

CANADA ARRESTS NIJJAR ASSOCIATE



Representative Image

Nijjar Road in Kharar. Arsh Dalla, who has been accused of involvement in targeted killings, terror financing and extortion in Punjab, was in January last year designated a terrorist by the Indian government. The Union Home Ministry had said in a notification that he was involved in the cross-border smuggling of drugs and weapons on a large scale. He is an accused in various cases registered and investigated by the National Investigation Agency, including targeted killing, extorting money for terror funding, attempt to murder, disturbing communal harmony and creating terror among the people in Punjab. The central government believes that Gill is involved in terrorism and hence designated as a terrorist under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 by exercising the powers conferred by clause (a) of subsection (1) of section 35 of the Act, the notification had said. In September 2024, Dalla publicly claimed responsibility for the murder of Congress leader Baljinder Singh Balli. Balli was shot dead in Moga district of Punjab. Dalla was the acting chief of the Khalistani Tiger Force and was seen as the successor of slain terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Dalla, a wanted person on the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) terrorist list, has been allegedly orchestrating criminal activities in Punjab from his base in Canada for the past three to four years. A native of Moga, Dalla is accused of multiple targeted killings in Punjab.

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Security personnel during an encounter with terrorists at Zabarwan forest area on the outskirts of Srinagar, on Sunday

PTI

Para commando martyred in counter-terrorist operation

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

An elite para commando of the Indian army was martyred in the counter-terrorist operation launched in the general area of Bhart Ridge, Kishtwar to flush out terrorists behind the killing of two members of the Village Defence Groups (VDG). Three other critically injured soldiers were airlifted from Kishtwar to a military hospital for advanced treatment. The operation was still in progress at the time. The Army identified the brave heart as Naib Subedar Rakesh Kumar of 2 Para and saluted his supreme sacrifice. The Army's Jammu-based White Knight Corps said in a post on X, "Based on specific intelligence input regarding the presence of terrorists, a joint operation was launched by security forces in general area Bhart Ridge, Kishtwar. This is the same group which had abducted and killed 02 (two) innocent villagers (village defence guards). Contact was established and a firefight ensued." According to ground reports, the encounter took place a few kilometres from the spot where the bullet-riddled bodies of VDGs Nazir Ahmad and Kuldeep Kumar were found on Friday. In Kashmir, the residents living in the vicinity of the Zabarwan forest area woke up to the gunshots of heavy firing between a group of terrorists and the security forces. The highly fortified area

remained under siege as reinforcements were rushed to plug the escape routes. According to police, the gunbattle broke out around nine am in the forest area connecting Dachigam and the upper reaches of the Nishat area, a famous tourist destination. This is the third incident of terrorist violence in Srinagar since November 1. The gunfight which started early Sunday morning reportedly stopped in the afternoon. The terrorists are believed to have fled from the dense forest area. Since November 1, eight terrorists have been eliminated by the security forces in six anti-terrorist operations in different parts of Kashmir valley. A foreign terrorist was killed during an encounter with security forces in the Rajpora area on the outskirts of Sopore in north Kashmir's Baramulla district on Saturday. A total number of four encounters have been reported in north Kashmir in the last four days which resulted in the killing of five terrorists. Two foreign terrorists were killed by security forces during an encounter in the Sagipora area of Sopore on Friday while two local terrorists were killed in Shangus, Anantnag and a foreign LeT commander was killed in Srinagar's Khanyar area on November 2. A foreign terrorist was killed in Bandipora forests earlier this week while another terrorist was killed during an encounter in Lolab forest.

Bangladesh govt wants Interpol support to repatriate Hasina

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh's interim government on Sunday said it will seek Interpol's assistance in repatriating deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina from India, and other "fugitives", to face trial for alleged crimes against humanity. Hasina and her party leaders face accusations of ordering brutal suppression of the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement, resulting in numerous casualties during the July-August protests. The movement later intensified into a large-scale uprising, forcing Hasina to secretly flee to India on August 5.



According to the interim government led by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, at least 753 people were killed and thousands injured during the protests, which it termed crimes against humanity and genocide. Over 60 complaints of crimes against humanity and genocide have been filed against Hasina and her party leaders with the ICT and the prosecution team till mid-October.

"A Red Notice will be issued through Interpol very soon. No matter where in the world these fugitive fascists are hiding, they will be brought back and held accountable in court," Law Affairs adviser Asif Nazrul told reporters here after inspecting the status of renovation at the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), which is housed in the Old High Court building on the Supreme Court premises.

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PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Arshdeep Singh Gill alias Arsh Dalla, who was designated a terrorist by India, is likely to have been arrested in Canada's Ontario province following a shooting incident, sources claimed here on Sunday. The incident occurred on October 28 in Milton. The Halton Regional Police Service (HRPS) had on October 29 said that it had arrested two men on charges of "discharging firearm with intent" following an investigation after the duo had come to a hospital and one of them was treated for a non-life-threatening gunshot and later discharged. It did not disclose their identity and said both accused "were held

in custody pending a bail hearing". The sources claimed that one of those arrested is believed to be Arsh Dalla, who is associated with the banned Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) and ran terror modules on behalf of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a designated terrorist who was killed in June last year. "The HRPS was contacted by Guelph Police in the early morning hours of October 28, 2024, after two males attended a hospital in Guelph. One of the males was treated and released for a non-life-threatening gunshot wound apparently suffered in Halton region. The other was not injured. "The HRPS Major Crime Bureau is now investigating and both males have been arrested. A 25-year-old male

of Halton Hills and a 28-year-old male of Surrey BC have both been charged with Discharging Firearm with Intent," a Halton police statement said, adding they were actively investigating the incident. Earlier on Sunday, Punjab Police announced the arrest of two shooters of Arsh Dalla's gang, who were allegedly involved in the murder of a Sikh activist last month, from Kharar in Mohali. Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said the arrest came in a joint operation of the state special operation cell, the Anti-gangster Task Force and Faridkot Police. The two were identified as Anmolpreet Singh alias Vishal, a resident of Bhadour in Barnala and Navjot Singh alias Neetu, a resident of



Justice Sanjiv Khanna takes oath as CJI today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Justice Sanjiv Khanna, who has been part of several landmark Supreme Court judgments such as scrapping the Electoral Bonds scheme, sanctity of EVMs and upholding abrogation of Article 370, will be sworn in as the 51st Chief Justice of India (CJI) on Monday. President Droupadi Murmu will administer the oath of office at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in a ceremony scheduled at 10 am. His term will last until May 13, 2025.

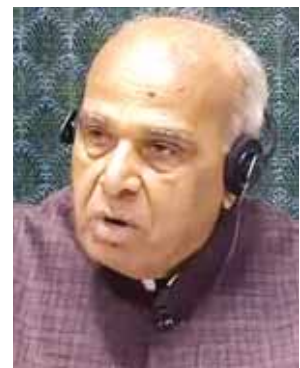
Hailing from an illustrious Delhi-based family, Justice Khanna is the son of former Delhi High Court judge Justice Dev Raj Khanna and the nephew of renowned judge Justice HR Khanna, who was superseded from Chief Justice post during Indira regime and later became Law Minister. Justice HR Khanna, the uncle of Justice Sanjiv Khanna, hit the headlines by resigning in 1976 after he wrote a dissenting verdict in the infamous ADM Jabalpur case during the Emergency. The majority verdict of a Constitution Bench, upholding the abrogation of fundamental rights during the Emergency, was considered a "black spot" on the judiciary. Justice HR Khanna declared the move unconstitutional and against the rule of law and paid a price as the then Union government superseded him and made Justice MH Beg the next CJI.

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Waqf Bill Committee courts controversy again

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Waqf (Amendment) Bill parliamentary committee of Parliamentarians has now run into another controversy as several Opposition MPs examining the Bill have suggested that the assurance they received after meeting Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has not been met. They accused the panel chairman Jagdambika Pal of going ahead with a tour of states despite his meetings lacking even the quorum. Jagdambika Pal, chairman of the Joint Committee of Parliament formed to scrutinise the contentious Bill tabled by the government in the last Monsoon Session, rejected Opposition members' contention, asserting that "study tours" of parliamentary panels are an informal exercise and are not bound by formalities like meeting the quorum. The Pal-led committee is currently on a tour of five states to speak to various stakeholders, though opposition members have



boycotted it. The panel chairman told PTI on Sunday that he is confident of meeting the deadline of submitting the committee's report by the last day of the first week of the Winter Session, which begins on November 25, adding that he has already prepared its 200-250 pages. Opposition MPs of the committee have, however, joined hands to question his functioning, alleging that Pal, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP, is doing the government's bidding, and they had earlier even threatened to disassociate themselves with its work.

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Long beards, orange buildings...

What's happening in govt colleges?

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAIPUR/BENGALURU

While the controversy over students hailing from Jammu and Kashmir sporting a beard, in government-run colleges in Karnataka has been amicably resolved, another issue seems to be brewing in Rajasthan, around the institutions seeking to paint their buildings orange. The Rajasthan College Education Commissionerate has directed 20 government-run colleges to get the facade of their buildings and entry halls painted orange, under the Kayakalp Scheme. According to the Commissionerate, the move is to ensure a positive environment in the education institutes. The scheme is a national initiative by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to promote cleanliness, hygiene, and infection control in public healthcare facilities in India. The Opposition Congress slammed the move as an



attempt to politicise educational institutions. Targeting the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government over the matter, Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) general secretary Swarnim Chaturvedi said that it was an attempt to "politicise" education in colleges. "The BJP government has failed to deliver on promises made to people. The government has nothing to highlight as its achievements and in order to divert attention; it is resorting to such moves," he said. Rajasthan government Joint Director (Planning), College Education, Vijendra Kumar Sharma issued the order last month regarding the paint of front facade and entry halls of colleges under the scheme.

In the first phase, a total of 20 colleges, two colleges in each division level, have to be painted, the order said. "The colleges are the main centres of higher education. The educational environment and scenario of the college should be such for the students that they feel positive as soon as they enter the college," the order stated. The joint director further said in the order that in the first phase of the scheme, two government colleges of each division have been included and the front facade and entrance hall of the 20 colleges' buildings should be phase painted with "Asian Paints White Gold 8292 and Asian Paints Orange Crown 7974".

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MASK UP!



Hazard ahead! Delhi woke up to another morning of toxic air on Sunday as the air quality lingered in the "very poor" range for the 10th consecutive day post-Diwali as a dense layer of smog blanketed parts of the National Capital. The Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 334. Key areas, including Alipur, Anand Vihar, Jahangirpuri, Rohini, and Bawana, remained in the "very poor" AQI category, indicating hazardous pollution levels. PM2.5 concentration is currently 30.6 times the World Health Organization annual PM2.5 guideline value. Mist/Shallow fog reported at Sardarjung airport. Sardarjung airport recorded lowest visibility at 700m at 0700 hours IST. Palam airport recorded lowest visibility 1200m at 0800 hours IST. In many parts of the city, buildings, monuments, offices, flyovers, roads, and bridges were hardly visible as they were covered by a thick layer of smog. Photo: PTI

Save the date(s)... 48 lakh weddings ahead

Around 48 lakh ceremonies expected, generating business worth Six Lakh Crore

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

India hosts the highest number of weddings in the world each year, and each is nothing less than a festival for the bride and groom, and their friends and families. Weddings are big business the world over, however, in terms of market size, the Indian wedding industry is still smaller than China's, but is almost twice as big as the United States'. Beginning from Dev Uthani Ekadashi on November 12, India's wedding season expects to see 48 lakh marriage ceremonies nationwide generating business worth a whopping Rs six lakh crore. This is attributed to 18 auspicious wedding muhursats (dates) this season, as compared to 11 in 2023. According to a study by the

Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), out of these 48 lakh weddings, about 40 lakh will be 'budget-weddings' (that cost between Rs 3 lakh to Rs 15 lakh), while around 50,000 weddings will be 'luxurious' with a spend of Rs 1 crore or more. About seven lakh weddings will have a budget of 25 lakh while 50,000 weddings will cost Rs 50 lakh and more.

The study estimated that 4.5 lakh weddings which will be solemnised contribute over Rs 1.5 lakh crore to the economy in Delhi. Last year, 35 lakh weddings during this season created business worth Rs 4.25 lakh crore here. Traders say weddings also help boost several other sectors, like clothing, jewellery, automobiles and consumer durables. These industries see higher



demand during the wedding season, with companies carefully timing their promotions and stock management around wedding dates. More than half of the jewellery industry's revenue comes

from bridal jewellery, while weddings and celebration wear drive 10 per cent of all apparel spending. According to wedding planners, a new trend emerging is the increasing spend on social media services for weddings.

Explaining this, CAIT's Secretary General and Member of Parliament from Chandni Chowk, Praveen Khandelwal said that while the Indian wedding industry is largely fragmented and unorganised, there's room

for big players to grow their share. He noted that wedding expenses are divided between goods and services, with main expenditure areas in goods including clothing, sarees, lehengas, and apparel (10 per cent), jewellery (15 per cent), electronics and appliances (five per cent), dry fruits, sweets, and snacks (five per cent), groceries and vegetables (five per cent), gift items (four per cent), and other goods (six per cent). In the services sector, expenditures will likely go toward banquet halls, hotels, and venues (five per cent), event management (three per cent), tent decoration (10 per cent), catering services (10 per cent), floral decorations (four per cent), transportation and cab services (three per cent),

and videography (two per cent), orchestra and music (three per cent), lighting and sound (three per cent), and other services (seven per cent). According to the Jefferies report, an investment banking and capital market firm, the Indian wedding industry is worth US\$130 billion and is the second-largest in the world, after food and groceries. The report said an average Indian family spends Rs 12 lakh on a wedding, which is three times their yearly income of Rs four lakh. In contrast, they only spend around Rs 6 lakh on educating their child for 18 years (from preschool to graduation). The largest share of wedding expenses goes to jewellery, at nearly 25%, followed by catering at 20% and events at 15%.

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7-year-old girl crushed to death by dumper

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A seven-year-old girl died after being hit by a high-speed tar dumper in Lucknow on Saturday. Her mother was seriously injured and has been admitted to Lok Bandhu Hospital. The incident took place in Rohtapur village, within the Banthra police station area. The girl was a student at Hiralal Inter College. She was on her way to a parents' meeting with her mother on a scooter when a dumper, coming from behind, hit them. Following the incident, angry villagers protested fiercely on Bani-Mohaan Road. Upon receiving the information, police arrived at the scene and attempted to calm the villagers. ACP, Krishnanagar, assured them of all possible assistance from the government, but they were unwilling to listen to anyone. The protest, which lasted for four hours, caused a long queue of vehicles on both sides of the road. However, eventually, the situation was resolved. Banthra police station in-charge Ram Singh stated that the dumper, which belongs to the PWD department, had been taken into custody. The driver fled the scene and is being sought. The girl's body has been sent for a post-mortem. The deceased girl's name was Drishti. She was a resident of Rautapur village, Narayanpur, Banthra. Her father Satish Maurya is a private school vehicle driver. There was a parents' meeting at Drishti's school on Saturday. Her mother Preeti Maurya (30) was taking Drishti to the school on their scooter at 8:30

am via Bani-Mohaan Road. As they reached Bani-Mohaan Road, a high-speed dumper (UP 32 RN 4187) coming from behind struck their scooter. The wheel of the dumper then ran over Drishti's head, and she died instantly. Preeti Maurya was seriously injured in the mishap. Upon receiving information about the accident, Banthra police arrived at the scene and rushed Preeti to hospital. When the family members of the deceased and the villagers were informed about the incident, they began protesting by blocking Bani-Mohaan Road and refused to allow the police to remove the girl's body. They demanded that the district magistrate or the SDM of Sarojini Nagar come to the scene. Residents of Rohtapur village, in the Banthra police station area, blocked the road, expressing their anger over the delay of the ambulance, which took one and a half hours to reach the scene. They also demanded that Preeti be treated immediately. Meanwhile, ACP (Krishna Nagar) Vinay Dwivedi arrived at the scene and attempted to persuade the protesters, but they remained upset, citing frequent accidents on this road. In addition to requesting financial assistance from the government, the villagers demanded that the victim's family receive benefits from the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Yojana. They also called for proper medical treatment for Preeti and strict action against the dumper driver. There was a heated exchange with the police present at the

Would-be groom among 3 of family killed in road mishap

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In yet another incident that occurred on the Lucknow-Agra Expressway on Sunday morning, three members of a family, including a would-be groom, lost their lives. According to reports, an out-of-control SUV (Scorpio) collided with a container parked on the Lucknow-Agra Expressway. The would-be groom, a teacher, along with his father (a businessman), and brother, died in the accident. All three were residents of Gaya district in Bihar. They were returning home after purchasing goods and items for the 'Tilak' ceremony from Ghaziabad. A cash sum of Rs 8 lakh, jewellery worth Rs 5-6 lakh, and wedding clothes, fineries, and gift packs were found in the SUV. The impact was so severe that the front of the SUV was badly dented. The incident occurred at 6 am on Sunday near the toll plaza of Kakori police station on the expressway. It is suspected that the accident occurred due to the driver's drowsiness, as the fam-

ily had left Ghaziabad at 2 am. Police arrived at the scene, removed the vehicle with a crane, and restored traffic. The would-be groom's father, Sanjay Kumar, was a businessman in Ghaziabad. The deceased have been identified as Saurabh (30), his father Sanjay Kumar (55), and his brother Gaurav (33), all residents of Gaya in Bihar. Sanjay had called Saurabh to Ghaziabad for the 'Tilak' shopping. The wedding was scheduled for February 8, 2025, and the Tilak ceremony was planned for November 18. After purchasing the wedding items in Ghaziabad, they were returning home when the accident occurred. Saurabh's marriage had been recently arranged, and the entire family had been busy with the preparations for the 'Tilak' ceremony and the wedding. Following the accident, wedding materials were scattered across the road. Inspector Chandrakant Mishra explained that the container was stationary on the Lucknow-Agra Expressway

when the Scorpio, travelling at high speed, collided with it. There was also light fog in the morning, which may have contributed to the accident, as the driver, Gaurav, was unable to control the vehicle and hit the container from behind. Upon receiving information about the accident, a police team arrived at the scene and had to break open the doors of the Scorpio to extricate the passengers. The victims trapped inside the vehicle were extricated and transported to Lok Bandhu Hospital where doctors declared all three dead. The police stated that, based on the extent of damage to the Scorpio, it is suspected that the vehicle was travelling at over 100 kmph. The container was pushed several feet forward by the impact. The entire front part of the car was crushed, and the driver was also trapped in the steering wheel. As a result of the accident, traffic was disrupted. A crane was called to remove the vehicle, and once it was cleared, traffic resumed.

Rajnath visits bereaved families, extends support



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh expressed his condolences by visiting the residences of intellectuals and the family members of party workers in his parliamentary constituency after their passing. He met with the families, offered his support during this difficult time, and assured them of his assistance in their hour of grief. Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, Rajya Sabha MP Dr Dinesh Sharma, BJP metropolitan president Anand D. Dwivedi, MLC Mukesh Sharma, Mayor Sushma Kharakwal, MLA Dr Neeraj Bora, OP Srivastava, MP representative Diwakar Tripathi, general secretary Pushkar Shukla, and media incharge

Praveen Garg were also present. On Sunday morning, Rajnath Singh visited the residence of the late Dr Ratan Singh, the founder of Charak Hospital and Diagnostics, to pay his respects. Dr Ratan Singh's wife Shyama Singh, son Dr Ashwani Singh, daughter-in-law Ritu Singh, daughter Kundanika Singh, and son-in-law Kanishka were among those present at the residence. Following this, Rajnath Singh went to the home of senior advocate LP Mishra in Nirala Nagar to express his sorrow over the untimely death of his son, Saurabh Mishra, who had passed away a few days earlier. Rajnath then visited the residence of the late Dr Siyaram Jaiswal, retired professor at Lucknow University and for-

mer chairman of the Higher Education Service Commission, in Aliganj, to offer flowers and pay tribute. Dr Kamal Jaiswal and Dr Vimal Jaiswal, family members of the late professor, were also present on the occasion. The defence minister also visited the Rajajipuram residence of senior party worker and Triveni Nagar Councillor Munna Mishra's nephew, Shubham Mishra, to offer his condolences. Later, he visited the Gomti Nagar residence of his assistant, Hazari Chandra Thakur. Hazari's 32-year-old son had passed away last month due to liver infection and dengue. Rajnath spoke to Hazari's wife Lalita Devi and his children, Ravichandra and Durga, offering them words of comfort.



An excavator being used to demolish an illegal building at Kaiserbagh, in Lucknow, on Sunday

PTI

Mithun Sharma, Palak Muchhal to be conferred 'Naushad Samman'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Musician Mithun Sharma and playback singer Palak Muchhal, Sufi singer Sonam Kalra, and renowned ghazal singer Radhika Chopra will be honoured with this year's 'Naushad Samman' awards at the Awadh Festival, which will be held on November 23. Young singer Artika Bhattacharya will also meet the ghazal lovers of Lucknow for the first time in a ghazal mehfil organised at the Surya Auditorium, Cantonment, on the evening of November 23. Senior army officials will also be present on the occasion. Regarding this programme of the Avadh Festival series,

organised by Hunar Creations and the Craft Association, the convener, Zafar Nabi, said that these awards are presented annually in the name of the famous musician Naushad, who created a sensation after arriving in Bollywood from Lucknow. "In the meeting of the award committee of the association this year, Sufi singer Sonam Kalra, Jammu-based ghazal singer Radhika Chopra, Gadar 2-fame musician Mithun Sharma, and playback singer Palak Muchhal were selected. Due to busy schedules and unavailability, Mithun and Palak will be felicitated at the next programme of the festival in December this year. The association has previous-

ly honoured many world-renowned artists, such as sardar player Amjad Ali Khan, santoor player Shivkumar Sharma, actress Hema Malini, singers Rekha Bhardwaj, Sonu Nigam, Talat Aziz, and Anup Jalota." He added that renowned Sufi singer Sonam Kalra, creator of the Sufi Gospel Project and member of the US Grammy Recording Academy, is the only Indian musician to win three times in a single edition of the Global Music Awards and the first Indian woman to win a gold medal. Internationally acclaimed ghazal singer Radhika Chopra and Bollywood singer Artika Bhattacharya will perform in Lucknow for the first time.

Subjected to humiliation, man hangs self to death

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A man allegedly took his own life following a public humiliation in the Rahimabad police station area on Saturday. As per reports, the victim, identified as Ramjivan, had a verbal altercation with his neighbours, including a woman who allegedly beat him in public. After this incident, he went to rest in his room and was found hanging from a tree the following morning. The confrontation occurred on November 5, and the man is said to have ended his life during the intervening night of November 6 and 7. In a complaint filed by his wife, Srimati of Mudiara village under Rahimabad police station, she stated that her family frequently faced harassment from Khushiram, Shriram, and Shriram's mother, who all lived in the same village. She reported that these individuals would

quarrel with her family daily. According to Srimati, at about 7 in the evening on November 5, the accused attacked her family, including her husband and brother-in-law, and subjected them to abusive language. When her husband called 112 for assistance, a PRV unit arrived, counselled both parties, and then left the scene. "We went back inside our home, but these people are very powerful. The next day, on November 6, Khushiram, Shriram, and their mother entered our house, beat my husband and us with shoes and slippers, abused us, and threatened us," she alleged. While leaving, they reportedly warned that they would prevent Ramjivan from showing his face in society and would attack him publicly to humiliate him. They further threatened to assault him anywhere they saw him, even in the village, preventing him from liv-

ing a life of dignity. She said her husband Ramjivan went to bed that night. "No one knows when he left the house or where he went. When I woke up in the morning, I noticed he was not at home. I then called my family members to ask about him. When we searched for him in the morning, we found him dead at around 7 am, hanging from a tree in a nearby garden close to our farm, with a rope around his neck. He was deeply affected by the incident the previous evening. I am certain that he took his own life due to the harassment from the other party," she alleged. She said she immediately informed 112, and a PRV team arrived at the scene, notifying the relevant police station. Police reported that a case has been registered under the relevant sections of the BNS, and the body has been sent for an autopsy.

Class X student alleges gangrape

Lucknow (PNS): Three men have been accused of blackmailing a 15-year-old Class X girl student, forcing her to visit Delhi and gang-raping her there. The victim belongs to a locality under Mall police station area. The victim has accused a chaat vendor, his brother and friend. The Mall police have registered a case and arrested the three accused. According to her father, the girl left for school on the morning of November 6, but did not return home till evening. It was discovered that she had not gone to school at all. The family members searched for the girl, but to no avail. Meanwhile, Manoj, a resident of Madaon, called the girl's brother and told him that he had taken his sister to Delhi. It was alleged that Manoj called the girl's brother from his room in Anand Vihar in Delhi and asked the latter to pick her up. When the girl's brother reached

there, he found his sister in an objectionable condition. When he confronted Manoj, he was beaten up. Later, he brought his sister home. The girl said that two months ago while going to school she met one Pradeep, who is a chaat seller from Madaon. She started talking to Pradeep frequently. In the meantime, Pradeep went to Delhi. On November 6, he called and blackmailed her, claiming that he had her obscene photos. He forced her to visit Delhi. Scared, the girl left for school and then reached Delhi. She said Pradeep had threatened to make her photos viral on social media if she did not visit Delhi. In Delhi, his brother Dilip and friend Manoj met her and the trio allegedly took turns raping her. Inspector, Mall, Vinay Kumar said that a case has been registered on the complaint of the girl's father and all the three accused have been arrested.

Book fair explores cultural connections through Ramayana

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Gomti Book Festival, organised by the National Book Trust and the Union Ministry of Education, featured a fascinating discussion on the Ramayana at its Authors' Session on Sunday. The session captivated the audience with insightful dialogue on the epic, which extended beyond the stage into a broader cultural context. Dr Alka Singh, an English faculty member at Dr Ram Manohar Lohia National Law University, explored the religious, cultural, and academic dimensions of Valmiki's Ramayana. Her session, titled 'Ramayana as

a Cornerstone of Cultural Connection among Asian Countries', focused on the growing global interest in South Asian studies and the potential of the Ramayana as a tool for cultural diplomacy. Singh emphasised how the epic fosters cultural tourism and strengthens soft power among Asian nations. She also discussed the seven meaningful models of Ramkatha, connecting them to everyday life. "Ramkatha links India to Myanmar, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, Mongolia, Vietnam, and China," Singh explained, adding,



"The concept of Ram Rajya represents good governance and public welfare." Neeraj Vashishtha, an Indian Armed Forces officer, also spoke at the session, discussing his book 'Ayodhya to Ayuthaya: A Relationship Transcending Faith and Time', which highlights the

cultural bond between India and Thailand. He noted that Thailand's Ramkathas have been deeply influenced by the Indian epic. The session's moderator emphasised the literary, religious, and cultural significance of the Ramayana, referring to AK Ramanujan's 'Three Hundred Ramayanas' and the Tamil Ramayana. The second day of the Gomti Book Festival offered a mix of literary activities. Children enjoyed a lively atmosphere throughout the day, with various creative workshops and storytelling sessions. At the Children's Film Festival, films highlighted environmental and water conserva-

tion. A session titled 'Role Play: Learn and Act' was held at Shabd Sansar, where Muskan Sharma taught children to express emotions through clapping exercises and simple words. Engaging activities on acting followed, sparking creativity in the young attendees. At the book fair, new book releases attracted eager readers, with several senior litterateurs, including Dr Hariom, Dr Rakesh Tiwari, Om Nischal, and JP Dwivedi, visiting the event. Three additional sessions at Lekhak Ganj focused on mythological stories, the 25th anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas, and the cultural significance of Lucknow.

CLASSIFIEDS
NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform the general public that my client, Cholamandalam Investment & Finance Limited, intend to grant loan on the property scheduled below of equitable mortgage by deposit of title deeds out of which one Sale Deed executed by Manish Shukla S/o Late Arun Prakash Shukla in favour of Smt. Nirmla Katiyar W/o Vinod Katiyar vide Book No. 1, Volume No. 5414, Page No. 45 to 62 at Serial No. 628 dated 08.02.2010 in the office of Sub Registrar, Kanpur, are lost and not traceable. All persons having any claim in respect thereof by way of sale, exchange, mortgage, charge, lien or otherwise howsoever are hereby requested to make the same known in writing to the undersigned within a period of 3 days from the date of publication hereof, failing which, the claim of such person/s will be deemed to have been waived and/or abandoned. Devendra Prakash Singh S/o Murlidhar
Schedule Part of Araz No. 1290 Vill. Barasirohi Pargana And Dist. Kanpur Nagar Uttar Pradesh
(Shiva Kant Dixit)
Advocate, Mob.- 0941540339

Retired doctor loses over ₹94,000 in online fraud

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A retired doctor was duped of over Rs 94,000 in an online fraud in the Gomti Nagar police station area. The victim of the fraud, Dr SC Tiwari of Vipul Khand, is a retired professor and head of department at KGMU. He stated that he had booked an economy class flight ticket from Toronto to Delhi for May 2, 2025. "My name was incorrectly spelt on the ticket. To get it corrected, I was speaking to the customer care toll-free number. A person who claimed to be an employee of the company contacted me. The caller told me he was calling from the company and informed me that my name was wrong on the ticket. He said, 'You will need to correct it online for

the journey.'" The fraudster then told Dr Tiwari that to make the correction online, he would need to provide his account PIN, assuring him that the change would be made immediately and sent to him online. "Believing him, I gave him my PIN, and Rs 94,150 was deducted from my account. I received a message on my mobile. I immediately called the person back, but his phone was unreachable. I then contacted my Indian Bank branch at KGMU, and the bank manager informed me that the amount had been withdrawn online and advised me to report the matter to the police and cyber cell as soon as possible," he said. The police have registered a case in connection with the incident.

Separate counters for women, senior citizens at transport offices

Lucknow (PNS):

Separate counters will be set up at divisional and sub-divisional transport offices for the convenience of senior citizens, soldiers, ex-servicemen, and women. This information was provided by the Transport Minister, Dayashankar Singh. He stated that the office of the Transport department is directly connected to the general public. "Driving licences, vehicle fitness, registration, and other vehicle-related tasks are processed here every day. In such a situation, senior citizens, soldiers, and women coming to the Transport department offices should not

face any inconvenience. In light of this, this decision has been made," he said. The minister added that separate counters have been created for each type of work at the transport offices, where applicants can have their tasks completed. "Due to the large number of applicants, senior citizens, soldiers, and women were facing difficulties in getting their work done. Now, with the establishment of a separate counter, all of them will be greatly facilitated. Work related to driving licences, vehicle fitness, etc, will be processed more easily," he concluded.

CITYBRIEFS

ANUSHKA CHAUHAN SELECTED FOR DUBAI TOUR



Anushka Chauhan, a student of SR Global School, Lucknow, has been selected for the Indian Under-18 team for the Dubai Tour. Anushka has made history as Lucknow district's first female international player, marking a milestone not only for her family and school but for the entire district. Anushka's journey to

the Indian U-18 team has been one of dedication, hard work, and perseverance.

ATHLETICA 2024

Seth Anandram Jaipuria Group of Schools hosted 'Athletica 2024', its inaugural inter-school sports championship, at Guru Govind Singh Sports College on November 9. Arjuna Awardee and renowned athlete Anju Bobby George was the chief guest on the occasion. Over 400 students from 21 schools within the Jaipuria network participated in various competitions, including track and field, table tennis, badminton, and chess, across three age categories: U-12, U-14, and U-17. Anju, former Olympic and World Championship bronze medalist, inspired the participants, highlighting the importance of sports in fostering qualities like teamwork, resilience, and leadership.

SP production house of rioters & criminals, Akhilesh its CEO: Yogi

PNS ■ AMBEDKARNAGAR/ MIRZAPUR/PRAAYAGRAJ

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Sunday, took a swipe at Akhilesh Yadav's PDA plank, terming it as "Production house of Dangai (rioters) and Apradhi (criminals)". He also said that the 'CEO' (chief executive officer) of this production house was Akhilesh Yadav and Shivpal Singh Yadav its "trainer", with all criminals "business partners" in the party. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav had coined the acronym 'PDA' for the 'Pichhde' (backwards), Dalits and 'Alpsakhyak' (minorities) during the 2022 assembly polls and he has been using it since the general election earlier this year. "Samajwadi Party talks about PDA. Let me tell you what PDA is. It is the Production house of Dangai (rioters) and Apradhi (criminals). We are giving you this new definition. The bigger a criminal is, the bigger a rioter is, they are part of Samajwadi Party's production house," he said addressing a gathering in Ambedkar Nagar. The

Katehari assembly seat in Ambedkar Nagar district is among the nine seats in Uttar Pradesh going to the polls. The election was necessitated after Samajwadi Party MLA Lalji Verma was elected to Lok Sabha. "Every dreaded criminal, mafia, rapist is born in this production house. And Akhilesh Yadav is its CEO," Yogi said, referring to allegations against Samajwadi Party leaders in rape cases in Ayodhya and Kannauj. He also alleged the SP tried to save the man accused in the Ayodhya rape case. "Dekh Sapai, betiya ghabrai (daughters are scared when they see Samajwadi Party leaders)," he said in another rally at Majhawan in Mirzapur district. Here, sitting MLA Dr Vinod Bind is now a Lok Sabha member. "Whether it was Atiq Ahmed of Prayagraj, Mukhtar Ansari of Ghazipur, Khan Mubarak of Ambedkar Nagar... all of them were the products of the Samajwadi Party's production house. All of them were business partners of the Samajwadi Party in crime. They looted the

poor, captured the land of the weak and disrupted social harmony," he said, adding that the double engine government of the Bharatiya Janata Party at the state and the Centre ended their era. Later, addressing an election rally at Tilak Inter College grounds in Kotwa in Phulpur assembly constituency in Prayagraj district in support of BJP candidate Deepak Patel, Accusing the Samajwadi Party of giving patronage to the mafia, Yogi said after Independence, the socialist movement was started with values and ideals and people like Jayprakash Narayan, Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, Acharya Narendra Dev, Chandra Shekhar, Janeshwar Mishra, Mohan Singh were associated with the movement, but today, the SP had deteriorated into a gathering of criminals and mafia. Yogi said that earlier the money of the public used to go to the Saifai family and their agents. He also alleged that the murder of MLA Krishnanand Rai in 2006 was committed at the



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at an election rally in support of BJP candidate Deepak Patel in Phulpur assembly constituency in Prayagraj district on Sunday

behest of the SP, and so was Raju Pal's in Prayagraj. Yogi asked what was the compulsion of Congress and INDI Alliance in the withdrawal of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir. "The government of Jammu and Kashmir has passed a resolution for the withdrawal of Article 370. This Article 370 is being withdrawn to promote terrorism. The Narendra Modi government will never let it return. There will be one symbol and one Constitution in the whole country," Yogi said. Yogi said that Prime Minister Modi had changed the image and destiny of the country in ten years. He said the double-engine government was working without stopping and without getting tired. He said UP was earlier known for anarchy and riots and there was a crisis of identity, the honour of daughters and sisters was not safe, farmers used to commit suicide, traders were insecure, youths did not get jobs as they were auctioned, but this image of the state had been changed by the BJP which stood of

peace and prosperity if the people. Nine UP assembly seats are going to bypolls — Katehari (Ambedkar Nagar), Karhal (Mainpuri), Meerapur (Muzaffarnagar), Ghaziabad, Majhawan (Mirzapur), Sisamau (Kanpur Nagar), Khair (Aligarh), Phulpur (Prayagraj), and Kundarki (Moradabad). Eight of these seats fell vacant after their MLAs were elected to Lok Sabha while bypoll is being held on the Sisamau seat due to the disqualification of SP MLA Irfan Solanki, who was convicted in a criminal case. In the 2022 assembly polls, Sisamau, Katehari, Karhal, Milkipur and Kundarki were held by the SP, while the BJP had won Phulpur, Ghaziabad, Majhawan and Khair. The Meerapur seat was held by the RLD, which is now an ally of the BJP in the NDA. The Congress is not contesting the bypolls and supporting its INDIA bloc partner SP, while the Bahujan Samaj Party is contesting solo on all nine seats.

BSP expels 3 leaders for attending SP leader's marriage

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The marriage of Samajwadi Party candidate from Muzaffarnagar's Meerapur assembly constituency, Sumbul Rana's brother created a stir in the Bahujan Samaj Party with party supremo expelling three leaders, including Meerut division's BSP in-charge, from the party. SP candidate Sumbul Rana is the daughter-in-law of Muzaffarnagar's former MP Qadir Rana and daughter of BSP's former MP and coordinator Babu Munqad Ali. The wedding of Sumbul Rana's brother was scheduled for November 7, for which the programme was organised in a farmhouse in Ghaziabad along with Kithor in Meerut. Munqad Ali had also printed the name of Qadir Rana in the wedding invitation card, due to which BSP supremo Mayawati looked at his son's wedding with suspicion. It is said that Mayawati's personal secretary Mewalal Gautam had called the party leaders of Meerut and warned them to keep a distance from the wedding programme of Munqad Ali's son. An audio of the phone conversation is also going viral on social media. Many BSP leaders could not keep distance from the wed-

ding due to their closeness with Munqad Ali and due to the the party expelled Meerut's senior BSP leader and Meerut division in-charge Prashant Gautam, district in-charge Mahavir Singh Pradhan and Dinesh Qazipur from the party. On Saturday, the order of their expulsion was issued by BSP's Meerut district president Mohit Jataw. Prashant Gautam said he came to know that he was expelled from the party for "anti-party activities". He admitted that recently he got a call from Mewalal Gautam asking him not to go to the wedding of Munqad's son, because Qadir Rana and his daughter-in-law, who is the SP candidate from Meerapur, would also come there and take photos and this could affect the election of BSP's Meerapur candidate. Prashant Gautam said, "Munkad Ali and I have family relations and he comes to all our functions, so we also go to all his functions." He said that neither Qadir Rana nor Sumbul Rana came there, and there was no other leader of Samajwadi Party from Muzaffarnagar, despite that the party had expelled him for being involved in anti-party activities. "This is beyond understanding," he added.

Higher edu students of madrasas face uncertain future after SC order

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

After the Supreme Court declared higher education degrees awarded by the Uttar Pradesh Madrasa Board unconstitutional, there is a demand to accommodate the about 25,000 students who are currently pursuing these courses in any other recognised university. The state government has also said it will find a way out after considering all the legal aspects of this matter. In an order on November 5, the Supreme Court declared the Kamil and Fazil degrees -- equivalent to graduation and post-graduation degrees -- awarded by the Uttar Pradesh Madrasa Board Board unconstitutional, saying it was in conflict with the University Grants Commission (UGC) Act. Zaman Khan, the General Secretary of the Teachers Association Madaris Arabia Uttar Pradesh, said the court's decision has created a difficult situation for the thousands of current students as the board will not be able to conduct exams for these courses now. "The order of the Supreme Court is supreme. But the government must find some way to deal with the situation that has arisen so that the future of the students studying in the Kamil and Fazil courses of the Madrasa Board does not

remain dark," he told PTI said on Sunday. Minority Welfare Minister Om Prakash Rajbhar said the government will definitely find a way out by studying the SC order and discussing its various legal aspects. On the question of whether the students studying in the Madrasa Board's Kamil and Fazil courses will be linked to any other university, the minister said, "All aspects will be considered and only after that the government will take any decision." Madrasa Board Registrar RP Singh said about 25,000 students are studying in the Kamil and Fazil courses run by the board currently, and whatever decision the government takes will be followed. Meanwhile, former Madrasa Board member Qamar Ali said that the Board's Kamil degree had the status of graduation and Fazil degree had the status of post-graduation, but even earlier they were not recognised for appearing in competitive examinations. These degree-holders would get jobs only in madrasas which has also ended after the Supreme Court order, he said, demanding the current students be given a chance in recognised universities. The Madrasa Board had earlier given a proposal to the government to accommodate the students of its Kamil and Fazil

courses in the Lucknow-based 'Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti Urdu - Arabic - Persian University' but no decision was taken on it, he said. It is not clear from the order that from when these degrees will be considered unconstitutional, but the government should take steps to affiliate these students with a UGC-recognised university, he said. There are about 25,000 madrasas in Uttar Pradesh -- 16,500 recognised by the State Madrasa Board and 8,500 unrecognised. A total of 560 of them receive grants from the state government. In its order on October 5, the SC upheld the constitutional validity of the Uttar Pradesh Madrasa Education Board Act, 2004, overturning an Allahabad High Court order of March 2024 which declared it unconstitutional. However, the SC declared the provisions pertaining to higher education (Kamil and Fazil degrees) were unconstitutional (meaning the Madrasa Board cannot offer these degrees) as they are in conflict with the University Grant Commission (UGC) Act. "The UGC Act governs the standards for higher education and a state legislation cannot seek to regulate higher education, in contravention of the provisions of the UGC Act," it said.

Govt to launch drive against power theft

Lucknow (PNS): The Yogi Adityanath government has taken a strict step against electricity theft in the state. Energy Minister AK Sharma has directed all distribution companies (discoms) to launch an intensive campaign against power theft in the state. The main objective of this campaign is to take strict action against power theft in those areas where the theft rate has reached 60%. According to reports, under this campaign, first those areas will be identified where most power theft is taking place, and then special inspection and action will be taken there. The energy minister emphasised that power theft not only harms the government revenue, but it also affects the power system of the state. It may be mentioned that along with the provision of strict punishment against power thieves, fines will also be recovered from the individuals and institutions involved in theft in this campaign. This step of the state government is considered important in the direction of streamlining the power supply and improving its distribution. The problem of electricity theft is increasing day by day in many districts of Uttar Pradesh. To end this problem, the Yogi government has given instructions to run special campaigns in these districts so that the problem of electricity theft can be dealt with.

Govt encourages farmers to boost garlic cultivation

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government has launched a special initiative to promote garlic cultivation in Uttar Pradesh under the Integrated Horticulture Development Mission. This mission, which is funded by the Government of India, is being implemented across 45 districts in the state. Under the mission, the Central government's share of the funding is set at 60 per cent, while the state government will contribute 40 per cent. This initiative aims to boost garlic production in the state, helping farmers increase their income. The districts benefiting from this programme include Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Bulandshahr, Ghaziabad, Bareilly, Moradabad, Agra, Mathura, Mainpuri, Hathras, Kanpur, Etawah, Kannauj, Lucknow, Unnao, Sitapur, Rae Bareilly, Barabanki, Sultanpur, Prayagraj, Kaushambi, Pratapgarh, Varanasi, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Basti, Sant Kabir Nagar, Siddharth Nagar, Ballia, Kushinagar, Maharajganj, Banda, Hamirpur, Jalaun, Chitrakoot, Mahoba, Lalitpur, Mirzapur, Sonbhadra, Bhadohi, Gorakhpur, Jhansi, Ayodhya

and Farrukhabad. Under this scheme, the Horticulture department in Uttar Pradesh has set a permissible unit cost of Rs 30,000 per hectare for garlic cultivation. Farmers will receive a subsidy of 40 per cent, up to a maximum of Rs 12,000 per hectare. The subsidy is available for land ranging from 0.2 hectares to 4 hectares per farmer. Garlic seeds, priced between Rs 370 to Rs 390 per kilogram, will be provided by the National Horticulture Research and Development Institute in New Delhi. Farmers can avail the benefits of this scheme on a first-come, first-serve basis. Interested farmers can contact the office of the district horticulture officer in their district or register online on the official website: <http://dht.uporticulture.in>. To meet the growing demand for garlic, the Yogi government has set a target to expand garlic cultivation by 10,000 hectares under the Spice Area Expansion Programme. The proposal of this scheme for the financial year 2024-25 was sent to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Horticulture Section, Government of India, which has already been approved.

Girl ends life after alleged sexual exploitation in gym

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Close on the heels of murder of a woman by a gym trainer in Kanpur Nagar, now another case has come up in Jalaun district where a graduate student has ended her life, accusing the gym trainer of sexual exploitation. On receiving information about the suicide on Sunday morning, the police reached the spot and seized the girl's phone as she had sent a video to her mother before ending her life. The body was sent for post-mortem. The girl's mother has told the police that Himanshu Yadav used to work with her daughter, Sneha, in a gym in Peeli Kothi near Allahabad Bank branch in Ora. Sneha lived with her mother, Rani, and a younger brother in Ganeshganj locality right in front of Orai Kotwali. Her father had died of illness four years ago. To run the household expenses, Rani works in a beauty parlor. Sneha was a BSC final year student. To help her mother, she used to work as a trainer in a gym near her house. While working in the gym, about two years ago, Sneha had an affair with Himanshu Yadav who also worked there. Her lover, however, ditched Sneha and refused to marry her after sexually exploiting her. Sneha spoke to Yadav on phone on Saturday night. During this, there was an argument between the two about something. When the matter escalated, Sneha disconnected the call. After this, she made a video

and wrote a message and sent it to her mother on WhatsApp. "Sorry mummy, I am not a good daughter. I made a mistake by befriending a wrong person (Himanshu Yadav). I am leaving, you take care of yourself. I really love him... but mummy, you should never leave him and get him punished for ditching me," she said in the message. After sending this last message to her mother on WhatsApp, Sneha hanged herself. Before dying, she also made a video of her hanging and sent it to her mother. Rani alleged that the gym owner and his associates had trapped Sneha in wrong things and were mentally harassing and blackmailing her. She alleged that one of the trainers had trapped Sneha in his love and all of them together used to harass her daughter. Orai Circle Deputy Superintendent of Police Umesh Kumar Pandey said that the case was being investigated. **SCRAP DEALER, WIFE, SON FOUND DEAD** Meanwhile, a 55-year-old scrap dealer, his wife, and their son were found brutally murdered in their home in Bijor on Sunday, police said. Police said the blood-soaked bodies of Mansoor alias Bhura, his wife Ubaidia (50), and son Yaqoob (19) were discovered by the scrap dealer's police Superintendent of Police Abhishek Jha said Bhura's mother lived near his Khalifa colony residence. On Sunday, the woman came to her son's place but nobody answered

the door. When she peeked inside and saw the bodies, she informed the police. Jha said a screwdriver was found near the bodies and that it prima facie appears to be the murder weapon. According to police, the couple had five children, and one of their sons, Zahur, is a history-sheeter. Police officials said separate teams had been formed to work out the case. The police are looking into all possible disputes of Bhura, including property disputes, in order to get some lead and close down on the killers. **YOUTH MURDERED, DRUGS RECOVERED** A youth was crushed to death with a brick in the Aonla area of Bareilly district, police said on Sunday. Two suspects have been detained in this connection and are being questioned, they added. Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Manush Pareek said that on Saturday night, information was received about Sharif Ahmed (22) being killed by some persons who allegedly hit him on the head with a brick. Pareek said upon reaching the crime spot, the police team found drugs, including intravenous injections, from there. Ahmed's family members said he was a drug addict. A case has been registered based on a complaint by Ahmed's family members, the ASP said. Pareek said the police are probing the sequence of events that led to the murder and the exact cause of the death will be clear from the postmortem report.

10 IAS officers shifted, ACS Manoj Singh put on waiting list

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The government on Sunday transferred 10 IAS officers. Additional Chief Secretary, Forest, Environment and Climate Change department, Manoj Kumar Singh, has been put on waiting list one and a half months before his retirement. The responsibility of his department has been given to Anil Kumar III, Principal Secretary, Labour and Employment and Mining departments. Senior IAS officer Dr Rajshankar has been relieved of the post of Secretary of Namami Gange and Rural Water Supply department, State Nodal Officer of PM Agricultural Irrigation Scheme and Uttar Pradesh Land Reforms Corporation. Now he is left with the post of Managing Director of Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam (Rural). The responsibility of the departments taken from him has been handed over to Principal Secretary, Irrigation and Resources, Anil Garg. Similarly, the responsibility of Managing Director of Uttar Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation and UP Agro has been taken away from Ravi Ranjan. He will remain on the post of UP Electronics Corporation. Sanya Chhabra, who was on the waiting list for the post of MD of State Tourism Development Corporation, has been confirmed on the post. On the other hand, Pranata Aishwarya, Special Secretary,

Namami Gange and Rural Water Supply and Joint Managing Director of Jal Nigam, has been made MD of UP Agro. Prabash Kumar, Special Secretary, Food and Logistics department and Controller of Legal Weights and Measures, has been sent to Namami Gange and Rural Water Supply department and made Joint Managing Director of Jal Nigam (Rural). Uday Bhanu Tripathi, Special Secretary, Housing and Urban Planning, has been given the responsibility of Special Secretary in the Urban Development department. Additional Commissioner Dr. Kanchan Saran in Agra Division has been made Secretary of State Women Commission. **TWO OFFICERS SUSPENDED** Vivek Rai, Chief Environmental Officer of Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board and Dr Anil Mathur, Regional Officer of Unnao have been suspended. This action has been taken after irregularities were found in giving NOC to a slaughter house. It is said that these irregularities took place during the tenure of Manoj Singh, the then Chairman of Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board. Therefore, on Sunday, the government removed him from the post of Additional Chief Secretary, Forest, and put him on the waiting list.

Nutritious snacks in schools to boost children's health

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government has introduced a plan to provide nutritious snacks alongside regular meals for the holistic development of children in basic and junior high schools across the state. In a high-level meeting, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath directed officials to introduce a Weekly Nutrition Programme in November, providing healthy snacks to students in basic and junior high schools every Thursday. As part of the programme, students will receive healthy snacks such as peanut chikki, millet laddus and roasted grams. This initiative enhances the mid-day meal scheme, aiming to make it even more impactful, and will play a key role in fostering children's physical and mental growth. Under the PM Poshan Yojana, the state already delivers nutritious meals to 1.74 crore students from classes 1 to 8, with 100-150 grams of grains given daily. To further enhance children's nutrition, items such as millet laddus, peanut chikki, roasted gram, and chakki laddus will be added. The Yogi government is allocating approximately Rs 95 crore for this initiative, which will be

supported by 3.72 lakh cooks across the state. The cooks will receive a monthly honorarium of Rs 2,000 each and an additional Rs 500 for uniforms, alongside regular training to ensure quality, nutritious meals. The chief minister also emphasised digital monitoring and social audits to maintain transparency and track the supply and distribution of food grains, ensuring fair and effective implementation. While quality inspections are already conducted at the district level, digital oversight and social audits will provide a more robust and reliable means of monitoring. **STF ARRESTS MAN WHO ESCAPED MUMBAI POLICE CUSTODY** Lucknow: The Special Task Force of Uttar Pradesh has arrested a man here who was on the run after escaping from police custody in Maharashtra's Thane, officials said on Sunday.

Chitoni Bazaar with constable Anand Tiwari and another PRD jawan, they said. According to police, the fellow PRD jawan tried to save Tiwari's life but was chased away by Verma. He then alerted the police and Tiwari's family. PRD personnel are deployed on security duty at police stations, fairs, and traffic operations and also assist police in various tasks. **PRD jawan beaten to death** Prance Kailash Vishwakarma was arrested in Thane district's Chitlars Manpada area on November 5 on charges of possession of two pistols, the Special Task Force (STF) said in a statement. The same night, he managed to escape from custody at the Chitlars Manpada police station, it said. The statement said Thane police had sought help from the Uttar Pradesh STF in connection with the case. After escaping from custody, he came to Lucknow and was living at different places before being arrested by police in the Indiranagar area here, the STF added. Further legal action is being taken by Maharashtra Police Sub-Inspector Pankaj Lahane, it said.

Rao: India's role as global superpower a reality



Swadeshi Jagran Manch founder P Muralidhar Rao addressing a seminar on healthcare at BHU in Varanasi on Sunday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Former national general secretary of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Swadeshi Jagran Manch founder P Muralidhar Rao said Prime Minister Modi has captured the aspirations of the common people setting a roadmap to turn India's collective dream of being a developed nation into reality. As the keynote speaker in a seminar titled 'India as a global superpower: Challenges and opportunities in healthcare' at the KN Udappa Auditorium at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Sunday, Rao said India's role as a global superpower is a reality, not just a political statement. The event was organised jointly by the Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS-BHU) and MSME & Startups Forum - Bharat, as part of the 'Healthcare For Viksit Bharat 2047'. Rao spoke of India's inherent strength, rooted in the wisdom and self-confidence of its people and reminded the audience that India had once held superpower status. He further explained that India's tradition of

knowledge, present since ancient times, will serve as the foundation for becoming a global power. He argued that prosperity (symbolised by Goddess Lakshmi) is inseparable from knowledge (symbolised by Goddess Saraswati). India, with its unique Ganges plains, is poised to support half of the world's population in the near future. He also underscored India's capacity to lead in technology and to provide affordable medicines globally. He proposed that Kashi could emerge as an international hub for healthcare services, supported by the government's expansion of medical colleges and facilities and that India's traditional medical practices—Yoga, Ayurveda, and Allopathy—complement each other. Deputy Chief Minister of MP Rajendra Shukla sent a video message highlighting the Ayushman Bharat scheme, which enables uninterrupted treatment for patients through Ayushman cards, calling for further efforts in this area. Dr GSK Velu, a prominent healthcare entrepreneur from Chennai,

praised the PM's forward-thinking policies, which he believes are transforming India into a global power. He noted that 'Developed India' is more than just a goal; it's a sentiment shared nationwide. Velu highlighted that India's healthcare services are becoming increasingly tech-based, ensuring precision through advanced equipment, while India's role as the 'pharmacy of the world' grows, with domestic manufacturing of medical devices on the rise. MLA Saurabh Srivastava emphasised India's abundant human and natural resources, asserting that India's journey towards becoming a developed nation was catalysed in 2014, when the country rallied behind PM Modi. He stressed that every citizen should prioritise the nation above all. IMS-BHU Director Prof SN Sankhwar, who chaired the event, highlighted the importance of long-term strategies to develop technology for high-quality healthcare, suggesting that health services should be considered a fundamental right. Special guests included MLC Ashwini Tyagi and former Gujarat MLA Jagdish Patel. MSME and Startups Forum Chairman Dr Manoj Kumar Shah welcomed the guests, while Prof Kailash Kumar from Sir Sundaral Hospital (SSH-BHU) introduced the topic. Amit Rai served as the event host, with Dr Sanjay Pathak as programme coordinator and Dr Anshuman Banerjee proposing the vote of thanks. The seminar saw participation from notable figures, including Bipin Pandey, Prof Yogendra Singh, Drarendra Rai, Dr Pramathesh Pandey, Aditya Vikram Shah, Ravi Prakash Jaiswal, Dr Ankur and Dr Lalit.

Officials inspect Dev Deepawali preparations



CP Mohit Agrawal, DM S Rajalingam inspecting Dev Deepawali preparations at Namoo Ghat in Varanasi on Sunday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Commissioner of Police (CP) Mohit Agrawal and District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam inspected Namoo and Assi ghats here on Sunday in view of preparations for Dev Deepawali and Ganga Mahotsav. Both the officers inspected Namoo and Assi ghats and took stock of the necessary arrangements. Dev Deepawali will be celebrated on November 15 when lakhs of diyas will be lit at Ganga ghats while Ganga Mahotsav will be

organised from November 12 to 14. During the inspection, they held discussions with the officers of departments concerned regarding what arrangements were to be made at which place and necessary guidelines were given to the departmental officers concerned. The DM gave instructions regarding arrangements for safe house, laying mats and chairs, parking and proper lighting, silt leveling, covered cultural stage, tents, washrooms for guests, drinking water, public route chart,

Women in Kashi producing cow dung diyas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has launched several initiatives to empower women in Uttar Pradesh, fostering economic independence and boosting their self-esteem. The success story of women in Varanasi, producing cow dung diyas for Dev Deepawali, exemplifies how the Yogi government has strengthened their financial standing. For Dev Deepawali, extensive preparations are underway to illuminate ghats of Varanasi with millions of diyas. What makes this unique is that these diyas are crafted from cow dung by women from self-help groups. Currently, 25 families from seven self-help groups (SHGs) are focused on produc-

ing 30,000 such diyas. Previously, these women would earn around ₹400-500 for Dev Deepawali, but now, through this initiative, they are making ₹4,000-5,000. The women now receive large orders in advance, a shift from earlier days when they had to sell lamps door-to-door. Radhika from Aharak village shared that, thanks to the Yogi government's support, she no longer has to go door-to-door and instead secures pre-orders, significantly boosting her income. This newfound self-reliance is not only uplifting these women but also benefiting their families directly. Through the Uttar Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mission, the state government has created new pathways for women's

employment and empowerment. Women involved in this mission are now earning higher incomes by producing and selling eco-friendly diyas made from cow dung, providing them with a sustainable, environmentally conscious source of income. On November 15, Dev Deepawali celebrations in Kashi will light up the ghats with 1.2 million diyas, including those crafted from cow dung. Women's participation in this initiative is a testament to how, when given the right opportunities, they can drive meaningful social change. Thanks to these efforts, women are not only achieving financial independence but also making a distinct impact on society.

route diversion, barricading etc in view of Dev Deepawali. He said whatever arrangements are to be made should be completed on

time. During the inspection, Additional Commissioner of Police S Chinnappa, ADM (Administration) Vipin Kumar,

Deputy Directot (Tourism) and officials of Smart City Project, PWD, Police and other departments were also present.

Students encouraged to face every challenge with determination

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The 30th foundation day celebration of School of Management Sciences (SMS), Aadarshila - 2024, started with a grand inauguration ceremony. Vice-Chancellor of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University (SSU) Prof Bihari Lal Sharma, while speaking as the chief guest, praised the 30 years of academic excellence of the institute and said it has nurtured countless youth, who have become valuable assets for the society. The SSU V-C encouraged the students to carry forward the values given by the institute and face every challenge with determination

and honesty. He said today in this age of technology, the form of education has changed. The needs of the students have also changed; in such a situation it is important that the educational institutes keep their curriculum updated. Describing the facilities and resources available in the institute as world class, Prof Sharma said SMS, Varanasi is becoming famous for its quality educational environment in the whole country, including Purvanchal. Special guest Prof Durga Singh Chauhan, former Vice Chancellor, AKTU, Lucknow, emphasising the emerging role of education in shaping the

society, said that today education is beyond books, which is constantly promoting innovation. He said this institute has consistently provided these opportunities to the students, thereby preparing them to excel in the fast-changing world. Another special guest Padma Shri Dr Rajeshwar Acharya, Chairman, UP Sangeet Natak Academy, Lucknow, while sharing his views on the role of cultural heritage in education, said Varanasi is the heart of culture and knowledge and SMS Varanasi's coordination of academic commitment with cultural richness is a symbol of this spirit. Dr Acharya encouraged

the students to embrace their cultural roots as well as to be open to global perspectives. Former MLA Surendra Narayan Singh said this institute is playing an important role in community development. Director Prof PN Jha, while welcoming the guests, said the success story of the institute is a testimony to the commitment of faculty, enthusiasm of students and foresight of those who have guided it since its inception. The inaugural session was conducted by Prof Pallavi Pathak, convener of Aadarshila. SMS Varanasi's Executive Secretary Dr.IP Singh, SMS Registrar Sanjay Gupta, Prof Sandeep Singh

and teachers and staff were present. SESSION: The Institute of Management Studies, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) organised an engaging session with Prof Vinay K Nangia, a renowned academic and former Head of the Department of Management Studies at IIT Roorkee, aimed at enhancing the knowledge of PhD scholars. One of the key topics discussed was National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Prof Nangia elaborated on how this policy is set to transform higher education in India by promoting enhanced governance and accountability within institutions.

JK Group celebrates 140th founder's day



Governor Anandiben Patel being felicitated at the 140th founder's day ceremony of JK Group.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The JK Group celebrated its 140th founder's day with grandeur at the JK Temple. The journey of JK Group began in 1875 and over 140 years, the group has not only made a mark in the industrial sector but has also contributed significantly to social service and education. The event was graced by the Governor Anandiben Patel, as the chief guest and Cabinet Minister Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi as the distinguished guest. Governor Anandiben Patel, along with distinguished guests and members of the Singhanian family, first visited the Shri Radhakrishna Temple. Following the darshan, the guests toured the JK Timeline Gallery. After the statue of the founder, late

Kamalpat Singhania, was garlanded and the distinguished guests lit lamps. Director of JK Organisation Abhishek Singhania presented mementos to the chief guest and distinguished guests. Senior members of the Singhanian family, Sushila Singhania and Manorama Singhania, honored various dignitaries, including MP Devendra Singh Bhole, and Governor's daughter Anar Patel, with shawls. Following the felicitations, a video message from Bharat Hari Singhania, Chairman of JK Organisation, was broadcast. Abhishek Singhania delivered the welcome address, highlighting the vision, patriotism and social contributions of the founder. He shared how, during the British rule, Lala Kamalapat not only laid the foundation of a vast business empire but also envisioned JK Group as a medium for positive societal change. In 1921, Lalaji established the first textile mill in north India. He also actively participated in the freedom struggle. After Lala Kamalapat's demise in 1937, his three sons—Padamapat, Kailashpat, and Lakshmiapat—took over the leadership, expanding the group from seven

to over 50 units. Sir Padamapat, who was knighted in 1943, contributed significantly not only to various industries but also to education, health and community development. He was instrumental in establishing institutions such as the JK Institute of Sociology and Human Relations in Lucknow, the JK Institute of Applied Physics in Allahabad, and IIT Kanpur. Abhishek Singhania emphasised that the success of JK Group is a result of the unwavering dedication and commitment of employees, partners and collaborators, which has kept the organisation strong and progressive, following the values set by its founders. As part of the founder's day celebrations, JK Group launched several public welfare initiatives. The governor inaugurated the Govind Hari Singhania Skill Development Centre where 100 women will initially receive training in tailoring. The centre aims to open more skill development centres in the future, empowering women and promoting self-reliance. Under the cervical cancer vaccination drive, 140 girls aged 9-15 years were administered the vaccine with the goal of providing them protection from cervical cancer. The governor presented vaccination cards to the first 10 girls. To strengthen the efforts of the

Umeed organisation, which provides quality education to underprivileged children, JK Group donated ₹140,000 to the organisation. This contribution will help provide better education and development opportunities to children, enabling them to improve their lives and contribute to nation-building. The governor symbolically handed over a cheque to the Umeed organisation. JK Group also donated Anganwadi kits to 10 Anganwadi centres to promote child development and women health awareness. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Partho Kar, Joint Managing Director of JK Enterprises, and a performance by the renowned folk singer, Padma Shri Malini Awasthi. LECTURE: The Political Science Department of Christ Church College hosted a lecture and a poster exhibition on Saturday on the theme 'A Journey of 75 Years of the Constitution of India.' The occasion was graced by chief guest, Prof Joseph Daniel, Principal and Secretary of Christ Church College; keynote speaker Prakalpa Sharma, legal expert and Deputy Registrar IIT Kanpur and Prof Ashutosh Saxena, Chairperson and former head of the Department of Political Science, Prof Sweta Chand, Vice-Principal and all distinguished faculty of the college.

Critical importance of healthcare quality & patient safety highlighted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Air Force Hospital, Kanpur, hosted a two-day Continuing Medical Education (CME) and workshop focused on enhancing healthcare quality and patient safety on Friday and Saturday. The event brought together healthcare professionals from across the country to share their knowledge and best practices. The theme of the CME was 'Healthcare Quality & Safety: Concepts and Implementation', aimed to empower participants with the tools and techniques necessary to improve patient care and satisfaction. Renowned healthcare administrators, clinicians and nurses from both the defence and civil healthcare sectors served as esteemed faculty members, sharing their expertise through a series of workshops, presentations and interactive discussions. In his inaugural address,

the Air Officer Commanding Air Commodore Shamsheer Singh Dalal highlighted the critical importance of healthcare quality and patient safety in India's current healthcare landscape. He emphasized the need for collaborative efforts among all stakeholders including administrators and healthcare workers, to ensure the highest standards of care and optimal patient outcomes. Chief Guest for the event, Air Mshl Pawan Kumar (Retd.) former DGMS (Air) and Chairman National Accreditation Board of Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH), delivered the keynote address. He highlighted the significance of a robust system driven by a commitment of excellence, evidence-based practices, accountability and empathy. He emphasized the importance of the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle in implementing

and sustaining quality improvement initiatives. A workshop conducted by Prof Vikram Datta on Improving Quality of Care provided participants hands-on training on root cause analysis of healthcare processes and adverse events. The workshop aimed to empower participants to identify and address systematic issues that may impact patient safety. The CME was attended by a diverse group of medical and nursing officers from the Armed Forces Medical Services, representing various levels of healthcare delivery. The event fostered a culture of continuous learning and collaboration, inspiring participants to implement quality improvement initiatives in their respective institutions. By focusing on healthcare quality and patient safety, Air Force Hospital, Kanpur is setting a new standard for healthcare excellence.

Festival return rush: Extensive security arrangements at stns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In view of the crowd of Chhath pilgrims on the return journey after the conclusion of the celebrations, extensive security arrangements have been made at the stations of Varanasi division of North Eastern Railways (NER), including Banaras, Varanasi City, Ghazipur City, Ballia, Mau, Azamgarh, Bhatni, Deoria Sadar, Siwan, Thawe and Chhapra. The Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel are providing their services for the safe travel of Chhath pilgrims and senior railway passengers.

about safety. Railway workers/rail servants are continuously providing services with full alertness so that the Chhath pilgrims returning to their work do not face any inconvenience. The passengers arriving before the time of special trains are being kept in the holding area. The activities taking place at the station, trains and platforms are being monitored from the CCTV control rooms created for Chhath Puja in the station superintendent's rooms and instructions are being given for crowd management as per the requirement. Single entry and single exit routes have been determined at such stations. In view of the crowd, additional reserved/unreserved ticket counters have been opened. Cleanliness and availability of drinking water at water booths is being ensured at the station in three shifts of 8 hours each. On Chhath Puja, Varanasi division has run a sufficient number of special trains for the convenience of pilgrims. To manage the crowd a holding area has been created for Chhath pilgrims at many stations, where passengers have been given the facility to wait for their special trains, which has been helpful in making their journey smooth and convenient.

Heart India Conclave organised

Varanasi (PNS): About 100 cardiologists of the country participated in Heart India Conclave at IMA here on Sunday. A senior doctor of Safdarjung Hospital said that nowadays hypertension and heart disease are common among the youth of the country whose age is only 25 years and this is a matter of concern for the country and doctors. He said that the number of heart diseases has increased due to stress, fast food trend, staying awake till late night, obesity etc. Dean of KGMU Prof Rishi Sethi said awareness is the only prevention and advised the people to meet doctors at the right time and take proper

advice apart from paying attention to lifestyle modifications. Organising secretary of Heart India Conclave Dr Alok Kumar Singh welcomed the guests. Dr Manoj Kumar Srivastava proposed the vote of thanks. Dr Rishi Sethi and Dr Akatchaya Pradhan were given the awards for Best Editor and Best Research Paper. Dr Shipra Dhar was honoured for her campaign 'Beti Nahi Hai Bojh Aao Badle Soch' for social service. On the occasion Dr Rohit Tiwari, Dr Rajni Sehgal, Dr Ashish Jaiswal, Dr Manoj Gupta, Dr AK Singh, Dr GS Singh, Dr Monika Gupta, Dr PR Singh, Dr Raman Puri, Dr Ashutosh Kumar, Dr Daljeet Kumar etc were also present.

LIC reports PAT of ₹18,082 crore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Board of Directors of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) approved and adopted the standalone and consolidated financial results for the six months ending September 30, 2024. The key highlights of the standalone results are: The Profit After Tax (PAT) for the half year ended September 30, 2024, was ₹18,082 crore as compared to ₹17,469 crore for the half year ended September 30, 2023, registering a growth of 3.51 per cent. In terms of market share measured by First Year Premium Income (FYPI) (as per IRDAI), LIC continues to be the market leader in Indian life insurance business with overall market share of 61.07 per cent for half year ended September 30, 2024, as compared to 58.50 per cent for half year ended September 30, 2023. For the half year ended September 30, 2024, LIC had a market share of 39.79 per cent in individual business and 74.77 per cent in the group business. The total premium income for six months period ended September 30, 2024, was ₹2,33,671 crore as compared to ₹2,05,760 crore for the six months period ended September 30, 2023, registering a growth of 13.56 per cent. The individual new business premium income for six months period ended September 30, 2024, was ₹29,538 crore as compared to ₹25,184 crore for the six months period ended September 30, 2023, registering an increase of 17.29 per cent. The individual renewal premium income for six months period ended September 30, 2024, was ₹1,15,158 crore as compared to ₹1,09,599 crore for the six months period ended September 30, 2023, registering an increase of 5.07 per cent. The total individual business

premium for the six months period ended September 30, 2024, increased to ₹1,44,696 crore from ₹1,34,783 crore for the comparable period of previous year, registering an increase of 7.35 per cent. The group business total premium income for six months period ended September 30, 2024, was ₹88,975 crore as compared to ₹70,977 crore for the six months period ended September 30, 2023, registering an increase of 25.36 per cent. A total of 91,70,420 policies were sold in the individual segment during the six months period ended September 30, 2024, as compared to 80,60,725 policies sold during the six months period ended September 30, 2023, registering a growth of 13.77 per cent. On an annualised premium equivalent (APE) basis, the total premium was ₹28,025 crore for the six months period ended September 30, 2024. Of this 64.81 per cent (₹18,163 crore) was accounted for by the individual business and 35.19 per cent (₹9,862 crore) by the group business. Within the individual business, the share of par products on APE basis was 73.69 per cent (₹13,385 crore) and balance 26.31 per cent (₹4,778 crore) was due to non-par products. The individual non-par APE has increased to ₹4,778 crore for the six months period ended September 30, 2024, from ₹1,575 crore for the six months period ended September 30, 2023, registering a growth of 203.37 per cent. Therefore, on APE basis, non-par share of individual business has increased to 26.31 per cent for the six months period ended September 30, 2024, as compared to 10.76 per cent for the six months period ended September 30, 2023. The Value of New Business (VNB) for the six months period ended September

30, 2024, was ₹4,551 crore as compared to ₹3,304 crore for the six months period ended September 30, 2023, registering a growth of 37.74 per cent. The net VNB margin for the six months period ended September 30, 2024, increased by 160 bps to 16.2% as compared to 14.6% for the six months period ended September 30th, 2023. The Indian Embedded Value (IEV) as on September 30, 2024, has been determined as ₹8,21,716 crore as compared to ₹6,62,605 crore as on September 30, 2023 registering an increase of 24.01% over the previous year. The Solvency Ratio as on September 30th, 2024 increased to 1.98 as against 1.90 on September 30th, 2023. For the six months period ended September 30th, 2024, the persistency ratios on premium basis for the 13th month and 61st month were 77.62 per cent and 61.46 per cent, respectively. The comparable persistency ratios for the corresponding period ended September 30th, 2023 were 78.49% and 62.53%, respectively. For the six months period ended September 30th, 2024, the persistency ratios on number of policies basis for the 13th month and 61st month were 67.23% and 48.92%, respectively. The comparable persistency ratios for the corresponding period ended September 30th, 2023 were 66.80% and 50.35%, respectively. The Assets Under Management (AUM) increased to ₹55,39,516 crore as on September 30, 2024 as compared to ₹47,43,389 crore on September 30, 2023 registering an increase of 16.78% year on year. The overall expense ratio for the six months period ended September 30, 2024, decreased by 240 bps to 12.74 per cent as compared to 15.14 per cent for the six months period ended September 30, 2024. The Yield

on Investments on policyholders funds excluding unrealised gains was 9.02 per cent for the six months period ended September 30, 2024, as against 9.06 per cent for six months period ended September 30, 2023. CEO & MD Siddhartha Mohanty said, "During the first half of this year (FY 2024-25), LIC has been successful in delivering holistic growth on various business parameters such as market share, premium, Non par share within Individual business, VNB, VNB margin and Embedded Value. Our market share for HIFY25 has increased to 61.07 per cent as compared to 58.50 per cent for the same period of previous year and 58.87 per cent for the full year ended March 31, 2024. Further we have been consolidating our gains in terms of changing our product mix. The non par APE share of Individual business for HIFY25 now stands at 26.31 per cent as compared to 10.76 per cent for the similar period of previous year. Our margin trajectory is on the upswing and our VNB margin for HIFY25 is 16.2 per cent as compared to 14.6 per cent for similar period last year. Our strategy on enhancing market share along with changes in product and channel mix, without compromising on profitability, is yielding very visible results. Further we have aligned our products with the new regulatory guidelines by redesigning them in such a manner that the interest of customers, shareholders and various marketing channel partners are taken care of. At LIC we are confident that all such changes which are friendly to customers will eventually expand the life insurance market in the country. We are committed to continue to play a significant role in the further development of the life insurance market with the support of

ST panel urges Centre, states to take policy action for LWE-displaced Gottikoya tribals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has asked the Union Home Ministry and Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha to submit a detailed report on the status of the Gottikoya tribals, who were displaced from Chhattisgarh due to Maoist violence and are now reportedly living in neighbouring states in difficult conditions, and are excluded from social security benefits. The commission has requested the presence of the home ministry's secretary and the chief secretaries of the states concerned at a meeting scheduled on December 9 to discuss the issue, aim recommending a prompt policy decision to provide necessary support to the community. In a letter sent to the ministry and the states on



Friday, the NCST said it had received a petition in March 2022 stating that members of the Gottikoya community, who had relocated from Chhattisgarh to neighbouring states in 2005 to escape "violence between Maoist guerrillas and Indian security forces", have been facing significant challenges

in their new locations. According to tribal rights activists who have repeatedly raised the issue with the NCST and the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs, an estimated 50,000 tribals were displaced from Chhattisgarh due to LWE. They now live in 248 settlements in the forests of

Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra. According to some reports, the Telangana government has taken back land from Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in at least 75 settlements, jeopardising their livelihoods and increasing their vulnerability, the NCST said, citing the petition. Some reports also allege that forest department officials demolished the homes of the IDPs and destroyed their crops. On November 7, 2022, the Commission issued a notice to the District Magistrate of Bhadradi Kothagudem in Telangana, seeking an action taken report or compliance report on the matter. In a report submitted on September 9, 2023, the DM denied the allegations against forest officials, arguing that the Gottikoyas were encroaching on forest land, impacting forest

resources and causing "irreparable damage to the environment and ecological balance, which could lead to natural calamities". The magistrate added that since all the Gottikoyas had migrated from Chhattisgarh, they do not qualify as Scheduled Tribes in Telangana and are, therefore, ineligible for forest rights in the state. The NCST held a meeting with the DM of Bhadradi Kothagudem on September 24 to discuss the matter in detail. It recommended that the Union Ministry of Home Affairs secretary and the chief secretaries of Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha be requested to attend a session before the commission on December 9 and provide a comprehensive action taken report on the issue. The director of the Centre

for Economic and Social Studies in Telangana, along with representatives from the Forest Department, has also been asked to present a report on surveys conducted in Gottikoya settlements in the state. In July, the government informed Parliament that tribal families displaced from Chhattisgarh due to LWE were unwilling to return to the state despite the availability of rehabilitation schemes and security measures in place through security camps. Responding to a question by Congress MP Phulo Devi Netam, Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs, Durgadas Uikey told the Rajya Sabha that the state government had organised teams to conduct surveys in the adjoining districts of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to identify tribal families displaced from Chhattisgarh due to LWE.

Panchayati Raj Ministry to host webinar on enhancing grassroots Governance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Prioritising citizen-centric interventions to ensure effective and efficient delivery of services and enhancing overall governance at the grassroots level will be the focus of a webinar by the Panchayati Raj Ministry here on Monday. The webinar seeks to emphasise the crucial role that panchayats, as the third tier of local self-government, play in rural governance, particularly in ensuring the timely and effective delivery of essential services to rural citizens. "Panchayati Raj Institutions, operating at the grassroots level, are at the forefront of governance, ensuring that government schemes, welfare programs, and citizen services reach every corner of rural India. "These services, ranging from water supply, sanitation, and healthcare, to digital literacy and infrastructure development, are critical in shaping the socio-economic development of rural areas

and improving the quality of life for millions of citizens," the ministry said in a statement. Government officials, including chief secretaries and IT secretaries, from all states and Union Territories, deputy commissioners, district magistrates from aspirational districts, and all national e-governance awardees for the years 2022, 2023, and 2024 and their representatives will participate in the seminar. The webinar will provide a platform for states and Union Territories to discuss their current service delivery models and outline their future plans to make governance more citizen-centric, the statement added.

VP Jagdeep Dhankhar emphasises importance of business and commerce in Society



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said that in commerce and business must not feel "heat of the system" as they are the job and wealth creators and contribute to social harmony. He also said that the principle of "econom-

ic nationalism" was more important than fiscal gains of a few individuals. Addressing an event of Maharaja Agrasen Technical Education Society, Dhankhar said he has always advocated that "those in trade, commerce, industry must not feel heat of the system. They must have respect in society". The Vice President was of the view that this segment was the job and wealth creator and contributes to social harmony. "They are economy drivers. They have learned the art in this country to give back to the society. By and large they do it," he said while noting that the freedom movement of India is dotted by their contribution. The Vice President also underlined the

need to follow the principles of economic nationalism, whereby unnecessary imports can be curbed to save foreign exchange and help local industry flourish. He told the students that they should respect various views and should never ignore the other point-of-view to ensure social harmony. Dhankhar also said that divergent views help in course correction. "Tolerance is a virtue. It is an inalienable fact of social harmony," he said. Lauding the newly-launched internship scheme and National Education Policy (NEP), Dhankhar underlined that NEP evolved after three decades of intense discussions, taking into consideration thousands of inputs.

CM Yogi Adityanath calls SP a haven for criminals

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday accused the Samajwadi Party (SP) of being a gathering place for criminals and mafia figures. Speaking at a rally at Tilak Inter College in Hanumanganj, Phulpur, to support BJP candidate Deepak Patel, Adityanath alleged that prominent mafia figures like Atiq Ahmed, Mukhtar Ansari, and Khan Mubarak were all associated with SP. Referring to past "daylight murders of leaders like Krishnanand Rai and Raju Pal took place during SP's reign." He added that during previous SP rule, public funds

were funneled to the SP family and their allies, turning the state's administrative bodies into a "production house for rioters." He further remarked, "Today's SP has strayed from the values it was originally founded upon. It has become a refuge for mafia and criminals." Adityanath also questioned

the Congress party and the INDIA alliance's stance on Article 370, highlighting a recent Jammu and Kashmir government proposal calling for its reinstatement. He alleged that "Congress and its allies want to reinstate Article 370 to promote terrorism." Adityanath assured voters that under the Modi administration, the move

would never be allowed, and India would continue with "one flag, one Constitution." Addressing a crowd alongside BJP leaders and local dignitaries like BJP candidate Deepak Patel, MPs Praveen Nandi and Mayor Ganesh Kesari, Adityanath honored Prayagraj's cultural and spiritual heritage, calling it a land blessed by the Ganga. He mentioned the special significance of 2025, when Prayagraj will host the Mahakumbh, an event recently recognised as a cultural heritage by UNESCO, thanks to efforts by PM Modi. Highlighting a decade of progress, Adityanath credited PM Modi's government for transforming the country's

image and destiny. He pointed out that UP has also seen "double-engine government." "Earlier, UP was known for anarchy and riots; women were unsafe, farmers were ignored, and youth couldn't find jobs," he said. Under SP rule, he claimed, "even government jobs were auctioned off beforehand, and farmers and the poor did not receive necessary benefits." The Chief Minister also criticised SP for straying from the principles upheld by leaders such as Jayaprakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia, and Janeshwar Mishra, stating, "Today's SP has lost those ideals and has become a haven for criminals and mafia."

India to stress climate finance and protection for vulnerable communities at COP29 in Baku

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



As world leaders and climate negotiators converge in Baku for COP29, beginning Monday, India is set to bring renewed focus to the urgent need for climate finance, accountability and protection for vulnerable communities. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not attend the conference, and environment minister Bhupendra Yadav may also be absent, with Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Kirti Vardhan Singh leading the 19-member delegation instead. India's national statement is scheduled for November 18-19. India's key priorities at the conference are likely to focus on ensuring accountability of developed nations on climate finance, strengthening resilience for vulnerable communities, and achieving an equitable energy transition, experts anticipate. Dr Arunabha Ghosh, CEO of

the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), emphasised that COP29 must go beyond promises, pushing developed nations to accelerate their paths to net zero and meet their financial commitments. "The climate COPs are about raising ambition, enabling action, and, most importantly, holding everyone accountable. While COP28 resulted in many promises, it let developed countries off the hook. COP29 must be about accountability," said Ghosh. "The largest historical

emitters must move faster and raise their ambition. Climate finance should be consistent, convenient, catalytic, and credible, and COP29 must ensure it delivers real resources and capacity to protect the most vulnerable." This year's negotiations are anticipated to tackle the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance, a critical benchmark that could reach trillions of dollars annually, a figure many developing nations insist is essential to combat climate

change effectively. Ali Mohamed, Kenya's Climate Change Envoy, reinforced the urgency for a "Finance COP" that prioritises financing without deepening debt burdens for nations already struggling to adapt to climate impacts. "For Africa, it is important that the final goal agreed in Baku should not worsen our debt situation," Mohamed said. "The Framework on Global Climate Resilience needs to translate into real actions that support agriculture, water, health, biodiversity, infrastructure, and human settlements." Dr Frances Colan, Senior Director for International Climate Policy at the Center for American Progress, highlighted the conference's importance following the re-election of Donald Trump in the US, who is anticipated to adopt policies favouring oil and gas expansion. In a departure from past

conferences, India will not host a pavilion at COP29. This absence also comes as India balances its role as a developing nation with rising energy demands and a focus on economic growth, particularly as the world looks to emerging economies for leadership in reducing emissions. The release of the Global Carbon Budget on November 13 will provide a detailed assessment of current emission trends and the global trajectory toward meeting the Paris Agreement targets. Linda Kalcher, Executive Director of Strategic Perspectives, underscored that the EU must step up its efforts in response to shifting US climate policies. "The EU is one of the most reliable partners on climate finance for developing countries, but it cannot hide from the moment," Kalcher noted.

Russia's Deputy PM Manturov and EAM Jaishankar to co-chair key commission meeting

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister, Denis Manturov and external affairs minister S Jaishankar will jointly hold on Tuesday a key session of the intergovernmental Russian-Indian commission on trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural "working visit" to India. As part of the visit, he will take part in the plenary session of the Russian-Indian Business Forum in Mumbai on November 11, the Russian Embassy said in a statement on Sunday. The event in Mumbai is aimed at expanding cooperation and ties between the entrepreneurs of the two countries, the statement said. There will be thematic sessions on current areas of interaction, including industrial cooperation,

transport and logistics, finance, digital technologies, and interregional ties. It is being organised by the Business Council for Cooperation with India and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). On November 12, in New Delhi, First Deputy Prime Minister Manturov jointly with External Affairs

Minister Jaishankar will hold the 25th Session of the Intergovernmental Russian-Indian Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation, it said. As part of his visit, the First Deputy Prime Minister also has a number of bilateral meetings planned, the embassy said in the statement.

Drone seizures along India-Pakistan border double to 200 amid rising security concerns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Drone seizures along the International Border in Punjab have doubled to 200 as Pakistani syndicates continue to push narcotics and weapons to "destabilise" India by inducing drug addiction in the youth and "disintegrating" social harmony, the Border Security Force (BSF) said. With the recovery of four more drones in the last 24 hours, over 200 Pakistan-based rouge drones have been seized along this border, it said in a statement issued on Saturday. The BSF guards the 2,290 km of this border running on India's western flank, including 553 km of the front along Punjab. The International Border also runs along Jammu in Jammu and Kashmir (LoC in Kashmir), Rajasthan and Gujarat. The BSF had seized a total of

107 drones at the Punjab border in 2023. The BSF said the almost doubled drone seizure this year is a "significant landmark" and "remarkable milestone" that "reflects the force's enhanced anti-drone strategies and the deployment of advanced technical counter-measures along the border." BSF troops, as per the force, have implemented "increasingly accurate" anti-drone drills, resulting in a significant setback for Pakistani narcotic syndicates attempting to push in drugs and weapons into the Indian territory with an objective to "destabilise" it by inducing drug addiction in the young generation and "disintegrating" social harmony. A senior BSF officer told PTI that the more than 200 drones seizure this year includes those unmanned aerial vehicles which were

shot down by its troops using rifles, jammed in-flight with the use of anti-drone technology and those that were recovered lying on the fields on the basis of intelligence inputs or information provided by the locals. Almost all of these drones are Chinese-made and they carry drugs, small arms and ammunition as payload. However, drugs are the highest sent consignment, the officer said. The drone menace, which started around 2019-20 along this front, is dominant in the border districts of Amritsar and Tarn Taran in Punjab. BSF officials have said all the drugs coming from across the Pakistan border into Punjab were now coming through the air route via drones as compared to the earlier land route using pipes pushed from the Pakistan border and many times by being flung from over the fence.

Congress claims India faces 'demand crisis' due to income stagnation



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Sunday claimed India was facing a "demand crisis" due to sustained and said the "double engine" of private investment and mass consumption that powered the UPAs decade of sustained GDP growth has been "derailed" in the last ten years of the Modi government. Congress general secretary in-charge communications, Jai Ramesh, urged the government to accept what the Congress has been proposing - raising

MGNREGA wages to a minimum of Rs 400 per day, guaranteeing MSP and a loan waiver for farmers, and a monthly income support scheme for women - to kickstart income growth in rural India. He said that with each passing day, the tragedy of India's dying consumption story becomes more evident. Last week, several CEOs from India Inc raised the alarm over the "shrinking" middle class and now, new data from NABARD's All India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey (NAFIS) 2021-22 adds to the

evidence that India's demand crisis is a result of sustained income stagnation, he said in a statement. Citing key takeaways from the survey data, Ramesh said the average monthly household income for Indians is Rs 12,698 to Rs 13,661 for agricultural households and Rs 11,438 in non-agricultural households. "Assuming an average household size of 4.4, the per capita income in rural areas is an estimate Rs 2,886 per month - less than Rs 100 a day. The vast majority of Indians therefore have very little money for discretionary consumption beyond that of basic necessities," Ramesh said, citing the data. "This is hardly the exception - nearly every piece of evidence points to this same damning conclusion: that the average Indian can buy less today than they could 10 years ago. This is the ultimate root cause for India's consumption slowdown," he claimed. Citing Labour Bureau's Wage

Rate Index data, Ramesh said real wages for labourers stagnated between 2014 and 2023, and in fact declined between 2019 and 2024. Further, he cited the Ministry of Agriculture's Agricultural Statistics data to state that under Dr Manmohan Singh, real wages for agricultural labourers grew at 6.8 per cent each year, he said. "Under Mr Modi, real wages for agricultural labourers declined by 1.3 per cent each year," Ramesh said. Citing Periodic Labour Force Survey Series data, Ramesh said the average real earnings over time have stagnated between 2017 and 2022 across all employment types - salaried workers, casual workers, and self-employed workers. He also cited Centre for Labour Research and Action data to claim that real wages of brick kiln workers have stagnated or declined between 2014 and 2022. He added that brick kilns involve intensive labour and are a low-paying

work of last resort for India's poorest. "As the government's own Economic Survey (2024) acknowledged, 'private sector GFCC (Gross Fixed Capital Formation) in machinery and equipment and intellectual property products has grown cumulatively by only 35 per cent in the four years to FY23. This is not a healthy mix. It is about to get worse, with new project announcements by the private sector falling by 21 per cent between FY23 and FY24," he said. The government must accept this proposal to kickstart income growth in rural India after a decade of stagnation, Ramesh said. The Congress last week had alleged that deliberate destruction of MSMEs through neglectful policy-making, a blundering demonetisation, a botched-up GST rollout, and the unplanned COVID-19 lockdown is partly responsible for the shift away from labour-intensive growth.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A rich legacy

Chief Justice DY Chandrachud's tenure leaves a legacy marked by bold decisions, though not without controversies

As Chief Justice DY Chandrachud's tenure concludes on November 10, his impactful decisions will be closely scrutinised for the lasting mark they have left on India's journey toward progress and development. He became the 50th CJI on November 8, 2022. During his tenure as a judge and as CJI, Chandrachud has been involved in more than 700 judgements including constitution bench judgements, many of which he has authored, dissented and concurred with. His tenure stands as one of the most impactful in recent years, marked by bold judicial reforms, significant rulings, and an enduring commitment to upholding constitutional rights. His time in office was characterised by an effort to reshape the judiciary to make it more accessible, transparent, and technologically adept. However, this legacy was not without its share of controversies, reflecting both the high expectations and challenges that come with the nation's highest judicial role. His approach to jurisprudence was firmly rooted in constitutional principles and a progressive interpretation of the law.



His tenure is defined by landmark rulings that addressed some of India's most pressing social and political issues. The free speech and right to dissent that are fundamental to any democracy were close to his heart. Under his leadership, the apex court repeatedly affirmed the rights of individuals to dissent and question authority, especially in cases where government overreach was alleged. His rulings in cases challenging sedition laws and other colonial-era restrictions reflected a judicial commitment to curbing censorship. Chandrachud introduced significant technological advancements within the judiciary to make it more accessible and efficient. His commitment to digitalisation and virtual court proceedings made it accessible to all. His efforts to streamline case backlogs, prioritise the rights of underprivileged communities and modernise the judicial system have left a lasting impact. He championed judicial independence and frequently emphasised the need for an apolitical judiciary. These reforms have set a foundation for future chief justices to build on. However, Chandrachud faced criticism over his handling of certain high-profile political cases, especially those involving state surveillance and alleged misuse of power. His reluctance to prioritise some of these cases was interpreted by some as an unwillingness to confront the government, casting a shadow on his otherwise steadfast stance on judicial independence. His attempts to bring transparency to the controversial collegium system were met with mixed reactions. Indeed, Chief Justice DY Chandrachud's tenure will be remembered as one marked by significant contributions to the evolution of Indian jurisprudence and judicial processes. DY Chandrachud commitment to rights-based judgements, technological modernisation and accessibility reforms represents his enduring contributions to the judiciary.

PICTALK



People take part in a boating competition, in Nadia

The business of power and the politics of loyalty



SANTOSH MATHEW

As history has shown, when influential businessmen back controversial leaders, the consequences reach far beyond politics—impacting nations and the global landscape

In the world of investment banking, there's an adage: "Insult is an investment." The idea is simple—those who are underestimated and ignored often end up making the most successful moves, purchasing stocks at a lower price before the crowd catches on. In political terms, this strategy mirrors how Donald Trump, after being insulted and sidelined following the 2020 election, has managed to turn his defeat into a powerful comeback. But Trump's resurgence isn't just a matter of political savvy—it's also about alliances, the kind that transcend national borders and redefine power structures. One such alliance is his relationship with Vladimir Putin, which, when examined through a historical lens, resembles the complex political alliances of the past. Trump's approach to Putin could be seen as a Trump card of sorts. A new world order under autocratic rule, with Putin at the helm, is a scenario that increasingly seems possible.



Ford once supported, albeit in a different era and context. Ford, the founder of the Ford Motor Company, became infamous for his admiration of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. Ford's business interests aligned with the Nazi regime, including lucrative contracts that benefitted Ford's German subsidiary, Ford-Werke. While Ford's connection to Hitler was ideological, it was also financial, a pragmatic alliance that offered both political and economic rewards. Fast forward to today, and we see a striking similarity between Ford's support for Hitler and Musk's endorsement of Trump. Elon Musk, a tech magnate with enormous influence, has embraced Trump's populist message, praising him for his policies on deregulation and free markets. Musk's relationship with Trump may not be rooted in ideology to the same extent that Ford's was with Hitler, but the political and business calculations are eerily similar. Like Ford, Musk sees in Trump an opportunity to align his business interests with a powerful political figure. Musk's recent purchase of Twitter, his vocal support for Trump, and his willingness to use his platform to reshape public discourse are strategic moves, not just personal convictions. At the heart of this dynamic is



AMID THESE SHIFTING GLOBAL TIDES, THERE'S ONE GROUP THAT TRUMP HAS PROMISED TO "SAVE": THE HINDUS. WHILE INDIA'S PRIME MINISTER MODI MAY CLAIM TO BE THEIR PROTECTOR, TRUMP'S DIWALI PLEDGE TO SAFEGUARD HINDUS WORLDWIDE PAINTS A DIFFERENT PICTURE

a simple truth: both Ford and Musk, at their respective times, recognised the value of political alignment in securing economic and business power. Ford saw his admiration for Hitler as a path to financial gain in a fractured Europe. Musk, meanwhile, sees his support for Trump as a means to ensure policies favourable to his empire, such as deregulation, low taxes, and the prioritisation of business over social welfare. Just as Ford's relationship with the Nazi regime was instrumental in expanding his company's reach in Europe, Musk's ties to Trump could bolster his business interests in the current global economy. Musk's approach to Trump is also a form of personal branding. Both men have cultivated larger-than-life personas, largely through social media, and both understand the power of controversy. Just as Ford was able to influence public perception through his business prowess and his political affiliations, Musk uses his platform—Twitter, now X—to shape political discourse. Musk's support for Trump also mirrors Ford's early 20th-century nationalist rhetoric. While Ford's nationalism was overtly racial, Musk's alignment with Trump echoes a modern brand of populism, focused on nationalism, "America First" policies, and anti-establishment rhetoric. However, the ultimate question remains: What happens when business and politics intertwine in such a way that it threatens the very fabric of democratic institutions? Ford's support for Hitler contributed to the global rise of fascism, and Trump's alliances with figures like Putin raised concerns about the future of democracy and global stability. Musk's role in this political theatre could either be a footnote in history or a major chapter in the ongoing struggle between corporate power and political freedom. The rise of populism, the fracturing of traditional alliances, and the unpredictable actions of powerful business figures like Musk and Trump all point to a future where global stability could be at risk. The future is uncertain, but one thing is clear: as history has shown when powerful businessmen like Ford or Musk align themselves with controversial political figures, the consequences can be far-reaching and transformative. Whether for good or ill, their influence is undeniable, and their alliances, however pragmatic, will shape the world for years to come. *(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CHANDRACHUD'S LANDMARK VERDICTS

Madam — Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud, overall, an eminent, very erudite and well-mannered CJI. Even though he was a woke, liberal, let's give him the credit where he truly deserves. He was completely impartial. He was on the bench for the Ram Mandir verdict which ruled unanimously in favour of the temple. He withheld Article 370, he ruled in the favour of government for demonetisation, granted bail to Arnab Goswami, ruled against MVA in Maharashtra, accepted SEBI report on Adani against Hindenburg allegations, approved Central Vista project, upheld government powers pertaining to ED, CBI and PMLA, left same sex marriage decision on parliament or interpretation of Article on private ownership of resources, Assam Citizenship Amendment Act. Some of the judgements may not align with our preference, but not everything can work in our favour. But my one regret is the Ganapati Aarti he shared with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his house. No doubt Modi Bhakts forgave him for this sole act. Side by side who forget his overlooking Bhima Koregaon undertrials and Umar Khalid's politically motivated jail. Whatsoever, a judge's task is to interpret the law and he did very creditably. Law making is the function of Parliament and not the Supreme Court. We will miss you a lot, your Lordship.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENT

Madam— Apropos of the front page news 'Ruckus continues in J and K Assembly' (Nov 8), CM Omar Abdullah should himself evaluate how development and infrastructure have been made priority by the Union Government in comparison to the other states after the abrogation of Article 370 and security preparedness has been enhanced in the state. Jammu & Kashmir has top priority for the country both from a strategic, economic and social perspective. People of the state responded positively to the repeal of Article 370 and have voted for the National

Stop political blame game



Rape, gangrape and murder are social crimes continuing since the dawn of 'civilisation' all across the world and which seem to have no end, proving that human beings are still left with several miles to go before turning truly humane. So whenever any such crime happens any-

where, the real culprits should be nabbed as early as possible, with the judiciary awarding exemplary punishment to the convicted. And if any influential person or persons are found to be protecting the criminals or diluting their crime, he/she/they must also be handed severe punishment. But character-assassinating the ruling party or government of the region along with the administrative head of the concerned region wherever such an unpardonable offence takes place is nothing but cheap, heartless politics within which the BJP and its leaders have scandalously immersed themselves, revolving around the Kolkata hospital case since early August. **Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata**

SAMOSAS CONTROVERSY

Madam — It is full of political crises as general security staff ate away elitist samosas ordered from a 5-star hotel by the CM of Himachal Pradesh. CID has been called in for investigation as to how these staff could not understand that not all samosas are for everyone. This transgression needs Byomkesh Bakshi, RAW, IB, and CBI to find out how dare some poor guy thought he could get away eating Sukku ke samose. Also, the five-star hotel that supplied those Samose might have to be penalised for not writing a caution note on each samosa by writing, Only for Italians, and those Indians whose income is more than 50 lakh per month, etc.

What Jalebi was to Haryana, Samosas will be to Himachal Pradesh. Also, Maharashtra elections are just 10 days away, and Pappu has not yet talked about the Vada Pav factory. It is concerning for Mahayuti. Congress is a complete mess on edibles. **A Subramaniam Krishnan | Mumbai**

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Vinod Johri | Delhi

Creating a workplace culture that truly supports mental health



ASHA IYER KUMAR

In a workplace where mental health is prioritised, employees would feel confident, heard, valued and supported

The theme for Mental Health Day 2024, which was observed on October 10, was "mental health in the workplace". Although a month has passed since then, it is a theme that will remain relevant at all times of the year, given the rising incidents of burnouts and crashes in the professional sphere. The race has never been this fierce to corner the best bargains in life and in the process of touching the finish line first, we are disintegrating as family, workers and society. Our workspaces are turning into ticking time bombs with a multitude of nerves waiting to snap. The deadlines in front of us are turning into death lines. As someone who has gone through a mental health condition and someone who has been through the trials of having to perform well at work during the ailment, and in the end been let off, I can say this much with certainty: We talk more and walk less. The active discussions that we are having on mental health in offices are not translating into workable actions and responses. Whether we use the word toxic or hostile, or



politics to describe ineluctable work conditions, there is an amount of disquiet hovering over workstations and cabins. Employees still struggle to define their boundaries and raise concerns without fear of judgment or retaliation. This lack of open communication creates a festering environment where mental well-being takes a back seat to competition, productivity, and ambition. To bridge this gap, I believe every organisation needs a Chief Emotional Intelligence Officer—a dedicated professional to prioritise the mental wellness of employees. This individual would serve as an accessible resource for emotional guidance, creating a safe harbour where employees can speak candidly about their mental and

emotional challenges without fear of repercussions. Why is this crucial? Because mental health issues in the workplace are seldom isolated incidents—they are deeply intertwined with how individuals interact, collaborate, and handle the pressures of their roles. The CEO would not only provide direct support but also foster a culture that values empathy, resilience, and open dialogue. They could organise workshops on emotional intelligence, manage peer support networks, and act as a mediator in times of conflict. By equipping employees with emotional tools and safe channels to address their struggles, companies can create a more harmonious and productive environment. A psychologist or therapist in the workspace would be invaluable in addressing the employees issues. Think about the quiet suffering: employees with anxiety disorders who fear speaking up during meetings, those with depression who find it challenging to meet deadlines or those enduring chronic stress due to workplace politics. When left unaddressed,

these issues don't just impact the individual—they disrupt team dynamics, reduce overall productivity, and lead to higher attrition. By bringing mental health resources in-house, organisations send a powerful message: We care about you as a whole person, not just as a worker. In workplaces that still stigmatise open communication, a CEO can lead by example, showing that seeking help is a strength, not a weakness. Imagine an office where an employee overwhelmed by stress could have a confidential conversation with a professional trained to listen and offer support. Or where tensions between coworkers could be resolved through mediation rather than letting resentment fester. This isn't just about providing a "quick fix" for mental health—it's about creating a sustainable, nurturing workplace culture. If we genuinely wish to prioritise mental health in the workplace, then it's time to go beyond well-meaning words and take actionable steps. *(The author is a columnist and writing coach based in Dubai; Views are personal)*



FIRST COLUMN

SHARENTING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Only with awareness and proactive choices, parents can create a positive digital experience



SHAINY SHARMA

In the digital age, social media has become an integral part of everyday life, allowing people to connect, share, and communicate across vast distances. Of recent, in one of the studies, it was estimated that over 90 per cent of American children have a social media presence by the time they reach age 2. Today, many parents feel a sense of pride in their children's achievements and milestones and want to celebrate these moments with friends and family. They believe that social media offers an easy, instant way to share updates and receive supportive feedback.

This practice of parents sharing photos, videos and details about their children on social media is termed 'Sharenting' and is becoming a buzz in town. This practice may include baby photos, milestones, family activities, humorous incidents and personal achievements. Sharenting often begins as early as pregnancy announcements and continues through the child's growth, school events and sometimes even into adolescence.

Practicing sharing offers numerous ways to bridge physical distance and bring family members into the child's life virtually by creating family bonding for families separated by geography and maintaining close relations with extended family members; building online support communities where sharing can bring camaraderie and guidance from other parents experiencing similar challenges and preserve memories that can later be revisited by both the parents and potentially the children themselves but on the contrary, sharing faces substantial criticism, primarily concerning privacy, consent and ethical issues. Studies suggest that children who discover their lives



have been publicly documented without their consent may experience trust issues with their parents and may feel a loss of control over their personal stories.

As children grow up in a digital world, having a documented online presence from a young age can influence their self-perception, social development and relationships. Being exposed to a wide audience might increase the likelihood that children develop feelings of shame or insecurity about how they are portrayed online.

The word 'Sharenting' is a double-edged sword, offering benefits in the form of connection and memory preservation but carrying significant ethical and privacy implications. It becomes of utmost importance for the parents to strike a balance and adopt responsible sharing practices such as seeking consent from their child when possible; avoiding sharing sensitive information such as full name, school, location, etc and periodically reviewing and removing older posts, thereby reducing their child's digital footprint and enabling them to control their online presence as they grow.

Only with awareness and proactive choices, parents can create a positive digital experience for their families while protecting their children's future in an increasingly connected world. Today's generation needs to create a new normal and prioritise a child's right to privacy, informed content as well and digital safety over the 'posting dopamine cycle.' Remember, the digital footprint of the child will last a lifetime, and privacy will give them power. Ultimately, responsible sharing will require mindfulness, ethical consideration, and the willingness to prioritise the child's well-being above the immediate gratification of social media validation.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Nutrient-based subsidy: Support and scrutiny balance



UTTAM GUPTA

While companies have the flexibility to set their MRP, these prices remain under close government scrutiny, ensuring affordability without undermining competition



Just around the time when the Rabi Crops season (October 2024 – March 2025) has commenced, there was a shortage of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) in many parts of the country.

DAP is a widely used complex fertiliser that supplies 46 per cent Phosphate or 'P' nutrients besides 18 per cent Nitrogen or 'N' (a ton of DAP contains 180 kg 'N' and 460 kg 'P'). The annual consumption of DAP is around 10 to 11 million tons. Against this, domestic production is less than half at around 4.5 – 4.8 million tonnes. The deficit is made up of imports from countries such as Russia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt and China.

According to the Department of Fertilisers (DoF), the requirement of DAP during the current Rabi season is assessed to be 5.5 million tonnes. Out of this, 60 per cent or 3.3 million tonnes was to be imported. This much material should have been purchased, transported and placed nearer the consumption areas before the commencement of the season. But, that was not to be. According to the Fertiliser Association of India (FAI), during April-September 2024, DAP imports were 1.96 million tons down from 3.45 million tons during the same period in 2023-24. The domestic production of DAP was 2.15 million tons down from 2.31 million tons during the same period last year. So, there was a reduction in supply of around 1.65 million tons compared to last year. This is the prime reason behind the shortage of DAP.

A plausible explanation could be that many countries from where DAP comes are in the middle east and the crisis due to the war involving Israel and others has led to disruption in the normal Red Sea route forcing the re-routing of ships through the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa. That involves much longer distance hence, taking additional time of up to 45 days for the consignment to reach Indian ports. But, it isn't simply a case of delay. It has more to do with policy issues. Under the existing policy, the Union Government asks manufacturers or importers to sell fertilisers to farmers at a low maximum retail price (MRP) unrelated to



THE ANNUAL CONSUMPTION OF DAP IS AROUND 10 TO 11 MILLION TONNES. AGAINST THIS, DOMESTIC PRODUCTION IS LESS THAN HALF AT AROUND 4.5 - 4.8 MILLION TONNES. THE DEFICIT IS MADE UP OF IMPORTS FROM COUNTRIES SUCH AS RUSSIA, MOROCCO, SAUDI ARABIA, JORDAN, EGYPT AND CHINA

the cost of production/import and distribution (or cost of supply) which is higher. The excess cost of supply over MRP is reimbursed as a subsidy to the manufacturer/importer.

In the case of urea, MRP is under 'statutory' control and subsidy varies from unit to unit (importer in case of import) depending on the cost. For non-urea fertilisers (there are 25 grades of such fertilisers including DAP) which are de jure decontrolled, the MRP is 'indirectly' controlled.

The government gives a 'uniform' subsidy on a per-nutrient basis to all manufacturers and importers under the Nutrient Based Scheme (NBS). Although they are free to fix the MRP, this is subject to scrutiny by the authorities. In an office memorandum dated January 17, 2024, the DoF has issued detailed guidelines for the evaluation of the "reasonableness" of the MRPs for all non-urea fertilisers covered under the NBS. To be effective from April 1, 2023, the guidelines prescribe maximum profit margins that will be allowed for fertiliser companies - 8 per cent for importers, 10 per cent for manufacturers and 12 per cent for integrated manufacturers (those producing finished fertilisers as well as intermediates such as phosphoric acid and ammonia).

The admissible profit margins are calculated as a percentage of their "total cost of sales", which covers the cost of production (landed cost in case of import), administrative/selling and distribution overheads, net interest and financing charges. Dealer's margin is allowed to the extent of 2 per cent of the MRP for DAP and muriate of potash (MOP), and 4 per cent for all other fertilisers covered under NBS. Companies earning "unreasonable profit", i.e. over and above the stipulated per-

centages, in a financial year (April-March) or FY will have to refund the same to the DoF by October 10 of the following FY. If they don't return the money within the said time limit, "an interest @12 per cent per annum is charged on a pro-rata basis on the refund amount from the next day of end of FY (i.e. in case of FY 2023-24, the interest would be charged from April 1, 2024)". The guidelines require fertiliser companies to "self-assess" unreasonable profits, based on the cost auditor's report along with audited cost data approved by their board of directors. This report and data have to be furnished to the DoF by October 10 of the following fiscal year. The DoF will then scrutinise the "reasonability of MRPs", as submitted by the companies, "for each completed previous FY (i.e. for FY 2023-24) by February 28, 2025". Following this scrutiny, the DoF will finalise a report on unreasonable profits earned, if any, to be recovered from the companies.

Such detailed regulations to the point of 'micro-managing' a firm by itself act as a deterrent to smooth and effective conduct of its operations. It is completely out of sync with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphasis on policy reforms and liberalisation. It makes a mockery of the decontrol of all non-urea fertilisers announced way back in 1992 under the economic reforms unleashed by the then government under PV Narasimha Rao. From the perspective of the manufacturer/importer, the 'reasonable' MRP allowed to it by the DoF plus the subsidy also fixed by the government (it is notified twice a year before the commencement of each season Kharif and Rabi) should fully cover the cost of supply. If it doesn't, the manufacturer's/importer's operations will be rendered eco-

nomic unviable. This is precisely what has happened with importers of DAP during the current year. For the Rabi season, the government has announced a subsidy of Rs 21,911 per ton along with the MRP of Rs 27,000. These two add up to Rs 48,911 per ton. Against this, the current landed cost of DAP in the country is US \$ 645 per ton or around Rs 54,000 per ton. Add to this, the cost of movement from the port to the consumption point and distribution cost, and the cost of supply to the farmer would be more than Rs 60,000 per ton. A firm won't go for such import only to incur a substantial loss of over Rs 10,000 per ton. The crux of the problem is the government doesn't want farmers to pay more. So, it has kept MRP unchanged at the level it was three years ago. At the same time, it is hesitant to increase subsidies as it will upset its fiscal budget. Its subsidy allocation for non-urea fertilisers has gone down from Rs 112,875 crore during 2022-23 to Rs 60,303 crore during 2023-24 and further down to Rs 48,894 crore during 2024-25 (it includes Rs 24,474 crore for Rabi season). In the process, it ends up impacting supplies as importers don't find it economical to import. During the previous two years, there wasn't any shortage as during 2022-23, the government was pretty liberal in spending and during 2023-24, the decline in global prices helped. But, during the current FY, none of these reliefs are available. So, there is stress on the supply front. The government can get out of the logjam only when it stops micro-managing the fertiliser business and leaves it to the market forces. As for subsidies, they should be given directly to farmers.

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

Israel, Palestine and a divided Africa: Seeking a path forward

African nations, with their unique histories, alliances and economic interests, find themselves divided over the Israel-Palestine issue

The ongoing conflict in Gaza between Israel and Palestine, which began on October 7, 2023, marks a significant military engagement in the region, being the largest confrontation since the 1973 Yom Kippur War. This conflict has global ramifications, with the African continent likely to feel its effects profoundly. Africa, with its 55 countries and diverse political landscape, is particularly vulnerable to such geopolitical divides.

Africa's Divided Stance on Israel-Palestine: African countries vary widely in their stance on the Israel-Palestine issue, often shaped by historical, ideological, and economic factors. Pro-Palestinian countries like Algeria, Tunisia, South Africa, Senegal, Mali,



MANISH KARMWAR

Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Libya support Palestine, often viewing the Palestinian struggle through the lens of their anti-colonial histories. In contrast, several nations, including Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Morocco, and Chad, have established close relations with Israel, motivated by economic, technological, and security interests. Additionally,

neutral countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan maintain diplomatic ties with both Israel and Palestine, typically refraining from favouring one side over the other.

At the continental level, the African Union (AU) has traditionally supported Palestine's statehood and criticised Israeli policies.

A Deeper Look at Africa's Reactions: African responses to the Gaza conflict highlight the continent's fractured stance on foreign policy issues. In South Africa, for instance, public protests have likened the Palestinian struggle to the country's anti-apartheid movement. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has voiced strong support for Palestine,

and his government filed a lawsuit against Israel at the International Court of Justice. Algeria's Foreign Minister similarly condemned Israeli actions, citing international law, while Comoros President Azali Assoumani labeled Israeli actions as genocidal. On the other hand, several sub-Saharan nations, including South Sudan, Cameroon, Togo, and Cape Verde, chose not to support the recent United Nations resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. Even Muslim-majority countries like Morocco, Chad, and Sudan have limited their response to public condemnations without altering diplomatic ties. Malawi and Kenya recently agreed to send laborers to Israel following a halt in work permits for Palestinians,



further signaling the complexities in Africa's stance. Africa and Israel share a complex, long-standing relationship that dates back to before Israel's founding. Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement, expressed support for African liberation, envisioning solidarity between Jews and Africans in their quests for self-determination. This vision gained trac-

tion in the 1960s, with Israel maintaining a strong presence in Africa, including 33 embassies across the continent. Israel's model of decolonisation and development attracted the admiration of African leaders who saw parallels in their own struggles for independence.

However, following the 1973 Yom Kippur War, pressure from Arab countries led many African states to sever ties with Israel. This led to a period of estrangement, with African leaders feeling frustrated by unmet promises from Arab allies, particularly in the realm of energy cooperation. Gradually, ties began to thaw, and by the early 21st century, Israel was once again seeking partnerships in Africa, with diplomatic and economic col-

laborations resuming. In recent years, Israel's outreach has intensified. In 2016, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited East Africa, and a year later, he addressed the Economic Community of West African States. In 2022, Israel and several African nations agreed to expand cooperation in renewable energy, trade, and technology. Kenya's President William Ruto visited Israel in 2023, further strengthening ties in agriculture, climate change, security, and other sectors.

These relationships are essential for African nations, many of which aim to modernise infrastructure and boost economic growth through partnerships with technologically advanced countries like Israel. Given the historical context

and current diplomatic landscape, it appears unlikely that the Gaza conflict will irreparably divide Africa. While opinions on the Israel-Palestine issue are undoubtedly polarized, African nations often prioritise pragmatic interests over ideological alignment. The Gaza conflict may not permanently alter Africa's alliances, but it does highlight the need for more cohesive foreign policy coordination on the continent.

Africa's relationships with Israel have historically ebbed and flowed, often dictated by external pressures and internal priorities rather than a single, unified stance.

(The writer is faculty, department of African Studies faculty of social sciences University of Delhi; views are personal)

Maharashtra Assembly election: It is all within the family

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Amid parties accusing rivals of promoting dynastic politics, the Maharashtra assembly election scheduled on November 20 will see brothers, cousins and father-children in the fray, with members of the same family taking on each other in some seats.

In one constituency, the battle is between husband and wife, while in another seat has an uncle and nephew pitted against each other.

In the high stakes battle of Pawars, debutant Yugendra Pawar, the candidate of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP-SP) led by Sharad Pawar, will take on his uncle and Ajit Pawar, representing the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), in the Baramati seat. Ajit Pawar, the deputy chief minister of the state, has won the Baramati Assembly seat seven times and has also bagged the Baramati Parliamentary seat once. This is the second time that

Baramati, the bastion of Pawars, will see a contest within the family. In the 2024 General Election, Sunetra Pawar, the deputy CM's wife, was defeated by his cousin and NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule in the Baramati Parliamentary seat.

In the neighbouring Karjat-Jamkhed seat, Rohit Pawar, another nephew of the deputy CM is in the fray as the NCP (SP) candidate against Ram Shinde of the BJP. Rohit Pawar is the grand-nephew of Sharad Pawar.

In the Kannad constituency's Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar seat, independent candidate Harshwardhan Jadhav is pitted against his estranged wife and Shiv Sena candidate Sanjana Jadhav, the daughter of BJP leader and former Union minister Raosaheb Danve.

Sanjana Jadhav's brother, Santosh Danve, is contesting from Bhokardan in Jalna as the BJP candidate.

Amit Deshmukh and Dhiraj Deshmukh, Congress candidates and sons of former state chief minister Vilasrao



Deshmukh, are in the poll race from Latur City and the adjoining Latur Rural seats, respectively. Similarly, Nitesh Rane and

Nilesh Rane, sons of BJP MP and former Maharashtra chief minister Narayan Rane, are in the fray from Kudal and Kankavli constituencies as

nominees for the Shiv Sena and the BJP, respectively. In Mumbai, the Thackeray cousins are in the fray from different seats. While sitting

Shiv Sena (UBT) sitting MLA, Aaditya Thackeray, is re-contesting from Worli, his maternal cousin Varun Sardesai is contesting from Vandre (Bandra) East Assembly seat on the party's ticket.

Aaditya's cousin, Amit Thackeray, son of Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) head Raj Thackeray, is contesting from neighbouring Mahim seat in Mumbai.

Former Maharashtra minister Ganesh Naik is contesting from Airoli seat as a BJP candidate, while his son Sandeep is in the fray from the neighbouring Belapur constituency as NCP (SP) candidate.

Similarly, Vijaykumar Gavit, Maharashtra minister and his daughter Heena Gavit, a former MP are also in the poll race. While senior Gavit is contesting as the BJP candidate from Nandurbar seat, his daughter is in the fray from neighbouring Akkalkuwa constituency as an independent.

In Islampur, Jayant Patil, NCP

(SP) state chief, is in the fray, while his nephew and former Maharashtra minister, Prajakt Tanpure, is contesting from Rahuri on the party's ticket.

NCP minister Chhagan Bhujbal is contesting from Yevala, while his nephew and former MP Sameer Bhujbal is in the fray from Nandgaon seat as an independent.

Ashish Shelar, BJP's Mumbai president, is in the fray from Mumbai's Vandre (Bandra) West, a constituency known to be the home of several Bollywood personalities, while his brother and party candidate Vinod Shelar is contesting from Malad West.

BJP's Santukrao Hambarde is contesting the Nanded Lok Sabha bypoll, while his brother and sitting MLA Mohanrao Hambarde is contesting the Assembly polls from Nanded South Assembly seat as a Congress candidate.

The Nanded Lok Sabha byelection, necessitated due to the death of sitting Congress MP Vasant Chavan, is also scheduled on November 20.

PM Modi attacks Congress in Gumla

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BOKARO / GUMLA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday attacked the Congress, accusing that its 'shahi parivar' (royal family) is hell bent on breaking the ST-SC-OBC unity to snatch reservations under an evil design.

Addressing a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) election rally at Gumla, he accused the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-led coalition of looting the state's resources such as minerals, forest, sand and coal and putting 'Roti-Beti-Mati' (bread, land and daughter) at grave threat. He also accused the ruling dispensation of fuelling illegal immigration.

"The Congress knows that if STs, SCs and OBCs are united, they will pose a threat to the party's existence. This is the reason the shahi parivar is hell bent on break their unity. They want to snatch reservations. The Congress is trying to pit one tribal community against another. Munda against Oraon, Lohra against Kharia, Kharwar against Korwa etc. With an agenda to break the tribal society's strength," he said.

The Congress cannot tolerate tribals in higher posts, which is why it opposes Droupadi Murmu's elevation (to the post of President) and continues to insult her, the PM said, adding former Jharkhand chief minister, Champai Soren, was also insulted.

The BJP is committed to restoring tribal pride and Janatiya Gaurav Varsh will be celebrated for one year from November 15 across the country to honour tribal icon Birsu Munda, he said. Modi also promised that those who looted Jharkhand's resources and played with the future of its youth will be put behind bars.

Earlier addressing BJP rally in Bokaro, the PM accused the Congress-JMM coalition of dividing OBCs by pitting sub-castes against each other, launching the 'ek rahoge toh safe rahoge' (be united to be safe) slogan.

Tension in Mandya village as Dalits enter temple

PTI ■ MANDYA (KARNATAKA)

Tension prevailed in a village in Mandya on Sunday after the district authorities made way for the Dalits to enter the temple and worship the deity 'Kalabhairaveshwara' for the first time. The upper caste people, mostly Vokkaligas, allegedly took away the 'Utsava Murthy', the metallic festival idol of the deity for performing rituals outside the temple in Hanakere village.

Heavy police force has been deployed in Hanakere in view of the prevailing tension.

According to sources, there was an old Kalabhairaveshwara Swamy temple in the village and Dalits were never allowed

to enter it.

About three years ago, the old dilapidated structure was demolished and a new temple was built. Recently, the shrine came under the control of the Religious Endowment Department of the state government. Soon, Dalits decided to enter the temple but the members of the upper caste communities did not agree.

The Dalits complained to the district administration about the discrimination done against them. Subsequently, two peace meetings were conducted but they failed. On Sunday, the Dalits entered the temple amid police security. The upper caste members who were upset with the development took away the festival idol.

BJP dismisses Abhishek Banerjee as senior TMC leaders fuel succession fire

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has scoffed at claims made by some senior Trinamool Congress (TMC) leaders projecting Abhishek Banerjee as the next chief minister (CM) of West Bengal.

"By the time when he comes of age, the TMC will be history and will be cast into the Bay of Bengal by the people of the state," said Sukanto Majumdar, state BJP president. Majumdar said that the TMC would not survive the 2026 Assembly Election.

Everyone has a freedom to make his or her suggestions and think freely. TMC leaders are no exception to this. They may nurture dreams but truth be told, the people of West Bengal have made up their minds and will throw out the TMC in Bay of Bengal in the 2026 elections. There will be no TMC in Bengal," he said.

His statement came amid the ongoing debate in the TMC over who will succeed Mamata Banerjee in the state.

The BJP leader's statement also came at a time when number of senior leaders openly backed the candidature of Abhishek Banerjee, the current party general secretary and nephew of the CM.

Supporting Abhishek, Kunal Ghosh, TMC spokesperson said, "Abhishek is not a contender. He is a successor." Ghosh in an online post wrote that Abhishek was his leader and was destined to be the next CM of Bengal. Calling him to be a rising star, who deserved to be nurtured and kept under constant watch, Ghosh wrote, "In the course of time, after Mamata Di, Abhishek will one day become the CM of Bengal," as he was the real "bearer and carrier" of the chief minister's legacy.

Even senior leader such as Saugato Roy, who has criticised by many for being a burden on the party and for cutting short ambitions of junior leaders, too said, "Abhishek is the best person after Mamata Banerjee and is



the future leader of the party." Both Roy's and Ghosh's remarks comes at the heels of an observation made by Kalyan Banerjee, another senior leader and MP, who sought to put to rest what many a senior leaders have termed an "uncomfortable debate," hinting at the point that Mamata Banerjee not

going to quit any time soon.

He hammered home the point citing the example of the newly elected American president Donald Trump. "Age is not a factor. Trump's election has proved that. If at the age of 78 he can get elected then it once again reinforces the point that if a person is capable of working

and continues to perform and then age is no bar for him," the MP said.

The present debate not only comes amid continuous churning inside the party for the past several months and the wake of a series of controversies, including the rural housing scam, the cash-for-job scam, RG Kar sexual assault and murder case, etc.. The debate reached a fever pitch some months ago forcing the chief minister put it to rest by the CM. "Both younger and older generation will work together to serve the people.

The younger people will respect the elders and the elders will encourage the juniors," she said.

Referring to the issue the Left leadership said that the controversy was being created by the TMC to divert attention from the real issues. "It is their internal matter. Who becomes the leader is their problem. They are making this a public issue in order to arrest the gradual alienation," said Sujan

Canada arrests Nijjar associate

From page 1

Born in Ludhiana, Dalla was designated as a terrorist by the Government of India in 2023. According to a gazette notification by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Dalla is associated with banned terrorist outfit Khalistan Tiger Force.

Dalla is accused of being involved in heinous crimes like murder, extortion and targeted killings. He is also accused of terror financing, cross-border smuggling of drugs and weapons at a large scale. According to the MHA notification, Arsh Dalla is accused in various cases registered and investigated by the National Investigation Agency including targeted killing, extorting money for terror funding, attempt to murder, disturbing communal harmony and creating terror among the people in the state of Punjab.

Dalla became active in 2020. He was mostly engaged in terror funding, raising terror modules, coordinating the supply of weapons from the

other side of the border, and planning specific murders across Punjab. According to the dossier created by the intelligence agencies, Dalla has a more killing record than the assassinated KTF leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Dalla allegedly planned an attack on a Hindu priest, Pragma Gyan Muni, in Phillaur, Jalandhar, in January 2021 through his associates Ram Singh, alias Sona, and Kamaljeet Sharma, alias Kamal.

Dalla was also involved in the murder of Manohar Lal, a disciple of Dera Sacha Sauda, in Bathinda in November 2020. Dalla also claimed responsibility for the murder of Sukhpreet Singh, a deceased criminal. Dalla collaborated with gangster Bikram Brar and Canada-based Goldy Brar in 2021 to form a 4-member KTF module tasked with targeting specific individuals. The module was assigned to target Bittu Premi, Shamma Badmash and Sira-based DSS follower Shakti Singh.

Save the date(s)...

From page 1

According to Acharya Durgesh Tare, Convenor of CAIT's Veda and Spiritual Committee, auspicious dates for this season fall on November 12, 13, 17, 18, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, and 29, and on December 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, and 16. Following this period, there will be a pause of about a month before the season resumes from mid-January to March 2025.

According to a report by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Indian wedding industry provides jobs to about 1 crore people including caterers, decorators, photographers and videographers, make-up

artists, wedding planners and musicians.

Khandelwal noted that the study has also highlighted a shift in consumer purchasing behaviour, with people increasingly opting for Indian products over foreign goods, reflecting the success of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Vocal for Local' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-Reliant India) vision.

According to Khandelwal, these estimates are based on auspicious dates, though numerous weddings will also occur on non-auspicious dates. Additionally, various pre-wedding functions, like mehendi, sangeet, and engagements, also represent significant expenses.

Justice Sanjiv Khanna...

From page 1

The Centre officially notified Justice Sanjiv Khanna's appointment on October 24 following Chief Justice Chandrachud's recommendation on October 16. Friday was the last working day of Justice Chandrachud as the CJ and he was given a rousing farewell by judges, lawyers and staff of the apex court and the high courts. It was the Justice Khanna-led Bench, which for the first time, granted interim bail to Kejriwal, the then chief minister, till June 1 to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections in the excise policy scam cases.

Born on May 14, 1960, he studied law at the Campus Law Centre of Delhi University. He enrolled as an advocate with the Bar Council of Delhi in 1983 and initially practised in the District Courts at the Tis Hazari complex here and later, in the Delhi High Court. He had a long tenure as the senior standing counsel for the Income Tax Department.

In 2004, he was appointed as the standing counsel (Civil) for the National Capital Territory of Delhi. Justice Khanna had also argued in a number of criminal cases at the Delhi High Court as an additional public prosecutor and as an amicus curiae.

BJP leader murder: father alleges TMC hand, woman

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A woman has been arrested for her alleged connection with the murder of a local Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader in Usthi village in the Diamond Harbour police district in South 24 Parganas. "We are exploring the angle of the deceased having been involved in a relationship and any quarrel with the arrested person," a senior police officer said.

They added, the accused has confessed to having hit the deceased with sharp

weapons resulting in his death.

The corpse of Prithviraj Naskar, a district level BJP leader, was discovered inside the local party office at Usthi on Saturday. His clothes were soaked in blood and the office was locked from outside, the police noted. They had to break open the door to recover his body.

The BJP has accused the Trinamool Congress (TMC) for the murder. In a public statement, the victim's father has alleged that local TMC leaders had threatened his son on several occasions

Long beards, orange...

From page 1

Down south, in Hassan in Karnataka, a row over students from Jammu and Kashmir studying in a government nursing college in Karnataka having long beard has been sorted out amicably, an official of the institute said on Sunday.

The issue came to light when the Jammu and Kashmir Students Association wrote to Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on the "significant challenges" faced by the students at the college at Holenarasipura in Hassan district.

The issue was amicably solved after the students agreed to comply with the directions of the college management, said Hassan Institute of Medical Sciences director Dr Rajanna. There are about 40 Kashmiri students in the college who alleged that they were facing "significant challenges". They communicated their concerns to the Srinagar-based Jammu

and Kashmir Students Association. "It has come to our notice that over two dozen Kashmiri students at the college are facing significant challenges due to restrictive policies concerning their personal appearance," the association said.

The college administration has reportedly been compelling the Kashmiri students to either trim their beards to a '01' trimmer length or be clean-shaven before they could be allowed to participate in college activities or enter the premises, particularly for clinical duties, the association wrote to the CM.

Students who have beards are being marked absent during clinical duties, impacting their academic records and attendance, it alleged.

"No student should be subjected to such discrimination or forced to compromise their beliefs and practices to access education. Such actions not only infringe

upon the rights of these students but also create an atmosphere of fear and exclusion, which is detrimental to the spirit of education and democracy," it added.

However, Dr Rajanna rejected the association's charges. "These students have mistaken the instruction given about the untidy dress and keeping a long beard. During the clinical process they were instructed to keep their dress neat and trim their beards," he said.

Rajanna said that when he came to know about the issue, he had discussed with the students, who later agreed to come with a neat dress, to be punctual and to keep the beard trimmed. "The issue is now resolved. Right now there are 40 students. The students are happy in their hostels. The faculties and principal have visited their rooms and counseled the students," he explained.

Bangladesh govt wants Interpol support to...

From page 1

Officials said a Red Notice is not an international arrest warrant, but rather a global request for law enforcement agencies to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender, or similar legal action. Interpol member countries enforce Red Notices according to their own national laws.

The ICT was originally formed by the Hasina-led Awami League government in March 2010 to try the perpetrators of the crimes against humanity committed during the 1971 Liberation War. It later formed ICT-2, and at least six Jamaat-e-Islami and leaders of Hasina's arch rival Khaleeda Zia's BNP party were executed following the judgments of the two tribunals. The tribunal

remained dormant since mid-June after its chairman retired. The interim government reconstituted the tribunal on October 12. On October 17, the tribunal issued arrest warrants against Hasina and 45 others, including her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy and several of her former cabinet members. The interim government had earlier said that Hasina and several of her cabinet colleagues and Awami League leaders will be tried in this special tribunal.

However, Chief Adviser Yunus in an interview with the United Kingdom-based 'Financial Times' newspaper last month said his government would not immediately seek Hasina's extradition from India, an approach seen as preventing diplomatic tensions between the two countries.

Waqf Bill Committee courts...

From page 1

In separate communications to Birla on November 9, some Opposition MPs said they believed following their meeting with him on November 5 that the five-state tour of the Joint Committee of Parliament headed by BJP MP Jagdebika Pal may be deferred as there is no "immediate urgency" to submit the panel's report, sources said.

Opposition members in their letters to Birla have expressed dismay and surprise at the tour, noting that his meeting in Guwahati had only five members, "far less" than even the quorum. They have boycotted the tour. Those who have written to the Speaker include DMK's A Raja, Congress's Mohammad Jawed and TMC's Kalyan Banerjee, sources said.

Pal said as the committee's chairman he is not feeling

good about the boycott of opposition MPs who were part of its earlier study tour across southern states, noting that his only motivation is to record the views of a maximum of stakeholders as many of them cannot come to Delhi.

Opposition MPs in their letters to the Speaker said they believed after meeting him that the committee's meetings will now be held either one day in a week or two consecutive days in a fortnight to allow them to prepare and study the submissions made in its sittings, the sources said.

They said they received a "ray of hope" that their grievances would be addressed, they added. However, Pal went ahead with the tour to their dismay and surprise, they said. This is the third coordinated communication these MPs have made to Birla, targeting Pal's way of functioning. "We like to point out the

Chairman of JPC has reduced the proceedings to a mockery in complete breach of constitutional morality and well-established parliamentary practices," an opposition MP letter of November 9 said.

Expressing disappointment at the charge of the opposition MPs, Pal claimed that there is "no bigger democrat" than him as he pointed out that he has repeatedly allowed them to raise as many points and ask as many questions in its meetings as they wanted. "Ask Asaduddin Owaisi (AIMIM), who attends the committee's meetings with a lot of preparations. I have always allowed him to make his points. Or be it Syed Naseer Hussain (Congress) or Kalyan Banerjee (TMC). There is no point in boycotting study tours in which we merely record stakeholders's views," he said.

Biden invites Trump for meeting at White House on November 13

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Outgoing US President Joe Biden has invited his successor President-elect Donald Trump for a meeting at the White House on November 13, which would formally begin the presidential transition. At President Biden's invitation, President Biden and President-elect Trump will meet in the Oval Office on Wednesday at 11:00 am," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement. The meeting between the outgoing president and the incoming one is ceremonial and is seeped into decades old tradition. It is generally held in the Oval Office during which the outgoing president gives the president-elect a briefing about the key agenda of the country. The president-elect is also given a tour of the White House. It involves a meeting between the First Lady and the incoming First Lady. This is only the second time in American history that a president is re-elected after a gap of four years. In this case, President-elect Donald Trump, who was the 45th president of the United States for four years beginning January 20, 2017, and First Lady Melania Trump are familiar with the workings of the White House and a presidential administration. The customary meeting between the outgoing and incoming president, which signifies a peaceful transfer of power, was paused in 2020 when Trump had not conceded the election. He also did not attend the swearing-in ceremony of President Joe Biden. A similar meeting between outgoing Vice President Kamala

'Iranian charged for assassination plot tasked with targeting Israelis in SL'

Washington (PTI) An Iranian national charged by the FBI for plotting assassination on president-elect Donald Trump was tasked by the Iranians to target Israeli tourists in Sri Lanka, the Department of Justice has alleged. Farhad Shakeri, 51, of Iran was charged Friday in a criminal complaint in connection with their alleged involvement in a plot to murder a Trump. Shakeri is an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) asset, remains at large and is believed to reside in Tehran, Iran. "He was also tasked with targeting Israeli tourists in Sri Lanka," the Department of Justice said. According to documents filed in a federal court, Shakeri was asked by

IRGC to target Israeli tourists in Sri Lanka and to plan a mass shooting event in October 2024. On or about October 23, 2024, the governments of the United States and Israel publicly warned travellers about threats of an attack targeting tourist locations in the Arugam Bay area, and, on or about the following day, Sri Lankan authorities reported having arrested three individuals in connection with the threat. On October 28, after the public travel warnings issued by the governments of the United States and Israel and after CC-2's arrest by Sri Lankan authorities-Shaker advised the FBI that he had previously tasked CC-2 with surveilling the Israeli consulate in Sri Lanka,

the Department of Justice said. Shaker stated that he and CC-2 had served time in prison together. Shaker informed the FBI that he had provided this surveillance to IRGC Official-I. According to unverified videos circulating on social media appeared to show demonstrators holding banners in support of Khalistan. The videos showed fist fights and people striking each other with poles on what appears to be the grounds surrounding the temple. The Peel Regional Police responded to the altercation during the demonstration at the Mandir. As tensions between opposing sides increased, the demonstrations became physical and assaultive, a statement said on Saturday. Police began investigating several offences that occurred during the demonstration, many of which were captured on video; including individuals using flags and sticks to assault people, it said. Investigators from the 21 Division Criminal Investigations Bureau and Strategic Investigation Team (SIT) have arrested and charged Inderjeet Gosal of Brampton, the Peel Police statement said. Gosal, is Sikhs for Justice coordinator for Canada, Toronto Star reported. The US-based SFJ is banned in India. On November 8, 2024, he was arrested and charged with assault with a weapon. He was released on conditions and is to appear at the Ontario Court of Justice in Brampton at a later date, it said.

Harris and her successor J D Vance is also being scheduled.

TRUMP RULES OUT POMPEO, HALEY IN HIS ADMINISTRATION
President-elect Donald Trump ruled out two of his previous Cabinet members — former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and former envoy to the United Nations Nikki Haley — to be part of his upcoming administration. Trump, 78, was elected as the 47th president of the United States. He defeated Vice President Kamala Harris, 60, in the elections held on November 5. In the first term, Trump

served as the 45th president from January 20, 2017, to January 20, 2021. "I will not be inviting former Ambassador Nikki Haley, or former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, to join the Trump Administration, which is currently in formation," Trump said in a post on Truth Social. Pompeo served as the CIA Director and Secretary of State in his first term, while Haley served as his ambassador to the United Nations in the first two years of his presidency. Both his cabinet-ranking officials later entered the presidential race against him in the Republican primaries.

While Pompeo dropped from the race early, Haley was the last challenger against Trump till February this year. Later on, the two endorsed his campaign. Haley announced her support for Trump during the Republican National Convention in Wisconsin in July this year. However, in his post, Trump thanked his two former Cabinet officials for their service. "I very much enjoyed and appreciated working with them previously, and would like to thank them for their service to our Country. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!" Trump said.

Trump urges supporters to donate to Dems

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

President-elect Donald Trump urged his supporters to donate to Democrats to help them overcome the "financial strain" in the aftermath of the general elections. In a social media post, Trump expressed his surprise that the Democrats didn't have lots of dollars left over. "Now they are being squeezed by vendors and others," he said after reports emerged that the Harris Campaign is USD 20 million in debt. "Kamala Harris's campaign ended with at least USD 20 million in debt, per two sources familiar. Harris raised over USD 1 billion and had USD 118 million in the bank as of Oct 16," said Christopher Cadelago, the California bureau chief of Politico. "I am very surprised that the Democrats, who fought a hard and valiant fight in the 2020

Presidential Election, raising a record amount of money, didn't have lots of dollars left over. Now they are being squeezed by vendors and others," he said. "Whatever we can do to help them during this difficult period, I would strongly recommend we, as a Party and for the sake of desperately needed UNITY, do. We have a lot of money left over in that our biggest asset in the campaign was "Earned Media," and that doesn't cost very much. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!" Trump said. Vice President Kamala Harris, 60, was the Democratic Party's presidential nominee for the elections held on November 5. Harris, who lost to Trump, shattered all fund-raising records. According to figures available from the Federal Election Commission, the Harris campaign and its Super PACS raised USD 2.3 billion and spent USD 1.9 billion. On

the other hand, the Trump campaign raised over USD 1.8 billion and spent USD 1.6 billion. "Despite raising and spending over USD 1 billion in fundraising, Kamala Harris' 2014 election bid failed to resonate with the voters who mattered most. The heavy reliance on celebrity endorsements, star-studded concerts, and backing from elite political figures couldn't bridge the growing gap between the party and middle-class Americans struggling with rising costs for groceries, rent, and healthcare," Ajay Jain Bhutoria, a major fundraiser for the Harris Campaign told PTI in an interview. "While the Democrats garnered support from wealthy donors and Hollywood, they lost the backing of key voter groups," he said. Moreover, Harris' campaign also saw significant shifts among key ethnic communities. Indian Americans, Asian Americans,

and Muslim and Arab Americans, particularly in battleground states like Pennsylvania, and Michigan, became more disillusioned with the direction of the party," he said. "Indian American communities, who had previously been strong supporters of the Democrats, expressed growing concerns about issues like immigration reform, job opportunities, US India relationship, attack on Hindu Temples, attack on Hindus in Bangladesh and Canada and rising living costs," Bhutoria said. "In Michigan, home to significant Arab American and Muslim populations, many voters felt their concerns were sidelined in favour of more nationalized political debates. As a result, these communities increasingly moved toward Trump, feeling that their issues were better addressed by his platform," he said.

SFJ Canada coordinator held in temple violence case

PTI ■ DEIR AL-BALAH

An Israeli strike early Sunday on a home sheltering displaced people in the northern Gaza Strip killed at least 17 people, according to the director of a nearby hospital that received the bodies. Dr Fadel Naim, director of the Al-Ahly Hospital in Gaza City, said the dead include nine women, and that the toll was likely to rise as rescue efforts continue. He said they were killed in a strike on a home in the urban refugee camp of Jabalyia, where Israel has been carrying out an offensive for over a month. The military said it targeted a site where militants were operating, without providing evidence. It said the details of the strike are under review. Separately, Lebanon's Health Ministry says an Israeli airstrike on Sunday killed at least 20 people in the village of Aalmaat — north of Beirut and far from the areas in the south and east where the Hezbollah militant group has a major presence. Israeli forces have encircled and largely isolated Jabalyia and the nearby towns of Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun for the past month, allowing in only a trickle of humanitarian aid. Hundreds of people have been killed since the offensive began on Oct 6, and tens of thousands of people have fled to nearby Gaza City. On Friday, experts from a panel that monitors food security said famine is imminent in the north or may already be happening. The growing desperation comes as the deadline approaches for an ultimatum the Biden administration gave Israel to raise the level of humanitarian assistance allowed into Gaza or risk possible restrictions on US military funding. The northern third of Gaza, including Gaza City, was the first target of Israel's ground invasion and has suffered the heaviest destruction of the 13-month-old war, which was triggered by Hamas' attack into southern Israel. As in other areas of Gaza, Israel has sent forces back in after repeated operations, saying Hamas has regrouped. The military says it only targets militants, whom it accuses of hiding among civilians in homes and shelters. Israeli strikes often kill women and children. The war began when Hamas-led militants blew holes in the border fence and stormed into southern Israel on Oct 7, 2023. They killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250. Some 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, about a third of whom are believed to be dead. Israel's offensive has killed over 43,000 Palestinians, according to local health

17 killed in Israeli strike on northern Gaza

PTI ■ DEIR AL-BALAH

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authorities who do not distinguish between civilians and militants in their count but say over half the fatalities were women and children. Israeli bombardment and ground invasions have left vast areas of Gaza in ruins and displaced around 90% of the population of 2.3 million people, often multiple times. Hundreds of thousands of people are living in crowded tent camps with few if any public services and no idea of when they might return to their homes or rebuild. Cease-fire talks mediated by the United States, Qatar and Egypt have repeatedly stalled since the start of the year. Qatar, which has served as a key mediator with Hamas, said over the weekend that it had suspended its efforts and would only resume them when "the parties show their willingness and seriousness to end the brutal war and the ongoing suffering of civilians".

ISRAELI AIRSTRIKE KILLS 20 PEOPLE IN NORTHERN LEBANON
Lebanon's Health Ministry says an Israeli airstrike has killed at least 20 people. It says the strike on Sunday occurred in the village of Aalmaat, north of Beirut and far from the areas in the south and east of the country where the Hezbollah militant group has a major presence.

Qatar suspends mediation between Hamas and Israel

AP ■ DEIR AL-BALAH

Qatar has suspended its key mediation efforts between Hamas and Israel, it said Saturday, after growing frustration with the lack of progress on a cease-fire deal for Gaza. It wasn't immediately clear whether the remaining Hamas leadership hosted by Qatar must leave, or where it would go. Hamas has good relations with Iran and Turkey, and some of its leaders are now in Lebanon. However, Qatar is highly likely to return to mediation efforts if both sides show "serious political willingness" to reach a deal, according to an official with Egypt, the other key mediator. Qatar told Israel and Hamas it can't continue to mediate "as long as there is a refusal to negotiate a deal in good faith" and "as a consequence, the Hamas political office no longer serves its purpose" in Qatar, a diplomatic source briefed on the matter said. Qatar told Hamas it will have to leave if it isn't ready to engage in serious negotiations, the source said. In Washington, a US official said the Biden administration

informed Qatar two weeks ago that the Hamas office's continued operation in Doha was no longer useful and the Hamas delegation should be expelled. A senior US official said that after Hamas rejected the last proposal for a cease-fire, Qatar accepted the advice and informed the Hamas delegation of the decision 10 days ago. A senior Hamas official said they were aware of Qatar's decision to suspend mediation efforts, "but no one told us to leave." Hamas has repeatedly called for an end to the war and a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza as a condition for any cease-fire deal. Israel seeks the return of all hostages taken in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel and insists on a presence in Gaza. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue. The Israeli prime minister's office had no comment. Late Saturday, the state-run Qatar News Agency published comments attributed to Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari, a Foreign Ministry spokesman, confirming that Doha informed parties in the talks 10 days ago that it "would stall its efforts to mediate

between Hamas and Israel if an agreement was not reached in that round." "Qatar will resume those efforts with its partners when the parties show their willingness and seriousness to end the brutal war and the ongoing suffering of civilians," the report said. There continued to be no end in sight to the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza and the Israel-Hezbollah war in Lebanon, where Israel's military said it struck command centers and other militant infrastructure in Beirut's southern suburbs and elsewhere. An Israeli airstrike on the southern port city of Tyre late Friday killed at least seven, officials and a resident said. Hezbollah "should continue (the fight) and we will continue to back them up even if we lose our families, our homes, and end up in the dirt," said one Beirut resident, Mohammed Mekdad, as people searched the smoking rubble. In Gaza, Israeli strikes killed at least 16 people on Saturday, Palestinian medical officials said, while Israel announced the first delivery of humanitarian aid in weeks to the territory's hungry, devastated north.

British Hindus object to non-veg, alcohol served at Downing Street Diwali reception

London (PTI) Some British Hindus have taken to social media to voice their objections over a lack of proper consultation ahead of a Diwali reception hosted by Prime Minister Keir Starmer at 10 Downing Street in London, where reportedly non-vegetarian snacks and alcohol were included on the menu.

While community organisation Insight UK questioned the "appalling lack of understanding" of the spiritual aspect of the Hindu festival, others pointed out that greater dialogue is required ahead of such religious events. "Diwali is not just a time for festivity, but also holds a deeply religious meaning. The sacred festival emphasises purity and devotion and hence traditionally involves vegetarian meals and strict avoidance of alcohol," Insight UK stated in a post on X. "The choice of menu at the Diwali celebration hosted by the PM himself displays an appalling lack of understanding or respect for the religious traditions associated with the festival of Diwali. It also raises the pertinent question of whether Hindu community organisations and religious leaders were consulted for greater cultural sensitivity and inclusivity," it said. The group urged "greater consideration" at future celebrations intended to promote multiculturalism and inclusivity, mindful of the "cultural and religious practices of the communities they seek to honour".

Man accused of stabbing at least 5 people in Seattle ordered held on \$2M bail

AP ■ SEATTLE

A 37-year-old man who police say stabbed five people in Seattle in broad daylight Friday and possibly four others the day before made his first court appearance Saturday where a judge ordered him held on \$2 million bail. "People who live in and travel to the Chinatown-International District deserve to feel safe and be safe," said King County Prosecuting Attorney Leesa Manion after the judge found probable cause to hold him on five counts of first-degree assault. In setting the high bail amount, the judge noted that the man had a warrant out for his arrest. He also has nine felony convictions in Washington state that include four car thefts, possession of stolen property, robbery and attempted burglary, according to the probable cause report. The case is still under investigation and has not been referred to the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office for a charging decision, spokesperson Casey McNerthney said Saturday. They expect to receive the case by Thursday, he said. Messages sent to the King County Department of Public Defense seeking comment were not immediately

returned Saturday afternoon. Four of the five victims were taken to Harborview Medical Center on Friday. One man who was in critical condition was upgraded to serious, while two others remain in serious condition in the Intensive Care Unit, Susan Gregg, spokesperson for the hospital, said Saturday. Another male patient was in satisfactory condition, she said. Police said they recovered two knives soiled with what appeared to be blood in the parking lot where the man was arrested. A third knife was lodged in a victim's back when he was taken to the hospital, court records said. Seattle police said they believe the man was also involved in at least four other stabbings in the same area on Thursday. He fit the descriptions of the suspect and the attacks were also random, like Friday's assaults. Police continue to investigate the case and more charges may be added, they said. The Thursday stabbings in Chinatown started when a 52-year-old woman was found with multiple stab wounds, police said. On Thursday afternoon, a 32-year-old man was found after being stabbed multiple times and at about 8 p.m., a 37-year-old man was stabbed multiple times in the back, police said.

Soldier with Yemen's exiled govt kills 2 Saudi troops, hurts another

PTI ■ DUBAI

A soldier for Yemen's exiled government opened fire on Saudi troops as they exercised in eastern Yemen, killing two of them and wounding another in a rare insider attack during the kingdom's nearly decadelong war there, officials said Saturday. The assault in eastern Hadramawt province comes as a yearlong cease-fire between Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Houthi rebels largely has held despite the militants' ongoing attacks against shipping in the Red Sea corridor. While the Houthis did not claim the attack, at least one Houthi official praised it as being "the beginning and an indication of a harsh future awaiting the invaders." Meanwhile, US warplanes carried out new strikes targeting Houthi positions that lasted into early Sunday morning, the American military said. The strikes come after the militants likely shot down yet-another American reconnaissance drone over the country. The attack on the Saudi troops took place Friday night in Seiyun, a city some 500 kilometers (310 miles) east of Sanaa. As troops worked out at a Saudi-led base there, the soldier opened fire, killing an officer and a noncommissioned officer, the state-run Saudi Press Agency said, citing a military statement.

"The Joint Forces Command underscores that this Lone Wolf" cowardly attack does not represent the honorable members of the Yemeni Ministry of Defense," the statement added. The dead and the other wounded Saudi soldier have been brought back to the kingdom, it added. Aidarous al-Zubaidi, the leader of Yemen's successorist Southern Transitional Council, identified the soldier who carried out the attack as belonging to the First Military Region, which is based out of Seiyun. Police in the area published pictures of the soldier, saying there was a 30-million-Yemeni-rial reward for information leading to the soldier's arrest. That's worth around \$15,000 on the black market. Authorities offered no motive for the attack. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, the militant group's Yemen branch, long has operated around Hadramawt. However, the group did not immediately claim the attack. A recent United Nations expert report has said that the al-Qaida group and the Houthis have begun to "coordinate operations directly with each other." The Houthis meanwhile did not claim the attack either. However, Houthi official Hamid Rizq praised the attack in a message on the social platform X, claiming it came from "the feeling of oppression" over Saudi troops being stationed in the area. "The heroic operation is the

beginning and an indication of a harsh future awaiting the invaders," Rizq wrote. Yemen has been mired in a decadelong war since the Houthis swept into Sanaa from their northern strongholds in September 2014. A Saudi-led coalition entered the war on behalf of Yemen's exiled government in 2015. The war further internationalized, with Iran backing the Houthis with weapons and support that cemented the conflict into a yearslong stalemate. The war has killed more than 150,000 people, including fighters and civilians, and created one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters, killing tens of thousands more. A cease-fire that expired in October 2022 largely has held in the time since, however, even as the Houthis have seized on the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip and Israel's invasion of Lebanon. On Saturday night, Houthi-run media reported U.S. airstrikes targeting areas around Sanaa. The airstrikes continued into Sunday morning and also included sites in Amran province just outside of the capital, the Houthis said. The rebels offered no immediate damage assessment from the strikes. The US military later told The Associated Press on Sunday it conducted airstrikes "on numerous Iran-backed Houthi weapons storage facilities within Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen."

Resignation of Valencia leader demanded for bungling flood response

AP ■ VALENCIA

Tens of thousands of Spaniards marched in the eastern city of Valencia on Saturday to demand the resignation of the regional president in charge of the emergency response to last week's catastrophic floods that left more than 200 dead and others missing. A group of protestors clashed with riot police in front of Valencia's city hall, where the protestors started their march to the seat of the regional government. Police used batons to beat them back. Regional leader Carlos Mazón is under immense pressure after his administration failed to issue flood alerts to citizens' cell phones until hours after the flooding started on the night of October 29. Many marchers held up homemade signs or chanted "Mazón Resign!" Others carried signs with messages like "You Killed Us!" Upon arrival at the regional government seat, some protesters slung mud on the building and left handprints of the muck on its facade. Earlier on Saturday, Mazón told regional broadcaster A Punt that "there will be time to hold officials accountable," but that now "is time to keep cleaning our streets, helping people and rebuilding." He said that he "respected" the march. Mazón,

of the conservative Popular Party, is also being criticized for what people perceive as the slow and chaotic response to the natural disaster. Thousands of volunteers were the first boots on the ground in many of the hardest-hit areas on Valencia's southern outskirts. It took days for officials to mobilize the thousands of police reinforcements and soldiers that the regional government asked central authorities to send in. In Spain, regional governments are charged with handling civil protection and that his administration didn't receive sufficient warnings from central authorities. But Spain's weather agency issued a red alert, the highest level of warning, for bad weather as early as 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday morning as the disaster loomed. Some communities were flooded by 6 p.m. It took until after 8 p.m. for Mazón's administration to send out alerts to people's cellphones. Mazón was with Spain's royals and Socialist prime minister when they were pelted with mud by enraged residents during their first visit to a devastated area last weekend.

Air India stands alone, five Indian full service carriers exited in 17 years

PTI ■ MUMBAI/ NEW DELHI

When Vistara folds up into the Air India Group on Monday, the number of full service carriers in the fast-growing Indian aviation space will come down to just one from five in a span of over 17 years.

Also, the merger that will see Vistara's 49 per cent owner Singapore Airlines holding 25.1 per cent stake in Air India post the merger will mark the sunset of another Indian airline jointly owned by an overseas carrier after the liberalisation of foreign direct investment norms.

In 2012, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh-led UPA government allowed foreign airlines to buy up to 49 per cent in a domestic carrier, which later resulted in the now defunct Jet Airways



securing 24 per cent stake from Gulf carrier Etihad besides the birth of AirAsia India and Vistara. Vistara is also the only full-service carrier to start operations in the last 10 years. Since the merger of full-service carrier (FSC) Indian Airlines with Air India in

2007, at least five FSCs dotted the Indian skies. As years passed by, Kingfisher and Air Sahara faded away while Vistara took flight in January 2015. Kingfisher went belly up in 2012 while Air Sahara, which was acquired by Jet Airways and renamed as JetLite, sank with Jet

Airways in 2019. FSC Jet Airways that flew for 25 years before getting grounded in April 2019 due to financial turbulence is set to be liquidated. From November 12, the enlarged Air India will remain the country's lone full-service player. Coming to Indian carriers with foreign ownership, the first was Jet Airways where Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways snapped up 24 per cent stake. Then came AirAsia India, 49 per cent owned by Malaysia's AirAsia and the rest was with Tatas followed by Vistara where Singapore Airlines holds 49 per cent stake and 51 per cent is with Tata Group. With rising air traffic and changing travel patterns, many no-frills airlines are dominating the skies worldwide and India's

dominant carrier is IndiGo. According to a senior airline official, the line differentiating a full service and a low-cost carrier is somewhat blurred. For instance, some of the budget airlines also offer business class seats. Among others, FSCs strive to provide more comfort to passengers during travel and the services, including meals, are included in the ticket price. Also, they mostly operate different types of aircraft and broadly, these airlines focus more on overall network profitability. In the case of low-cost carriers route-specific profitability, ancillary revenues and mostly single type of planes are among the key elements that help in ensuring cost-effective operations.

SEBI considers broadening unpublished price-sensitive information scope

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To enhance transparency in market disclosures, SEBI is looking to broaden the scope of Unpublished Price Sensitive Information (UPSI) by including proposed fundraising activities, restructuring plans, and one-time bank settlements. In its consultation paper, SEBI has proposed that only agreements, including shareholder, joint venture and family settlement, that affect the management and control of the firm and are known to the firm should be considered price-sensitive and included in the illustrative list of events under the definition of UPSI. Additionally, key developments in corporate insolvency proceedings, such as initiation or approval of resolution plans by the tribunal, should be disclosed as potentially price-sensitive. If a forensic audit is launched or concluded for issues like fund misappropriation or financial misstatements, it



should be disclosed as price-sensitive. The proposed changes to SEBI's definition of UPSI are aimed at increasing regulatory clarity and consistency. In the constitution paper, SEBI suggested including fundraising proposed to be undertaken in the definition of UPSI. Currently, the decision concerning fundraising proposed to be undertaken is not included in the definition at present. The regulator has proposed the inclusion of restructuring plans, one-time bank settlements and other significant financial restructurings as UPSI. SEBI has also proposed that

actions by regulatory or judicial bodies against a company or its key personnel if involving significant enforcement, fines, penalties, or other sanctions, should be considered price-sensitive and classified as UPSI. Among others, the regulator suggested that outcomes of major litigations or disputes that could affect a company's operations or finances, along with any major contracts or orders awarded to the company (or significant amendments or terminations) outside regular business activities, should be disclosed as UPSI due to their potential impact on financial performance. Further, the granting, withdrawal, or suspension of essential licenses or approvals should be disclosed, as such events could significantly affect company operations. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has sought public comments on the proposals by November 30.

India, a promising market for Sony's gaming business, says India MD Nayar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is emerging as a "good opportunity market" in the gaming business for the consumer electronic major Sony, its India Managing Director Sunil Nayar said. The company has reported "phenomenal growth" in the gaming business in FY24, with the robust performance of PlayStation 5 and its software peripherals. Sony India's PlayStation dominates the console operating gaming system market here with around 95 per cent market share and has almost doubled its revenue in FY 2023-24 from the segment. However, now, it expects a moderation in the growth rates because of the high base, Nayar said. "Now, the base is very high because we almost achieved the double business last year. So this year, we intend to have modest growth, but we are developing the gaming



business market in the country, including software development and peripherals etc," the Sony India MD told PTI. Sony India last week filed its annual returns to report over 50.1 per cent growth from its 'other business' segment at Rs 1,363.54 crore, which houses its gaming and B2B business. "This is largely led by the gaming business. It gave us a phenomenal growth. There is no doubt about it. PlayStation 5 and our software peripherals, everything did very well. So, India is now becoming a very good opportunity market for gaming for Sony... We have 95 per cent in the

market today as far as PS5 is concerned. We have a very strong brand here in the gaming business," Nayar said. Sony India's revenue from Consumer Audio and Visuals segment increased 15.7 per cent to Rs 6,300.20 crore in FY 2023-24 against Rs 5,445.73 crore a year ago. Its overall profit rose 22.18 per cent to Rs 167 crore, while revenue from operations surged 20.6 per cent to Rs 7,663.74 crore. Nayar said the over 20 per cent growth in the topline is because of the strategy of premiumisation on which it has been working for the last few years in all product zones, including TV and audio products. "This is the primary cause because of the sales growth because our average sales price has gone up," he said, adding that "now, we do not rely on selling entry-level or price point models".

Now, in India, everything is being upgraded in the market from content on OTT platforms to everything in the market, he said. "This is our ongoing journey for selling premium products in the country. So, this strategy, you can say philosophy, is working well for Sony. We have upgraded, and evolved the customer into the premium segments, especially in our television lineup, home theatres and cameras," said Nayar. Sony India, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Japan's tech major Sony Corporation, expects to surpass its historic Rs 11,000 crore revenue, which it recorded in FY15, in the coming years. On Sony India's ongoing business in the current fiscal, Nayar said all the categories are showing very positive momentum, especially television, sound bars, and home theatres.

Fraud detection system saves ₹2,500 crore in public assets: Jyotiraditya Scindia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The technical system deployed by the government is blocking 1.35 crore fraud calls daily and has helped save people's assets worth Rs 2,500 crore till date, Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia said. The minister, in an interview with PTI, said most of the spam calls originate from servers outside the country, and the systems have been able to block the majority of such fraudulent calls. "In terms of the number of marketing calls you get in your phone, the number of fraud calls that come in, we have put in place a full system to be able to tackle that. Our DoT fraud detection network has saved close to about Rs 2,500 crore of people's assets today, as we speak, through Sanchar Sathi and Chakshu," Scindia said. The systems have led to the disconnection of close to about 2.9 lakh phones and blocked close to about 1.8 million



headers that were used for sending out messages, he added. "Along with that, (there) was another vicarious method through which people would use servers outside India, which would masquerade themselves as a +91 number (Indian number). We have put into place software that stops these calls that are blocking an average of 1.35 crore such calls per day," the minister said. The government has put in new software where it is integrating law enforcement agencies as well as banks, he said, adding that "520 agencies have been onboarded". While charting out his priorities, Scindia said that rolling out of Atmanirbhar (self-reliant) BSNL 5G by May and 4G for all under the saturation scheme by April is among his

top priorities, along with notifying all rules left under the Telecommunications Act 2023 by December. He said that a plan to roll out 1 lakh base stations for BSNL 4G is underway, of which roll out of which 50,000 towers have been completed. "By April-May next year, we will roll out 1 lakh BTSs, which means we will have our own domestic publicly-owned company rolling out 4G. The move from 4G to 5G then, is only tweaking the core a little bit, as well as adding an additional BTS. By April-May next year, hopefully, some sites will become 5G enabled as well, within the BSNL system. So, that's the alacrity with which we are working. That's my first priority," Scindia said. The minister said his second priority is to ensure 4G saturation across the country. "We have close to about 37,000 villages that are left with connectivity on 4G in the country. A lot of them are in very distant areas. We are

looking at making sure that we have 100 per cent saturation on 4G by March-April, next year," he said. Scindia said that out of about 27,000 BTSs required, 10,000 have already been installed. The 4G saturation will provide coverage to roughly 1.6 crore population. The minister also said that after assuming office, he issued notification of the Telecom Act, passed in Parliament last November, and now he has to mandatorily issue all rules by December. "The first thing I did when I assumed office was I issued the notification of the Telecom Act. Why is that important? That's important because the minute you do that, then your 180-day counter starts, and within six months, mandatorily, you have to issue all the rules. So by the end of December, the total of those 31 rules, we have done almost about 14 or 15, and the balance we hope to have done by the end of December," he added.



India's coal import rises eight per cent in April to September

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's coal import rose by 7.8 per cent to 140.60 million tonne (MT) in the April-September period of the ongoing financial year. The country's coal import was 130.34 MT in the year-ago period, according to data compiled by B2B e-commerce company junction services ltd. Overall, coal import demand is likely to remain modest due to the healthy stock position and high volumes being offered through spot auctions in the domestic market, junction MD and CEO Vinaya Varma said. Coal import in September dropped by 10.09 per cent to 19.42 MT from 21.60 MT in the corresponding month of previous fiscal. Of the total imports in September, non-coking coal volume was 13.24 MT, against 14.88 MT in the year-ago month. Coking coal import stood at 3.39 MT, against 4.59 MT a

year ago. During the April-September period, non-coking coal import was at 91.92 MT, higher than 83.45 MT imported during the same period last year. Coking coal import was at 28.18 MT as against 29.44 MT. "There was a slight increase in non-coking coal import in September (over previous month), ahead of the festive season. However, coking coal imports fell, in line with the softness in steel demand and prices," Varma said. The country's domestic coal production rose 6 per cent to 453 MT in the April-September period of FY25, over 428 MT in the year-ago period. Coal minister G Kishan Reddy had recently said Coal India's priorities should be to ramp up production of coal and scale up supplies to reduce imports. Coal India Ltd accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal output.

Russian oil reaches Europe via India, making India biggest exporter of fuel to Europe: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's export of fuels like diesel to the European Union jumped 58 per cent in the first three quarters of 2024, with a bulk of them likely coming from refining discounted Russian oil, according to a monthly tracker report. The EU/G7 countries in December 2022 introduced a price cap and an embargo on the imports of Russian crude oil in a bid to cripple Kremlin's revenue and create a vacuum in its funding for the invasion of Ukraine. However, a lack of a policy on refined oil produced from Russian crude meant that countries not imposing sanctions could import large volumes of Russian crude, refine them into oil products

and legally export them to the price-cap coalition countries. India has become the second biggest buyer of Russian crude oil since the invasion, with purchases rising from less than one per cent of the total oil imported in the pre-Ukraine war period to almost 40 per cent of the country's total oil purchases. The rise was primarily because Russian crude oil was available at a discount to other internationally traded oil due to the price cap and the European nations shunning purchases from Moscow. Fuel exports were, however, at full price. "Capitalising on the refining loophole, India has now become the biggest exporter of oil products to the EU. In the first three quarters of 2024, exports to the EU from



the Jamnagar, Vadinar (in Gujarat) and new Mangalore refinery - which are increasingly reliant on Russian crude - saw a 58 per cent year-on-year rise further," the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) said its latest report. Europe typically imported an average of 1,54,000 barrels per day (bpd) of diesel and jet fuel from India before Russia's

invasion of Ukraine. This has almost doubled. While CREA did not give an absolute number for imports, the European think tank had in a previous report stated that Euro 8.5 billion of price cap coalition countries' imports of oil products in 13 months to December 2023 were made from Russian crude. These imports in 13 months were equivalent to 68 per cent

of the EU's annual commitment to aid Ukraine between 2024 and 2027. "In the 13 months since the oil price cap took effect (in December 2022), over one-third of India's exports of oil products to sanctioning countries was derived from Russian crude (EUR 6.16 billion or USD 6.65 billion)," the Finland-based CREA had said in the previous report. While there are no restrictions or sanctions on buying/using Russian crude oil and exporting fuels like diesel derived from it, the Group of Seven (G7) rich nations, the European Union and Australia - called the price cap coalition countries - first set a crude price cap of USD 60 per barrel starting December 5, 2022, and later on products like diesel to keep

the market supplied while limiting Moscow's revenue. CREA in the latest report said India, the world's third largest oil-consuming and importing nation, in October bought Euro 2 billion worth of crude oil from Russia, down from Euro 2.4 billion in the previous month. "China has bought 47 per cent of Russia's crude exports (in October), followed by India (37 per cent), the EU (6 per cent), and Turkey (6 per cent)," it said. "India was the second-largest buyer of Russian fossil fuels in October, contributing 19 per cent (EUR 2.6 billion) to Russia's monthly export earnings from its top five importers. An estimated 77 per cent of India's imports (valued at EUR 2 billion) comprised crude oil."

Mcap of 6 of top-10 most-valued firms erodes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of six of the top-10 most-valued firms eroded Rs 1,55,721.12 crore last week, with Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest laggard, in line with an overall weak trend in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark declined 237.8 points, or 0.29 per cent. While Reliance Industries, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, ITC, Hindustan Unilever and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) suffered erosion in their market valuation, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, Infosys, and the State Bank of India were the gainers. The valuation of Reliance Industries fell Rs 74,563.37 crore to Rs 17,37,556.68 crore. Bharti Airtel's valuation dropped Rs 26,274.75 crore to Rs 8,94,024.60 crore. The market valuation of ICICI Bank slumped Rs



22,254.79 crore to Rs 8,88,432.06 crore and that of ITC tanked Rs 15,449.47 crore to Rs 5,98,213.49 crore. LIC's market capitalisation (mcap) declined Rs 9,930.25 crore to Rs 5,78,579.16 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever went lower Rs 7,248.49 crore to Rs 5,89,160.01 crore. However, the valuation of TCS jumped Rs 57,744.68 crore to Rs 14,99,697.28 crore. The mcap of Infosys soared

Rs 28,838.95 crore to Rs 7,60,281.13 crore and that of State Bank of India climbed Rs 19,812.65 crore to Rs 7,52,568.58 crore. HDFC Bank added Rs 14,678.09 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 13,40,754.74 crore. Reliance Industries remained the country's most-valued firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, ITC, Hindustan Unilever, and LIC.

Exploration, monetisation of natural gas will benefit Northeast: Indian Gas Exchange Official

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Exploration and monetisation of natural gas deposits in the northeastern region can help cut down its import, while also boosting the local economy and providing more trade opportunities, a top official of the Indian Gas Exchange (IGX) said. Rajesh K Mediratta, Managing Director and CEO of IGX, the country's first automated national level gas exchange, maintained that the region can supply the surplus gas not only to other parts of the country, but also to neighbouring Bangladesh and earn significant revenue. "The Northeast has tremendous potential in the production of natural gas. As the Northeast Gas Grid is likely to become operational by 2026, the deposit of 6 million MMSCMD of natural gas can be monetised by the existing producers," Mediratta said.



"This will add to the country's energy security as IGX will help gas producers sell the surplus gas to the other regions," he said, while speaking at a seminar on 'Gas Market Development for North East' here on Friday. Highlighting the potential of natural gas from the Northeast in support to India's energy security, the official said, "India is currently importing about 50 per cent of its consumption, around 100 MMSCMD to meet the total demand of 200 MMSCMD. With the effective gas pipelines in the region, the existing petroleum companies can unearth 6 MMSCMD. This will save approximately Rs 14,000 crores, apart from allowing backward linkages in the local economy with job

and trade opportunities, he maintained. "The access to gas network also opens up doors to newer industries such as ceramic and glass which run exclusively on natural gas. Given the natural resources, these industries are expected to thrive in the region," Mediratta added. The rejuvenated gas distribution network with the Northeast Gas Grid will also improve supply to tea estates, allowing them to switch back to natural gas from the traditional energy sources like coal, he claimed. He also highlighted that natural gas is a cheaper and cleaner option as compared to LPG, which makes case for households to switch to gas. On the market potential for export of natural gas from the region, Mediratta said, "Bangladesh has tremendous market potential as the country has been using natural gas. The natural gas producers can definitely look at this scope with potential," he added.



MEDITATION

THE PATH TO BETTER SLEEP AND DAILY WELLNESS

Practicing meditation not only improves health but also life as a whole, leading to a balanced and fulfilling life, writes P N ARORA

In today's fast-paced world, many people struggle with stress, anxiety, and sleep disturbances. As a result, meditation has gained popularity as a powerful tool for improving the quality of life. Not only does meditation help in calming the mind, but it also promotes better sleep.

Meditation is a practice that encourages focused attention and mindfulness, leading to a deep state of relaxation. Practising regularly can significantly lower cortisol levels, our body's primary stress hormone. High cortisol levels are often associated with sleep problems. With mindful eating, regular exercise, and meditation, one may find it easier to fall asleep.

Research indicates that meditation can improve sleep quality. A study found that meditation can reduce insomnia symptoms and improve sleep quality in older adults. By cultivating awareness of thoughts and emotions, meditation allows individuals to manage racing thoughts that often disrupt sleep. Many meditation practices help significantly improve the quality of sleep. One of these techniques involves focusing on the present and letting go of the intruding thoughts by allowing one to focus on the sensations of breathing. Further, guided imagery helps by equipping the practitioners with the ability to

visualise soothing scenes, often guided through a meditation guide, which helps soothe the mind and prepare it for rest. The body scan technique also helps by checking different parts of the body to identify stress and release tension. This helps facilitate both physical relaxation and mental calmness. Lastly, loving-kindness meditation cultivates feelings of love and compassion, improving emotional well-being and reducing stress, making it easier to drift into a peaceful slumber. Together, these techniques offer powerful tools for anyone seeking to improve their sleep through mindful practices.

Meditation has a host of benefits far beyond just sleep improvement. It decreases stress and anxiety because it gives one the feeling of calmness within, reducing anxiety levels and building the strength to stand up again after every fall that comes with life's obstacles. Additionally, mindfulness practices improve concentration and attention significantly, which positively relates to improved cognitive functions and productivity at work throughout the day. This sensitivity increases emotional balance and propels the practice of awareness toward self-consciousness. It also makes one respond much better to everyday

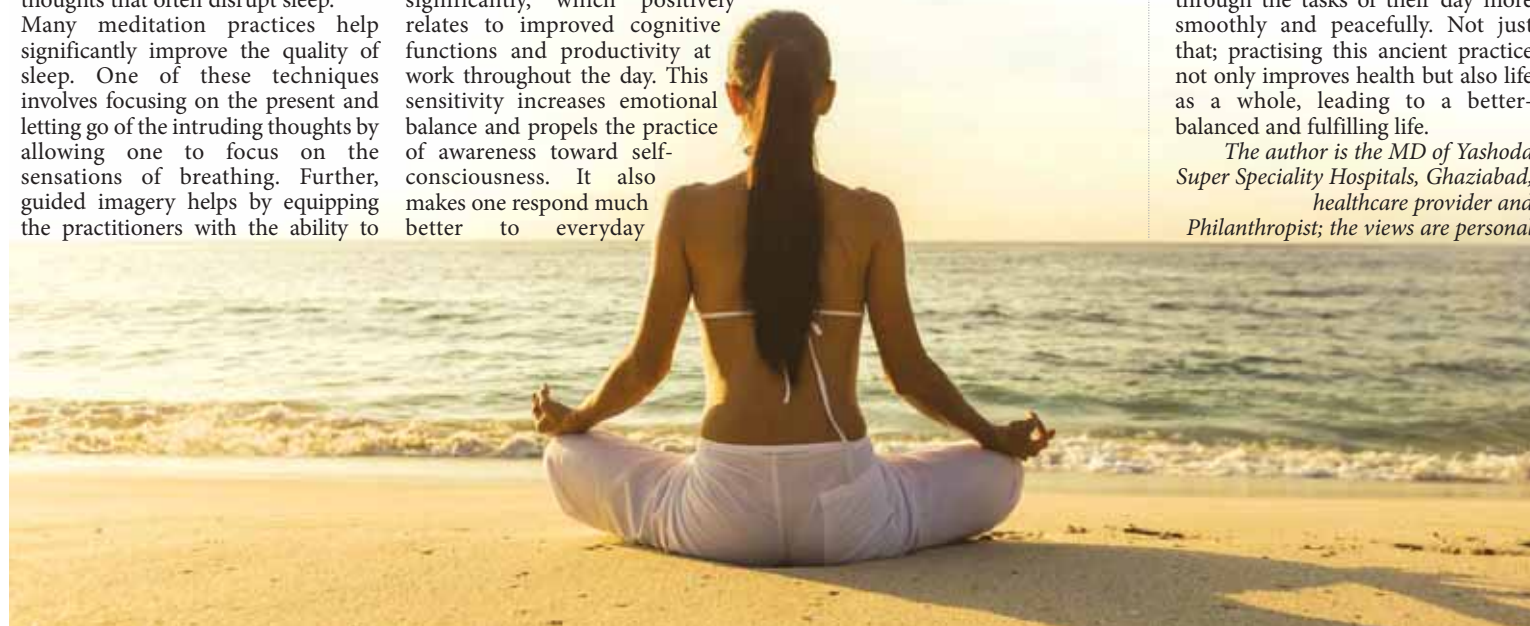


MEDITATION IS A PRACTICE THAT ENCOURAGES FOCUSED ATTENTION AND MINDFULNESS, LEADING TO A DEEP STATE OF RELAXATION. PRACTISING REGULARLY CAN SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER CORTISOL LEVELS, OUR BODY'S PRIMARY STRESS HORMONE

situations through conscious thinking.

The impact of meditation on relationships is that it makes it possible to have a compassionate understanding towards others; many even describe that the relationships they maintain with other people become far more profound and richer after meditation practice begins. It is also reported on the physical level by linking the reduction in stress levels with many kinds of health improvements, including lowering blood pressure, better function of the immune systems, and even lowering chronic pain to attain good physical health. Adding meditation into activities would surely bring some much-needed transformation from mental to even physiological status. Meditation is a great tool to sleep better and have more holistic wellness. By reducing stress levels, meditation creates a peaceful mental condition that allows for rejuvenation and improves the everyday flow of life, in which people can navigate through the tasks of their day more smoothly and peacefully. Not just that; practising this ancient practice not only improves health but also life as a whole, leading to a better-balanced and fulfilling life.

The author is the MD of Yashoda Super Speciality Hospitals, Ghaziabad, healthcare provider and Philanthropist; the views are personal



INDULGE IN GUILT FREE SWEET TREATS

TEAM VIVA

The intake of sweets in the festive season and even after is inevitable. However, for those with diabetes or managing their diabetes, it can feel like a challenge. But here's the good news: you don't have to give up dessert. It's about making mindful choices—picking better options and exploring new diabetes-friendly ingredients. By doing so, you keep your blood sugar levels in check and discover a world of healthier, delicious cuisines to enjoy.

MANAGING DIABETES

It's not just sugar intake that impacts your blood sugar levels. It's important to manage your overall carbohydrate intake as well. Carbohydrates, including sugars, complex carbs, and fiber can significantly affect blood sugar levels. Desserts often contain high levels of simple sugars such as dextrose, fructose, and glucose, which can cause blood sugar spikes. However, there's more to consider than just avoiding sugar.

EAT YOUR WAY TO BETTER HEALTH

Understanding *glycaemic index* (GI) of foods helps with your food choices. The GI index is a scoring system for foods that tells you how much a food will spike your sugar level. So, the lower the GI index, the healthier the food. Examples of foods with a high GI index that you should eat occasionally and in moderation are simple carbs like ice creams, chocolates, refined flours, sweets etc. These major sources of glucose can do the most harm to your sugar balance.

"Managing diabetes isn't about depriving yourself—it's about making smart, informed choices," said Dr Irfan Shaikh, Associate Medical Director, Abbott's Nutrition business. He further added that the key to managing blood sugar is finding the right nutrient balance that lowers the glycemic index (GI) of your meals. By thoughtfully combining ingredients in the right proportions, you can control the GI of your meals and manage your glucose levels more effectively.

It's good to include plenty of high fibre (bajra, jowar and ragi), whole-wheat bread, fruits, vegetables and whole legumes (daals). These are must-haves for diabetics, as they balance out your simple carbohydrate intake and help you maintain a normal blood sugar level.

Dr Rajeev Bansal, MD Medicine, Consultant & director East Delhi cardiac & diabetes centre, Krishna Nagar opines, "Good nutrition is significant to managing diabetes. Diabetes-specific nutrition (DSN) helps regulate blood sugar and provides essential nutrients at times, lacking in daily meals. Incorporating specialised nutrition drinks can fill critical gaps, ensuring sustained energy and better post-meal glucose control, allowing you to enjoy the festivities without worrying about blood sugar spikes."

SATISFY YOUR SWEET TOOTH SMARTLY

Diabetes-Specific Nutrition offers a way for diabetics to enjoy sweets without the guilt. DSN products are formulated to be low in glycemic impact, making them ideal for



replacing high-carb, sugar-laden desserts. Here are some tips for incorporating DSN and other diabetes-friendly ingredients into your festive treats:

DSN shakes: Instead of sugary milkshakes or smoothies, use a DSN shake mix as a base and blend in diabetes-friendly fruits like berries or figs

Sugar substitutes: Swap out refined sugar for alternatives like jaggery or dates based sweeteners in moderate amounts

Homemade sweets: When making traditional sweets, replace high-carb ingredients with DSN powder or low-GI flours such as almond or oat flour

Low-GI foods: Replace high-GI foods like basmati rice with brown rice and swap out regular wheat chapati for options like ragi, bajra or jowar bhakri to keep your meals diabetes-friendly

DIABETES-FRIENDLY DESSERT
Transforming popular festive desserts into diabetes-friendly versions is easier than you think. By incorporating Diabetes-Specific Nutrition (DSN) products, and low-glycemic ingredients, you can keep the festive spirit alive without affecting your blood sugar control.

Gajar Halwa: Gently simmer grated carrots in milk infused with fragrant cardamom and roasted almonds. Cook until the liquid evaporates, leaving behind a rich, creamy mixture. Garnish with a final sprinkling of toasted almonds for that perfect nutty crunch

Shir Sewain: Toast golden semia in ghee, then simmer in milk and khoya until it thickens. Add a touch of saffron for color and flavor, and top with nuts for the perfect festive indulgence

Moong Dal Paysam: Slow-cook moong dal and rice together to create a creamy base. Enhance with ghee for richness, and finish with a generous mix of toasted nuts and warm milk for a comforting and nutrient-packed treat

Nuts Shrikhand: Transform thickened curd into a cooling treat by mixing in cardamom and a medley of almonds and pistachios. Serve chilled for a nutty, refreshing delight

Enjoying sweets that make you happy doesn't have to come at the cost of your health. By making mindful choices, managing your carbohydrate intake, and incorporating Diabetes-Specific Nutrition, you can indulge in sweet treats without guilt.

YOGA FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

As individuals age, reduced flexibility impacts daily life. So, while introducing yoga to seniors, it's essential to select gentle postures

BY JYOTI SINGH

Ageing gracefully is a common aspiration, and yoga offers senior citizens a holistic approach to wellness that supports both physical and mental health. Here are some insights on how yoga can profoundly benefit older adults. With gentle, adaptable practices, *yoga* is an ideal exercise form for seniors, focusing on mobility, flexibility, strength, and mental tranquility.

ESSENTIALITY FOR SENIORS

As individuals age, natural changes like reduced flexibility, weaker muscles, and increased risk of chronic ailments can impact daily living. Yoga provides an effective way to address these age-related challenges. For seniors, yoga offers a well-rounded path to stay active and maintain mobility.

Physical and Mental Benefits:

Yoga helps maintain flexibility, strength, and balance, which are

crucial for older adults. Practising yoga supports joint health and relieves stiffness. With regular practice, seniors can improve balance and coordination, significantly lowering their fall risk. Additionally, yoga's controlled breathing and stretching exercises benefit cardiovascular health, helping reduce blood pressure and manage cholesterol levels.

Mental Well-being: Yoga is a powerful stress reliever, fostering emotional balance and mental clarity. Many seniors face feelings of loneliness or anxiety, particularly those living independently. Mindfulness and breathing exercises in yoga calm the mind, helping manage stress. The deep breathing in yoga stimulates the nervous system, promoting relaxation and enhancing mood.

POSES FOR SENIORS

When introducing yoga to seniors, it's essential to select gentle, accessible postures. Some beginner-friendly poses that the seniors can safely practice at home to enhance flexibility, strength, and balance.

TADASANA (MOUNTAIN POSE)

This foundational standing posture helps improve balance and posture.



Seniors can stand with feet together, stretching arms upward, taking slow, deep breaths. *Tadasana* strengthens leg muscles and increases core engagement, supporting stability.

VRIKSHASANA (TREE POSE)

A great pose for balance, *Vrikshasana* improves leg strength and stability. By placing one foot on the opposite thigh and balancing with arms lifted, seniors can focus on coordination. Practising

near a wall can offer additional support.

ANULOM VILOM (ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING)

Anulom Vilom is a simple yet powerful breathing exercise that promotes mental clarity and emotional stability. Seniors can sit comfortably, close one nostril with a finger, inhale through the open nostril, and then alternate. *Anulom Vilom* helps balance the mind,

reduces stress, and improves lung function making it especially beneficial for seniors seeking calm and focus.

BHUJANGASANA (COBRA POSE)

Ideal for spinal flexibility and relieving back tension, *Bhujangasana* involves lying on the stomach and gently lifting the chest. This pose opens the chest and improves breathing, supporting respiratory health.

SHAVASANA (CORPSE POSE)

A restorative pose, *Shavasana* allows for deep relaxation and mindfulness. Seniors lie flat on their back with arms at their sides, focusing on breathing deeply. Ending each session with *Shavasana* is recommended to bring a sense of calm.

In conclusion, yoga offers a gentle yet powerful approach to support seniors in maintaining a healthy, balanced lifestyle.

With expert guidance from practitioners, older adults can experience the transformative benefits of yoga, embracing it as a tool for both strength and serenity.

The author is the, Founder and CEO of Sparsh Yog; the views are personal

Indian women's hockey team resets, targets World Cup 2026, Olympics 2028

PTI ■ RAJGIR (BIHAR)

Indian women's hockey team has overcome recent setbacks and is set to start a new journey with World Cup and Olympics in mind, chief coach Harendra Singh asserted on Sunday, saying that the performance in Asian Champions Trophy will serve as base for future. The Indian women's team has endured a very rough and long patch since its historic fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Games. It could not qualify for the Paris Olympics and lost 13 of the 16 FIH Pro League matches. Coach Harendra said his team has worked hard to shrug off the lean run and is preparing for a good show at the 2026 World Cup in Netherlands and the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. "This tournament is a base for our future planning, ACT as on our calendar, what we want to achieve in terms of results. It will be start of journey for mission 2026 World Cup and 2028 Olympics," Harendra said ahead of India's ACT tournament-opener against

Malaysia on Monday. "We have overcome all the setbacks, worked on our mistakes. Everyone realised their role and know their role and understands that. ACT is one of the biggest platforms for the girls to showcase their skill and excel and show that the team is on the right path." Harendra reiterated that fitness is an area which impacted the women's team adversely. "Whatever has happened in the Pro League is a past, we can't keep crying on that. Yes, we know we lost 13 games but there are reasons behind. The reasons are not technical, but tactical, it's about fitness and that's why I took them to Indian Naval Academy. "I am looking at the results, I am looking at the progress they are making day after day," he said. Harendra said together with fitness, mental aspect of the game is also very important. "Modern hockey doesn't compromise on fitness, if you slightly stray you are going to pay the price. Once you are fit you are mentally strong because you know if you lose



the ball you know you have said. the past, that is history for present and the present is Champions Trophy to defend the gas to regain the ball," he "I am not willing to look at me. Always live in the that we have Asian which can get the entire

country out of that setback." "Deepika and Manisha Chauhan I am working their dragflicks and I am confident about them. I am confident they will deliver." The coach said he is pinning his eyes on young dragflickers Deepika and Manisha Chauhan to deliver the goods in the tournament. "Deepika and Manisha Chauhan, I am working their dragflicks and I am confident about them. I am confident they will deliver," Harendra said. India captain Salima Tete said Olympic silver medallist China is the biggest threat in their title defence. "China is the biggest threat for us but we are not underestimating any side. Every team can upset another on the given day," she said. Salima said leading the side at such a young age of 22 is definitely a challenge but she is up for it. "It's a challenge for me and I accept that, very few people get that honour. But my focus is on my own performance which will definitely motivate others," she said.

Palak-Amit pair strikes air pistol mixed team gold in World University Championship

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The air pistol mixed team of Palak Gulia and Amit Sharma struck gold with a commanding performance against their compatriots as India won five medals, including three silver, on day 2 of the World University Shooting Championship here on Sunday. The duo of Palak and Amit defeated the pair of Sainyam and Samrat Rana 16-12 as India grabbed the top-two podium spots in the event at the Karni Singh Range. The Hungarian pair of Sara Rahel Fabian and Redcesi Mate took the bronze defeating Chinese-Taipei 16-12. Earlier, in the qualification round, Sainyam (289) and Samrat (290) had emerged toppers with an aggregate score of 579, while Palak (285) and



Amit (293) were placed second with a combined score of 578. In women's trap, Neeru and Kirti Gupta clinched silver and bronze respectively shooting 43 and 32

out of 125, while Neeru entered the six-shooter final with a score of 115. Olympian and winner of three gold medals at the 2021 World University Games in China, Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar added another silver to India's tally in 50m rifle 3-positions with a score of 458.2 in the final. Czech Republic's Jiri Privratsky secured the gold medal with a score of 462.9. Aishwary, who could not make an impact at the Paris Olympics, earlier shot a superb 592 in the qualification to be placed third going into the eight-shooter final. As many as 220 shooters from across 23 countries are competing in the championship. The event is being hosted by Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies.



McSweeney to open, Inglis also handed maiden Test call up for BGT opener

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Uncapped Nathan McSweeney won the race to open the batting alongside Usman Khawaja in the first Test against India while Australia also handed a maiden Test call up to Josh Inglis on Sunday. These two are the new faces in an otherwise expected 13-member squad announced by Cricket Australia just for the series opener starting in Perth on November 22. The South Australian had emerged as a strong contender for the opener's spot, earning backing from the likes of David Warner and Ricky Ponting. He has been picked ahead of specialist openers Marcus Harris, Cameron Bancroft and Sam Konstas for the spot. "We are just really thrilled with Nathan's game. I think over the last 12 to 15 months, we have seen a player whose growth is on a great trajectory," Chairman of selectors George Bailey said. "He is a very organised, composed player at the crease and he's got a game that will really suit Test cricket. He can probably speak more to that but I don't think it's a huge adjustment to go from three

to opening," Bailey said. "I think in the 15 or so games that he's been batting three for South Australia, he's been in before the 10th over about 20 times, so he's had plenty of experience. And as I said, his game and the way he plays, I don't think the adjustment will be too much." The 25-year-old has been rewarded for his consistent performances in the Sheffield Shield over the past couple of years, as well as his role as captain and batter during the recently concluded A tour matches against India. "Nathan has displayed the attributes we believe will equip him well for Test cricket along with a strong recent record in domestic cricket." "His performances for South Australia and Australia A weighed in his favour and supports our view he is ready for the opportunity at Test level." Inglis, whose family emigrated to Perth from Leeds at the age of 14, has been named as backup keeper to Alex Carey. The in-form wicketkeeper batter, who is leading Australia for the first time in the third ODI against Pakistan, has also been rewarded for a fine domestic

season that included two hundreds in the Sheffield Shield. "Similarly, Josh has been in great touch in the Sheffield Shield competition and deserves his place in his first Test squad," Bailey added. The pace unit will be led by skipper Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood and Scot Boland takes up the reserve quick's spot, while Nathan Lyon is the lone specialist spin option. Australia squad for 1st Test: Pat Cummins (capt), Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Marsh, Nathan McSweeney, Steven Smith, and Mitchell Starc. ANOTHER BAD INJURY A tearful Ilias Akhometiev also had to be taken off on a stretcher after he hurt his right leg following his opening goal in Villarreal's 3-0 win over Alaves. Villarreal, which is in the northern part of the Valencia region, honored the flood victims by having players from both teams wear T-shirts saying "Stay Strong Valencia" before kickoff.

Former top polo player HS Sodhi dies

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leading former Indian polo player and Arjuna Awardee Harinder Singh Sodhi, who during his peak achieved a handicap of plus-five, has died due to age-related illnesses. He was 86 and is survived by his wife and two daughters. Popular in polo circles as 'Billy' Sodhi, he died here late on Saturday. Sodhi played polo alongside the likes of Hanut Singh, Sawai Man Singh (Maharaja of Jaipur) and later with his son Bhawani Singh. His younger brother, renowned polo player Ravinder Singh Sodhi, is also an Arjuna Award recipient. Harinder was the manager of the Indian equestrian team during the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

Coco Gauff wins WTA Finals for the first time by rallying to beat Zheng Qinwen

AP ■ RIYADH

Coco Gauff won the WTA Finals for the first time by rallying to beat Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (2) in the final. The 20-year-old American came from 2-0 and 5-3 down in the final set and was two points from defeat at one stage. Yet she took the set to a tiebreaker and won the first six points. Zheng threatened a comeback but Gauff took the victory off her third match point with a forehand winner as she came into the net. She is the first American to win the Finals since Serena Williams in 2014, and received \$4.8 million in prize money. She also is the youngest player to win it since Maria Sharapova in 2004, the year Gauff was born. Gauff beat the world's top two



players - Aryna Sabalenka and Iga Swiatek - on her run to the final at the season-ending event in Riyadh. She felt vindicated after that and appeared to take a swipe at observers who wrote her off. "I just love to say I'm right. Specifically today, I got comments about how I was going to lose badly, so I was just like, 'OK, we'll see,'" Gauff explained. "It's honestly just

couple of important points," Zheng said. "The match was very close." Gauff edged the three-hour final which included 26 break points. Gauff also won their only previous meeting, in the Rome quarterfinals on clay in May. Gauff beat Sabalenka at age 19 in last year's U.S. Open final to win her only major in singles to date. She teamed with Katerina Siniakova to win the French Open doubles this year. In the WTA doubles final, Gabriela Dabrowski of Canada and Erin Routliffe of New Zealand beat Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic and Taylor Townsend of the United States 7-5, 6-3. They are the first players from Canada and New Zealand to win the doubles title.

Messi and Inter Miami ousted from MLS playoffs by Atlanta United

AP ■ FORT LAUDERDALE (US)

There will be no MLS Cup for Lionel Messi and Inter Miami this year. Atlanta United saw to that with a massive upset, sending the game's most decorated player and biggest-spending team home earlier than anyone imagined. Jamal Thiare scored twice, Bartosz Slisz's header in the 76th minute was the winner, and Atlanta United stunned Inter Miami 3-2 on Saturday night to win their best-of-three first round MLS Cup playoff series in three games. Two free kicks by Messi in the final minutes hit the wall of Atlanta defenders, and time eventually ran out. Messi's header - yes, header - in the 65th minute tied the match at

2-2, but the hosts never reclaimed the lead and Brad Guzan stopped almost everything that came his way in the Atlanta net to seal the upset. It was the fifth win-or-lose victory for Atlanta United this season - starting with two must-win matches to keep hope alive at the end of the regular season against the New York Red Bulls and Orlando City, then a wild-card match at Montreal, Game 2 of this series at home and then Saturday's stunner. And the East is suddenly wide open. Ninth-seeded Atlanta United will play No. 4 Orlando City in the Eastern Conference semifinal, while sixth-seeded New York City FC will face the seventh-seeded New York



Red Bulls in the other East semifinal. No. 2 Columbus was already gone. No. 3 Cincinnati was ousted Saturday. And then came the biggest surprise of all - No. 1 Inter Miami's season is over.

The team with the best record won the MLS Cup four times in the league's first seven seasons. In the 22 seasons since, the top overall seed has gone on to win the title only four more times. And on paper, there may never have been a bigger upset than this one - a No. 9 seed vs. A No. 1 seed, and not just that, a No. 1 seed with Messi in the lineup. Messi's \$20,446,667 in total compensation from Inter Miami this season was about \$5 million more than the entire Atlanta payroll, and

Inter Miami spent a record \$41.7 million on payroll this season. It got Inter Miami the Supporters' Shield, the best regular-season record in MLS history and an invitation to next year's Club World Cup, which came as no surprise. But it didn't even get the club into Round 2 of the playoffs, which will be remembered as a massive flop. And Atlanta fully believed it was going to pull this off. For whatever reason, Atlanta was a matchup nightmare for Inter Miami this season. It beat Inter Miami three times, all of them with Messi in the lineup; every other MLS team combined to get three wins over Inter Miami. A five-minute, three-goal barrage in the first half set the

tone. Inter Miami opened the scoring and Atlanta United punched right back - twice. Thiare was denied by the goalkeeper 14 minutes into the contest, when his deflection of a flick into the box narrowly missed opening the scoring. And Inter Miami grabbed a 1-0 lead about two minutes later - Messi was stopped by a diving Guzan, but Diego Gomez was there to lift the rebound into the net from a tight angle near the right post. The lead didn't last long. Thiare saw to that. He took a pass and was completely unmarked, firing into the upper right corner to beat Inter Miami goalkeeper Drake Callender - who had no chance - to tie the match in the 19th minute. And not even two minutes later,

Alexey Miranchuk tapped a pass to Thiare who went over Callender for a 2-1 Atlanta lead. Just like that, the best team in MLS regular-season history - and the best player in the sport's history - was in big, big trouble. Inter Miami thought it tied the match in the 25th minute, only for Gomez to be called offside. And the hosts argued wildly for a penalty kick later in the half, arguing that there was a handball in the box (replay suggested they had a case), but they still went into the half down 2-1. Messi tied it, one last hurrah on the season. But it ended about a half-hour later, leaving the Inter Miami side in stunned disbelief.

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