian, Sinner will be the main focus of attention in Turin. It's the first time that Sinner will be playing at home since it was announced before his U.S.

Open title that he had tested positive in two separate drug tests earlier in the year.

A decision to clear Sinner of wrongdoing was appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency in September and the Switzerland-based Court of Arbitration for Sport is expected to make a final ruling on the case early next year. Alcaraz has won all 3 of his official meetings with Sinner this year. Sinner opened this year by winning the Australian Open to become the first Italian man to win a Grand Slam singles title in

nearly a half-century - since Adriano Panatta raised the French Open trophy in 1976. Alcaraz then claimed the French Open and Wimbledon titles to raise his career total to four Grand Slams.

Sinner responded by winning the U.S. Open. Alcaraz won all three official meetings with Sinner this year and holds a 6-4 advantage in their career head-to-head rivalry. Last month, Sinner beat Alcaraz in the Six Kings Slam exhibition in Saudi Arabia. Zverev won in Paris last week and looks for a 3rd title at finals. The only two players in the field to have won the finals are Zverev and Medvedev.

Zverev won in London in 2018 and in Turin in 2021; while Medvedev triumphed in 2020 - the final year the event was held in London. Zverev enters in solid form coming off a title at the Paris Masters.

Fritz is looking to add another big result after his maiden Grand Slam final at the U.S. Open; Ruud was a finalist in 2022; De Minaur is making his tournament debut; and Rublev is making his fifth straight appearances.

## Harmanpreet features in 50-player for WBBL Team of the Decade

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Captain Harmanpreet Kaur is the lone entry from India in the 50-player shortlist for the Women's Big Bash League (WBBL) Team of the Decade, which was released on Thursday.

The shortlist comprises cricketers who have played a minimum of 60 WBBL matches prior to this season. The list will be pruned to 12 by a selection panel of experts after taking into account public voting.

The public voting will be open between November 11-24 on the Big Bash App.

The Team of the Decade will honour the greatest players from across the 10-year history of the WBBL.

The selection panel is being chaired by Cricket Australia Director Clea Smith, and also includes Mel Jones, Lisa Sthalekar, Matthew Mott, Quentin Hull, Laura Jolly and Alistair Dobson.

Public voting will be given equal importance and the panel will then review and combine those votes with their own selections to finalise the 12-player side, to be announced at the WBBL 10 final on December 1. The final XI will have a



maximum of three overseas players in keeping with league's rules.

**WBBL Team of the Decade shortlist:**

Sarah Aley, Samantha Bates, Suzie Bates (International), Alex Blackwell, Nicole Bolton, Nicola Carey, Lauren Cheatle, Sarah Coyte, Hannah Darlington, Sophie Devine (International), Mignon du Preez (International), Jess Duffin, Rene Farrell, Ashleigh Gardner, Heather Graham, Nicola Hancock, Grace Harris, Laura Harris, Rachael Haynes, Alyssa Healy, Sammy-Jo Johnson, Jess Jonassen, Marizanne Kapp (International), Harmanpreet Kaur (International), Delissa

Kimmince, Alana King, Heather Knight (International), Meg Lanning, Lizelle Lee (International), Katiem Mack, Hayley Matthews (International), Tahlia McGrath, Tegan McPharlin, Sophie Molineux, Beth Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Rachel Priest (International), Georgia Redmayne, Amy Satterthwaite (International), Megan Schutt, Natalie Sciver-Bruno (International), Molly Strano, Annabel Sutherland, Stefanie Taylor (International), Dane van Niekerk (International), Elyse Villani, Georgia Wareham, Amanda-Jade Wellington, Laura Wolvaardt (International), Danni Wyatt-Hodge (International).

## Barcelona, Inter and upstart Brest win again in Champions League

AP ■ Paris

Barcelona and Inter Milan won again in the Champions League though both former title holders are looking up in the standings toward upstart newcomer Brest.

Aston Villa started the week atop the 36-team table but its winning run ended on Wednesday after a bizarre penalty was awarded when defender Tyrone Mings picked up the ball in the area at Club Brugge, resulting in a 1-0 loss that sent the English club plummeting to eighth place.

Paris Saint-Germain, in its first season without Kylian Mbappé, trails far behind in 25th after Atletico Madrid

scored in stoppage time to seal a 2-1 win for the Spanish team at Parc des Princes.

Barcelona's blistering scoring form continued in a 5-2 win at Red Star Belgrade - a seventh straight win since the start of October at a rate of four goals per game. Robert Lewandowski scored twice and has 21 this season.

Inter Milan stifled Arsenal in a 1-0 win at San Siro sealed by Hakan Calhanoglu's penalty in first-half stoppage time. Inter is unbeaten on 10 points and in fifth place, one below Brest which won 2-1 at Sparta Prague. The French debutant looks sure to advance to the knockout phase starting in February. Atalanta won 2-0 at Stuttgart to stay unbeaten on eight points and Salzburg got

its first goals and points in a 3-1 win at Feyenoord.

Bayern Munich won 1-0 at home to Benfica in a game that was delayed 15 minutes by crowd congestion and then was played in a muted atmosphere because of a medical incident for a fan. Shakhtar Donetsk playmaker Heorhiy Sudakov had a fine assist and an even better goal in a 2-1 win for the Ukrainian champion against Young Boys. Shakhtar's No. 10 showed why he is expected to be the club's next big-money sale. Liverpool, which on Tuesday routed Bayer Leverkusen 4-0, leads the standings at the midway point of the eight-round program. Liverpool is the only team with four straight wins, while



five teams have four losses. They are Leipzig, Sturm Graz, Young Boys, Red Star and Slovan Bratislava. Two Italian teams - Inter Milan and Atalanta - have yet to concede a goal in four games. Another Italian side,

Bologna, is the only team with no goals scored.

**Villa slides** Villa had led the standings in the new league-phase format after three straight wins without conceding a goal - and it took a bizarre incident

before goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez was eventually beaten.

Mings was punished for picking up the ball when Martinez seemed to restart play with a goal kick passed forward to his teammate. Mings walked a couple steps to gather the ball with his left hand and returned to place it in the six-yard box.

"It's the biggest mistake I witnessed in my career," Villa coach Unai Emery said. "It has only happened one time in all my life. Today." Brugge captain Hans Vanaken placed the 52nd-minute spot-kick to Martinez's left as the World Cup-winning Argentina goalkeeper dived to his right.

**Bayern and Dinamo**

It was the standout result of the inaugural week of the new Champions League in September: Bayern Munich 9, Dinamo Zagreb 2.

It was the first time a team had scored nine times in a game in the 32-year Champions League era, and Dinamo fired its coach two days later.

Since then? Bayern lost twice, including a 4-1 rout at Barcelona, and Dinamo won twice. At the end of play Wednesday, Bayern was 17th on six points, one place below Dinamo on seven. If those placings hold until January, they meet again twice more in the knockout playoffs round.

**Next up** The fifth round in three weeks' time has perhaps the

stellar attraction of 144 games in the league phase: Liverpool vs Real Madrid.

That game on November 27 is a rematch of the 2022 and 2018 finals, both won by Madrid, and the 1981 European Cup title match that Liverpool won.

There is another final rematch: Bayern Munich hosts PSG on November 26 in a repeat of the pandemic-season final played in August 2020 without fans in Lisbon. Also, sixth-place Barcelona hosts Brest, a fixture which might have been overlooked when the draw was made in August yet the French team is currently fourth.

Only the top eight teams in January advance directly to the round of 16 in March.