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InSIDE

**SPORTS 11**  
DEEPIKA'S BRACE HANDS  
INDIA 3-2 WIN OVER  
SOUTH KOREA



## Polls on platter, all eyes on Wayanad



Women from the tribal community give a traditional welcome to a polling official before he leaves for his allotted polling station on the eve of the 1st phase of Jharkhand Assembly elections, in Ranchi, Tuesday

Bypolls are being held due to death of the representatives. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is making her electoral debut from Wayanad vacated by her sibling Rahul Gandhi who also won from the Rae Bareilly parliamentary constituency. Voting will be held in seven seats in Rajasthan, six in West Bengal, five in Assam, four seats in Bihar, three in Karnataka, two seats in Madhya Pradesh, and one seat each in Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Kerala and Meghalaya. Votes will be counted on November 23.

Though polling was also scheduled for two seats in Sikkim, Soreng-Chakung and Namchi-Singhithang, Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) nominees Aditya Golay and Satish Chandra Rai have already been declared unopposed after their rivals withdrew from the race.

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/RANCHI/WAYANAD**

polls and bypolls is scheduled on November 20 which will see second phase of Jharkhand, single phase Maharashtra and several bypoll Assembly pockets including that in Uttar Pradesh. Counting will be held on November 23, as per the Election Commission dateline. Though these by-elections are not going to have any bearing on the governments, they are seen as a big test for the Congress and the INDIA Bloc which failed to put up a united show in the recent Haryana Assembly polls. Most of these seats fell vacant after the sitting MLAs contested the Lok Sabha elections and won while in some constituencies, the

Byouyed by the success of Assembly elections in Haryana right after the Lok Sabha polls, a high voltage campaign led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, several Union Ministers and Chief Ministers has set the tone and tenor of the first phase of Assembly elections in Jharkhand, and bypolls in 31 seats spread across 10 states, and the most watched Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency, which will be held on Wednesday amidst tight security arrangements. The second phase of Assembly



## ED raids multiple locations in Jharkhand, WB

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RANCHI**

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday raided multiple locations in poll-bound Jharkhand apart from West Bengal in a money laundering investigation linked to alleged illegal infiltration of Bangladeshi nationals, official sources said. A total of 17 places are being covered in the two neighbouring states by the Ranchi office of the federal probe agency, a day before the first phase of polling in Jharkhand.

Visuals of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel positioned outside a hotel located on Bariatu Road in Ranchi and a resort in the city were captured by press teams as ED teams scoured for documents, ledger entries and financial records inside. The ED in September filed a case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to probe an instance of alleged infiltration and trafficking of some Bangladeshi women into Jharkhand leading to the generation of alleged slush funds.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders have accused the State Government of aiding such infiltration leading to the altering of the demographic landscape of the tribal-dominated areas of Santal Pargana and Kolhan regions during the recent poll campaign. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday accused the ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led coalition of converting Jharkhand into a 'dharma-shala' for Rohingyas and Bangladeshi infiltrators.

Continued on page 8

Continued on page 8

## Overaged vehicles choking NCR

One crore end-of-life cars are still running on Delhi's roads

**RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI**

As there is no letup in worsening air pollution in Delhi and its neighbouring region as the air quality index here remains in the 'very poor' category for the past 13 days, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) directed to launch actions to remove highly polluting end-of-life (EoL) vehicles (petrol vehicles older than 15 years and diesel vehicles older than 10 years) still reported to be plying in Delhi.

The National Capital Region (NCR) still has over one 1.06 Crore 'overage' vehicles (End of Life (EoL) running on the roads illegally and adding to the pollution. Of them, only 26,064 vehicles have been seized in 2023 and 6011 till September 2024.

In Delhi, the transport sector is the most significant contributor at 15.496 per cent, as per the Decision Support System data by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM). The PM2.5 concentration is currently 40.4 times the World Health Organization (WHO) annual PM2.5 guideline value.

Data shows there are 60,14,493 such vehicles in Delhi. Of them, only 24,706 have been impounded so far. A survey by the Delhi government in October estimates there are 15,00,000-2,00,000 EoL vehicles still on roads. An estimated 1.1 million vehicles enter and exit Delhi daily, further worsening the air quality. The traffic congestion caused by this vehicle influx also intensifies pollution, particularly nitrogen oxides (NOx), which account for 81 per cent of NOx pollution in Delhi. Data shows that during peak traffic hours (5 pm - 9 pm), when average traffic speed drops to 15 km/h, NO2 levels are 2.3 times higher than noon levels (12 pm - 4 pm) when traffic speed averages 21 km/h.



Photo: Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

These congestion-related emissions worsen air quality, especially during winter when inversion layers trap pollutants close to the ground. According to the Ministry of Road and Transport, Haryana has over 27.50 lakh while Uttar Pradesh has over 12.38 lakh such vehicles. Rajasthan has 6.06 lakh such vehicles. Transport department Officials said that there are a large number of EoL vehicles plying on the roads, causing traffic snarls here. In an order to Delhi, the Commission has directed that EoL vehicles should be denied fuel at petrol pumps and more importantly, immediate legal action should be taken against such vehicles, including impounding and further disposal in accordance with RVSF Rules, 2021 and other extant policies of the respective State Governments and the GNCT Delhi.

"As a deterrent measure, all such EoL vehicles are identified through the Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera systems at petrol pumps. Delhi has piloted one such innovative and effective solution which envisages Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera systems which are in the process of being installed at all 500+

fueling stations in the capital city." "These cameras, besides capturing and displaying the registration details of all the vehicles that enter the premises of the fueling station, also have a provision of integration with VAHAN database and thus the status of "EoL" vehicles or vehicles without valid Pollution Under Control Certificate "PUC" can be readily captured by the system. The system further has a provision for an audio message which is relayed in respect of such non-compliant vehicles entering the premises of the fueling station," it said.

"In view of the high polluting nature of EoL vehicles and considering that such a large fleet, while de-registered, is still reported to be plying, NCR States / GNCT of Delhi, there is an urgent need to launch / intensify drives against such vehicles. While much more intensified "on-road" drives should be taken up to guard against such overage vehicles plying on roads or parked in public spaces, suitable technological interventions and intelligent solutions also need to be employed towards identification / detection of such EoL vehicles still running in the NCR," it said.

Continued on page 8



## Canada temple cancels event amid protest threats

**PTI ■ OTTAWA**

The Brampton Triveni temple in Canada has cancelled a consular event after the Canadian police warned them of an "extremely high and imminent" threat level of violent protests.

The Life Certificate event, organised by the Consulate General of India, Toronto, was scheduled for November 17 at the temple premises. It was part of the consulate's many camps for issuing Life Certificates for pension purposes. On Monday, the temple authorities said the event was cancelled due to "official intelligence from Peel Regional Police, stating that there is an Extremely High and Imminent Threat Level of violent protests".

"...We must make the appropriate decision to cancel to ensure the safety of Brampton Triveni Mandir devotees, community visitors, and the general public," the temple authorities said in a statement. "We are deeply saddened that Canadians now feel unsafe coming to Hindu Temples in Canada," it added.

Temple authorities called on Peel Police to address the threats being circulated against the temple and provide security guarantees to the Canadian Hindu community and the general public.

The cancellation came almost a week after protestors carrying Khalistani flags clashed with devotees at a Hindu Sabha temple and disrupted an event co-organised by the temple authorities and the Indian Consulate at Brampton. Last week, the Consulate General of India in Toronto said it was cancelling some of its scheduled consular camps after the Canadian security authorities conveyed their inability to provide minimum security protection to its organisers.

After the protests at the Hindu Sabha temple in Brampton on November 3, the Ministry of External Affairs said that New Delhi remains "deeply concerned" about the safety and security of Indian nationals in Canada. India condemned the attack with an expectation that those indulging in violence "will be prosecuted".

The relations between India and Canada have come under severe strain following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in Khalistan extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar's killing. New Delhi rejected Trudeau's charges as "absurd." Nijjar, a Canadian citizen, was designated a terrorist by India.

## Bodies of two Meitei men recovered

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ IMPHAL**

Bodies of two elderly men belonging to the Meitei community were recovered on Tuesday morning in Manipur's Jiribam district where a gunfight between suspected militants and security forces broke out a day before, police said.

Operations are underway to trace three women and three children, who have been reported missing since the violence erupted in Jiribam on Monday, IGP (operations) I K Muivah said.

The bodies of the two men, Laishram Balen and Maibam Kesho, were found lying in debris during a search operation in the Jakuradhor Karong area where a few shops were set on fire by suspected militants on Monday, another senior officer said.

"The two elderly men belonging to the Meitei community died after the insurgents torched a few shops in the Jakuradhor Karong area," he said.

The Jiribam district administration imposed prohibitory orders to avoid any untoward incident in the area, the officer said. A



shutdown has been observed since five am on Tuesday in Kuki-Zo majority areas in the hills to protest against killing of suspected insurgents in the gunfight with security personnel, another police officer said. The Kuki-Zo Council called for a total shutdown in the hill areas of the state from 5 am to 6 pm on Tuesday to express their "collective grief and solidarity for those who were brutally shot dead". The police had said 10 suspected militants were killed in the fierce gunfight with security forces on Monday after insurgents in camouflage uniforms, armed with sophisticated weapons, fired indiscriminately at a police station and an adjacent CRPF camp in Jiribam district. However, a senior officer had put the toll at 11.

Continued on page 8

## New entrance exam series in January

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday announced that the Centre is introducing various reforms in the entrance examinations in the country beginning January and appealed to the state governments to extend their support for zero-error entrance tests.

Pradhan said the Radhakrishnan panel has submitted its report outlining reforms in the National Testing Agency (NTA) and to



implement the recommendations, cooperation of states is essential.

"I have appealed to all state government education secretaries. A new entrance exam series for the upcoming year will begin in January. Based on last year's experiences, the government has introduced numerous reforms," he told reporters on the sidelines of a national workshop on higher and technical education attended by secretaries of states and Union territories (UTs). "The Radhakrishnan committee

has submitted its recommendations and to implement it, the states' cooperation is essential. I have appealed to everyone on this matter, especially regarding entrance examinations. "Bringing examinations, especially entrance exams, to zero error is the responsibility of both the Government of India and the state governments. We will work as a team to build confidence in the children of our country," the education minister added.

Continued on page 8

## Retail inflation rises to 6.21 per cent

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Retail inflation rose to 6.21 per cent in October from 5.49 per cent in the preceding month mainly due to higher food prices, breaching the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) upper tolerance level, according to official data released on Tuesday.

The consumer price index-based inflation was 4.87 per cent in October 2023. The National Statistics Office data showed that inflation in the food basket rose to 10.87 per cent in October from 9.24 per cent in September and 6.61 per cent in the year-ago month.

The RBI, which kept the key short-term lending rate unchanged earlier this month, has been tasked by the government to ensure inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

## LET IT SNOW...



Tourists play in the snow at a ski resort after season's first snowfall at Kongdoori area of Gulmarg, in Baramulla district, Jammu and Kashmir, Tuesday

PTI

## Band, baaja, baraat and... traffic jams

Around 50,000 weddings were celebrated on Tuesday, in Delhi

**SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI**

Be ready to encounter loud music, people dancing on the streets, and a general euphoria amongst the masses as wedding season officially began on Tuesday, which marked the auspicious occasion of Dev Uthani Ekadashi, when around 50,000 weddings were celebrated in the National Capital. However, what is 'party mode' for some will be a major headache for the commuters traversing through the roads of Delhi, especially through South Delhi and East Delhi.

The sounds of celebration will continue until December 16 with the city witnessing around 4.5 lakh weddings across the different venues in Delhi in a

span of 18 days. The day is also seeing a surge in weddings since the day also marks 'Tulsi Vivah', which is considered a highly auspicious day to get married as Goddess Tulsi married Shaligram, a form of Lord Vishnu. As 'baraats', which are the procession a groom takes out via reaching the venue where the marriage is taking place, the commuters faced hardships as the processions led to traffic woes in the city. Areas like Mahipalpur, Mehrauli, Karnal, and Rohini among others saw congestions due to wedding related activities.

It took hours to cross even small stretches, as the weddings added to the already existing problem of persistent traffic congestion in different areas across the Capital.



Many a time vehicles parked around these wedding venues also leave the roads narrower, and normal traffic has to wade through the cramped spaces.

Shopping related to wedding events will also create a jam around key market areas. According to Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT)

estimates, this wedding season is expected to generate over Rs 6 lakh Crore in trade.

In light of these issues, Special Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Ajay Chaudhary spoke about the special arrangements made to avoid any hassles, and keep the load off of the city roads. He said that in addition to the already existing force of about 4,500 traffic personnel, the police department has deployed an additional staff of 250. Addl/CP (Traffic) Satyaveer Singh Katara added that with a special focus on the traffic congestion resulting from the extra flow due to the ceremonies, they have adjusted the duty timings of the staff in a way that the maximum number of police is on the ground, and managing

the flow at the hours when these celebrations usually take place across the city.

Highlighting the issue of unmanaged parking around these venues, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Shashank Jaiswal shared that the police has held several meetings with wedding organisers to ensure there is ample place to park the vehicles of the attendees and doesn't lead to cramping the roads. "We are doing our best including motorcycling patrolling and deployment of cranes to remove vehicles amid the festive season. We understand that this traffic can also choke important highways, hence the traffic department is fully ready to tackle it."

# Hoteliers asked to ensure security measures ahead of wedding season

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In view of a recent bomb hoax, the Lucknow police on Tuesday asked hoteliers to ensure foolproof security arrangements ahead of the wedding season and several large events in the state capital. They were also instructed to step up vigilance due to the possible visit of foreign delegates and celebrities arriving for various events, such as concerts, meet-ups, and other social gatherings, which typically attract large crowds of fans. This increases the likelihood of such venues becoming potential targets. The meeting was held at the Reserve Police Lines and was chaired by Joint Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Amit Verma. Representatives from the Uttar Pradesh Hotel and Restaurant Association, along with over a 100 delegates from major hotels and malls, were also in attendance.

"Although the recent emails sent to hotels and schools were hoaxes, they cannot be taken lightly," said the JCP (L&O). "Before anything happens, it is the responsibility of both the police and hotels to ensure the safety of the people they are serving. We are all aware of the lives lost during the 26/11 terrorist attack at the Taj Hotel in Mumbai, where so many innocent lives were taken. We must learn from the past and make sure that something like that never happens again. This can only be achieved through coordination between the police and the hospitality sector," he said. Verma further emphasised the importance of police verification for employees working in hotels, restaurants, resorts, and malls, and urged them to follow standard operating procedures (SOPs) for dealing with emergency situations. He also highlighted the need to address issues such as encroachment around business establishments, the proper functioning of CCTV cameras, and the periodic



Joint Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Amit Verma and others in a meeting with representatives from the Uttar Pradesh Hotel and Restaurant Association, along with over a 100 delegates from major hotels and malls

inspection of DFMD/HFMD and bag scanners. He stressed the importance of informing the police about the arrival of foreign delegations and tourists, obtaining necessary permissions for major events (such as celebrity appearances), and adhering to protocols for crowd management and fire safety. "Proper arrangements for crowd management should be in place, along with regular checks of fire-fighting equipment. Restaurants

should operate within the prescribed hours, and there should be a ban on the consumption of illegal intoxicants. Compliance with Supreme Court directives regarding weddings and other events, including regulations on DJs, fireworks, and celebratory firing, is crucial. Drone cameras should only be operated by approved technical experts and must not exceed prescribed heights or enter no-fly zones," said Verma, directing the representatives of all business establishments to prepare an action plan and ensure full compliance.

## BOMB HOAX

# LDA to launch drive to reclaim public land occupied illegally

**Lucknow (PNS):** The Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) will begin an extensive operation to reclaim public land that has been illegally occupied by locals with the assistance of musclemen, Vice-Chairman Prathmesh Kumar said on Tuesday. The exercise would commence next month. Currently, land worth approximately Rs 10,000 crore has been seized in various parts of the city. He added that the LDA would seek the assistance of PAC personnel, noting that the task was demanding and would take at least three to four months to complete. He highlighted areas such as Vasant Kunj, Gomti Nagar Extension, Aliganj, and Jankipuram as locations where illegal occupations have become widespread. The VC explained that field officers have been assigned the responsibility of conducting a survey to identify such encroached land, and they are expected to submit their findings within two weeks. Action will be taken based on the reports submitted by these officers. According to rough estimates, over 90 bighas of land have been unlawfully occupied by locals, who have constructed permanent structures for residential or commercial use. However, the development authority can only take action against the defaulters once they have been identified.

# Girl alleges harassment by youth after breakup

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a disturbing incident in Madheganj, a youth has been accused of persistently harassing a girl even after their breakup. The victim, a resident of a local colony, lodged an FIR at the Madheganj police station, alleging that the accused, Raj, continued to trouble her through frequent phone calls, text messages, and physical confrontation after they ended their relationship. According to the victim's statement to the police, she and Raj were in a romantic relationship, but their bond soured due to Raj's erratic behaviour and constant doubts, leading to frequent arguments. Eventually, they decided to break up. However, even after the breakup, Raj allegedly pressured the victim to meet with him and continued to follow her when she left her house. On one occasion, he allegedly blocked her way, verbally abused her, and threatened her. The situation escalated when the victim's brother intervened after hearing his sister's distress calls. According to the victim's complaint, Raj physically assaulted her brother and threatened the victim, saying he would "not leave her in a position to live". A crowd gathered in response to the altercation, prompting Raj to flee the scene, allegedly threatening to harm her. The Madheganj police have

registered a case based on the victim's complaint. They have initiated an investigation into the matter and are gathering evidence to take appropriate action against the accused. The police have assured that they will take necessary legal action against the accused based on the investigation. In another case, a man claiming to be a journalist allegedly sexually exploited a woman after befriended a woman under the pretext of assisting her with litigation at the family court. He also promised to help her secure a house under the Prime Minister's Awas Yojana. After gaining her trust with these promises, he took her to a hotel where he allegedly made her unconscious by giving her intoxicants. The accused then recorded an obscene video after assaulting her. The woman alleged that the man continued to exploit her physically and financially for several months, threatening to release the video online. The police have registered a case against the accused following the victim's complaint. The victim reported that she met the accused, who lives near Sahara Shopping Centre, Indira Nagar, four years ago. He introduced himself as a journalist and offered to help with her family court case. Persuaded by his assurances, she began meeting him regularly. A few days later, he took her to a hotel under the pretext

of needing to complete some work. "At the hotel, the accused mixed a sedative into my cold drink and made me consume it. When I regained consciousness, I realised I had no clothes on. When I threatened to report him to the police, he countered by threatening to release the obscene video. When I resisted, he suggested marriage and took me to Chandrika Devi Temple, where we were married," she alleged. She said that after the marriage, she discovered he was already married. "Upon confronting him, he evaded my questions and promised to arrange a house for us under the prime minister's scheme. He took around Rs one lakh from me for the house allotment. When I protested, he kept making excuses. Later, I found out he was married and had two daughters. When I confronted him again, he came to my house with his brother, who is a policeman, and his wife Madhu on November 7. All three assaulted me, deleted photos of our temple wedding, snatched my gold earrings and chain, and tore my clothes during the attack. My sister and aunt, who tried to intervene, were also assaulted," she alleged. According to Hazratganj inspector, evidence is being gathered against the accused, and action will be taken based on the findings.

# Bells stolen from Maa Tapeshwari Devi temple

**Lucknow (PNS):** Thieves broke into Maa Tapeshwari Devi temple in the Para area and stole ten bells by cutting the chains. "The incident occurred on the intervening night of October 10 and 11, after which the police were notified via the 112 emergency service. An FIR under Section 303(2) of BNS has been filed against the unidentified culprits, and footage from nearby CCTV cameras is being reviewed," according to a press note issued by police. According to Shyam Sundar, the priest at Maa Tapeshwari Devi temple in Bardaiya village in Mall police station area, each bell weighed around 10 kg, with an estimated value of Rs 75,000. "When I arrived to conduct the morning worship today, I found that the bells, which were previously tied with iron chains, were missing. This prompted locals from nearby areas to gather at the temple and express their anger over the incident. The matter was reported to the Mall police station," he said. According to Sundar, there is no CCTV camera installed within the temple premises, which the thieves took advantage of.

# Pvt company asst manager found hanging in her flat

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

An assistant manager at a private company in Lucknow allegedly took her own life by hanging. Her husband, a doctor, was in Hyderabad at the time of the incident. He had been calling his wife repeatedly since Monday evening. When his calls went unanswered, he contacted a neighbour on Tuesday morning. When the neighbours reached the flat, they found the door locked from the inside. They informed the police, who arrived at the scene, broke open the door, and discovered the woman hanging from the ceiling fan. The police took her body into custody and sent it for a post-mortem. The incident occurred in the Sushant Golf City police station area. The deceased has been identified as Neha (25). Five months ago, she and her husband Deepak had rented a flat on the 12th floor of Kiara Residency. Both are originally from Agra. Neha was employed as an assistant manager in a company office in Indira Nagar. She and Deepak had a love marriage a year ago. Deepak, a doctor, was recently selected to join a dental hos-

pital in Hyderabad. Currently, Neha was living alone at home. When she did not answer the phone, Deepak sent neighbours to check on her. He had tried calling her continuously on Monday night, but his calls remained unanswered. On Tuesday morning, he asked the neighbours to visit the flat. When they received no response from inside, they knocked on the door, but it remained locked. They then informed the police. Her family did not come to Lucknow themselves and instead sent a relative. Police stated that Neha's parents, who are elderly, have sent a relative to the post-mortem house, and her body will be released to them after the post-mortem. No suicide note was found at the scene. ADCP (South) Rajesh Yadav mentioned that Neha had been living in the rented flat and that she had not answered her husband's calls following a disagreement during a phone conversation. When she did not respond even in the morning, her husband alerted the neighbours, who called the police after receiving no response at the door. The police confirmed the suicide after forcing entry

into the flat. Both families reside in Agra and have been notified. The husband is a government dentist based in Hyderabad. No suicide note has been recovered from the scene, and investigations are ongoing. The forensic team has collected evidence from the flat. Meanwhile, a truck driver was killed while a man sitting next to him in sustained critical injuries in a road accident in the Bijnor police station area on Monday. The truck owner, Pravesh Kumar from Etah, informed the local police on Tuesday that his truck was en route to Pratapgarh via the Agra-Lucknow Expressway after loading goods in Hathras. Around 4-5 am on Tuesday, near the Kisan Path above the Anoopkheda underpass, the vehicle suddenly went out of control and collided with the truck ahead of it. The impact caused significant damage to the front of the vehicle. As a result, the driver, Harivilas (39) from Etah, died, while the other person in the vehicle, Geetam (26), also from Etah, was seriously injured. "I was informed about this by the driver of my other vehicle, which was following behind," said Kumar.

# DGM, finance controller accused of abetment after SIFSPA steno ends life

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In the case of the suicide of Rajendra Kumar Joshi, a stenographer at State Innovations in Family Planning Services Project Agency (SIFPSA) in Lucknow, his brother Brij Mohan Joshi filed a complaint at Sairpur police station on Monday. In his written complaint, Brij Mohan stated that his brother's provident fund and gratuity payments had been withheld and that staff members were obstructing his efforts to withdraw them, which pushed him into depression. "My brother could not afford medical treatment, which led him to take this step," he said. Brij Mohan Joshi explained that his brother had also shared his workplace issues with a relative, Kaushal Tripathi. "After he retired, certain officials began harassing him

because he had not supported them in a matter involving a missing file at the office," he said. According to Brij Mohan, Deputy General Manager Dr Rinku Shrivastava, Finance Controller Brij Bihari Kushwaha, and Kaushal Singh Bisht withheld the NOC required for the release of Rs 80 lakh in provident fund and gratuity owed to his brother. "Even after he fell ill, he was pressured to locate the missing file," alleged Brij Mohan, adding that the officials kept sending notices to his brother to increase the pressure, despite his limited mobility due to illness. "Our relative Kaushal Tripathi somehow managed to take

him to the office on AP Sen Road. There, the finance controller behaved indecently and threatened to send him to jail if he did not cooperate. My younger brother Rajesh then emailed the director with all the information. The director assured him that the funds would be released, yet the matter remained unresolved. On Saturday, my brother received another notice from the deputy general manager. After that, he left the house around midnight and took his life by jumping in front of a train on the railway track near Chhatta Mill," Brij Mohan stated. Sairpur Inspector Manoj Kumar Kori said that the case is under investigation based on the complaint.

# Jeweller kills four members of his family, attempts suicide

**Etawah/Mau (PTI):** A jeweller allegedly killed his wife, two daughters and a son here by feeding them some poisonous substance and then attempted to end his life by jumping in front of a train but was saved by Railway Protection Force jawans, police said on Tuesday. The incident came to light on Monday evening when the jeweller Mukesh Verma uploaded the photographs of the bodies of his wife and children on his WhatsApp status. After seeing the status, the family members checked the rooms and found the bodies. Senior Superintendent of Police, Etawah, Sanjay Kumar said the bodies of Kumar's wife Rekha, daughters, Bhavya (22), Kavya (17) and son Abhisht (12) were

found lying in separate rooms in a four-storey building in which the jeweller lived along with his brothers. Verma killed his family members apparently due to a family dispute and then attempted to end his life by jumping in front of the Marudhar Express at the railway station here, he said. Seeing him jump, people raised an alarm following which RPF jawans present on the platform rescued him, the SSP said, adding Verma sustained minor injuries. Meanwhile, a 40-year-old police constable posted in Mau district died after a speeding truck hit his motorcycle, officials said on Tuesday. The accident occurred late at night when Avneesh Singh, 40, was returning to his

quarters on his two-wheeler after duty. He was struck by a speeding truck near Bhati Chauraha and died on the spot, according to the police. On Tuesday, senior officers, including Superintendent of Police Elamaram G and Additional Superintendent of Police Mahesh Singh Atri, gathered at the police line to pay their respects. "Constable Avneesh's passing is an irreplaceable loss for the police department," ASP Atri said. Avneesh, a 2015-batch constable, was a resident of Ambedkar Nagar district, he said. Meanwhile, the police impounded the truck involved in the case, while its driver managed to escape and searches are underway to nab him, the officer added.

# 2 killed as school bus hits bike

**Balrampur/Etah:** Two men died after a school bus hit their motorcycle in Balrampur district on Tuesday, police said. Superintendent of Police Vikas Kumar said Shridhar Rajbar (45) and his brother-in-law Shakoor (35) were riding on a motorcycle when they were hit by a school bus. The two men died on the spot. The bus has been seized and the bodies have been sent for the postmortem examinations, he said. Meanwhile, a bus carrying a wedding procession fell into a ditch near village Gulabpur in Etah, leaving 12 people injured, an official said on Tuesday. The incident occurred at about 10 pm on Monday. Locals and police rescued those injured and rushed them to the medical college here. The condition of the injured in stable, CMO Dr Umesh Tripathi said. *PTI*

# Fake currency worth over ₹1.4 lakh seized

**Farrukhabad (PTI):** Police seized counterfeit Indian currency worth over Rs 1.4 lakh after arresting four members of a counterfeiting gang in Farrukhabad on Tuesday, officials said. The operation was conducted by a team from the Mohammadabad police station following a tip-off, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Sanjay Singh told

reporters. Based on the tip-off, police arrested two suspects — Sarvesh Kumar from Bilasod village in Etah district and Vipin Kumar alias J P Yadav from Tikurian Nagla village in Farrukhabad district, the officer said. Following the initial arrests, the police raided the residences of two more suspects — Yagya

Mitra Singh and Deepak Yadav, both residents of Nadaura in Farrukhabad district — and seized Rs 1,40,900 in counterfeit currency along with the equipment used to print fake notes, Singh said. The counterfeit currency included 180 notes of Rs 500 denomination, 503 notes of Rs 100 denomination, and three Rs 200 notes.

# Man cheating jobseekers with fake appointment letters lands in police net

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A man, who had been allegedly cheating people by providing fake appointment letters, was arrested by a team from Hazratganj police on Tuesday. The accused, Rajesh Yadav, had been allegedly deceiving people by offering fake job appointments and extorting money from young jobseekers. He had made false promises of employment in institutions such as Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and the municipal corporation. A spokesperson confirmed that a case had been filed against Rajesh under various sections of the IPC at Hazratganj police station. During the initial investigation, the police uncovered strong evidence of fraud against the accused, and he was arrested. The spokesperson added

that the search for other individuals involved in the fraud is still ongoing. Rajesh lured young people with promises of jobs as clerks, head clerks, and peons in prestigious institutions like BHU, the municipal corporation, and Sampurnanand Sanskrit University. As part of his scheme, he would produce fake appointment letters and hand them over to his victims before disappearing with the money. The spokesperson said that a complainant, Amit Kumar, had filed a written report on 21st November 2023, in which he described how he and others had been deceived by the accused with promises of jobs at BHU, the municipal corporation, and Sampurnanand Sanskrit University. The accused had then disappeared after giving them fake appointment letters.



Inter-College Badminton Tournament was organised by the Catholic Diocese of Lucknow on November 8 and 9 at St Francis' College. The chief guest was Dr Gerald John Mathias, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Lucknow. He inaugurated the tournament and wished the participants all the best. Both boys and girls participated in the singles and doubles event. Montfort Inter College, St Thomas College, St Xavier's Inter College, St Paul's College, St Joseph's College, St Dominic Savio College, Stella Maris College, Canossa College, and St Francis' College participated in the tournament.

CONTINENTAL CHEMICALS LIMITED.						
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Tel : 91-120-2423316 Email: info@continentalsoft.com, nke@continentalsoft.com, web: www.continentalchemicalsLtd.com						
UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND SIX MONTHS ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER, 2024						
(Rs. in Lakh except EPS)						
PARTICULARS	3 Months Ended 30.09.2024	3 Months Ended 30.09.2023	3 Months Ended 30.06.2024	6 Months Ended 30.09.2023	6 Months Ended 30.09.2024	Year ended 31.03.2024
	(Unaudited)	(Unaudited)	(Unaudited)	(Unaudited)	(Unaudited)	(Audited)
1 Income from operations	35.72	34.60	37.91	75.48	73.63	157.49
2 Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	2.90	11.92	11.99	27.10	14.89	60.55
3 Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period before Tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	2.90	11.92	11.99	27.10	14.89	60.55
4 Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	2.97	11.59	11.16	22.41	14.13	51.82
5 Total Comprehensive Income for the period (comprising Profit/ (Loss) for the period (after tax)	2.98	11.75	11.23	22.59	14.21	52.11
6 Equity Share Capital	224.90	224.90	224.90	224.90	224.90	224.90
7 Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve as shown in the Balance Sheet of previous year)	-	-	-	-	-	-
8 Earnings Per Share (of Rs. 10/-each)						
Basic :	0.13	0.52	0.50	1.00	0.63	2.30
Diluted :	0.13	0.52	0.50	1.00	0.63	2.30
<b>Notes:</b>						
1 The above financial result are reviewed by audit committee and thereby have been taken on records by board of Director in their meeting held on 12/11/2024						
2 Previous period figures have been re-grouped/reclassified whenever necessary to make them comparable with the current period figures.						
3 These results have been prepared in accordance with the Companies (Indian Accounting Standards) Rule 2015 (Ind As) prescribed under Section 133 of the Companies Act 2013 and other recognised accounting practices and policies to the extent possible.						
4 The company operates only in one segment						
For and on behalf of the Board of Continental Chemicals Limited						
Sd/-						
(Narsing Kumar Chibba)						
Managing Director						
DIN: 00376963						
Place : Noida						
Date : 12.11.2024						

# Nation always comes first for me: Yogi to Kharge

PNS ■ AMRAWATI/AKOLA/NAGPUR

In a sharp reaction to Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge's recent remarks, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said that as a Yogi, the nation always comes first for him, whereas for Kharge, Congress's appeasement politics take precedence. Addressing a rally in Achalpur, Maharashtra, on Tuesday, CM Yogi said: "For the past three days, Kharge ji has questioned my choice of words. Kharge ji, as a Yogi, I prioritise the nation above all else, just as my leader, Prime Minister Modi, has instructed me to put the country first in all matters. But for you, Congress's appeasement policy remains paramount, preventing you from acknowledging or understanding the truth." Yogi also referenced events after India's independence, reminding the audience of Kharge's family background in Varawatti, which was once under Hyderabad's Nizam. He recounted how, even before independence, the British had begun planning India's partition, emboldening the Muslim League in the process. He asserted that Congress leaders had bowed to the Muslim League at that time, which resulted in the massacre of



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during an election rally in Achalpur, Maharashtra, on Tuesday

Hindus, while "Congress's power-hungry leadership" remained silent. Yogi recounted how the British allowed princely states the choice to join either India or Pakistan, or remain independent. In response, the Nawab of Junagadh and the Nizam of Hyderabad attempted to maintain independent states. However, when Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, known as the 'Iron Man', became Home Minister, the Nizam realised he couldn't sustain a separate existence and began ruthlessly massacring Hindus," Yogi said. He explained that Dr BR Ambedkar had called upon

Scheduled Castes, Tribes, and Hindus in the Hyderabad state to seek safety in Maharashtra. Varawatti village, then part of Hyderabad state, was burned in this violence—tragically affecting Mallikarjun Kharge's family. His mother, aunt, and sister were killed by the Nizam's Razakars. However, CM Yogi pointed out, "Kharge ji is hesitant to acknowledge this truth, fearing it might harm his appeal to Muslim voters." CM Yogi remarked: "Kharge ji seems to have forgotten his family's sacrifices for the sake of vote banks, emphasising that for him and his party, power takes precedence over patriotism."

Meanwhile, Yogi addressed three rallies in Maharashtra's Vidarbha region, warning the state's residents against division, stating that if the people remain fragmented, they would invite violence, particularly during Ram Navami and Ganesh Chaturthi processions. He stressed that such incidents of stone-pelting and violence occur in places where the community is divided. He cited incidents in Ayodhya, Kashi, and Mathura, and the recent riots in Amravati as examples of the consequences of division. He emphasised that the country's unity is crucial for its safety and warned that if the people remain divided, they would be vulnerable to attacks from elements like stone-pelters. In a scathing attack on the opposition, CM Yogi described the 'Mahaanadi' coalition as a threat to the security of Maharashtra, accusing it of turning the state into a hotspot for "love jihad, land jihad and PAN card jihad." He claimed that these issues were being promoted by a fractured alliance with no clear leader or policies. He contrasted this with the BJP's vision of 'One India, Best India', led by PM Modi, and assured voters that the BJP's double-engine government was the only solution to these growing issues.

# Opposition backs protest by PCS aspirants, hits out at govt

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

While the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Congress on Tuesday questioned the Bharatiya Janata Party over its claims of 'One Nation-One Election' when it failed to conduct an examination on the same date, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati urged the Uttar Pradesh government to pay attention to the ongoing row over the question paper leak and the conduct of the Uttar Pradesh Union Public Service Commission's (UPPSC) exam. Expressing support for the ongoing agitation of students against the decision of the State Public Service Commission (UPPSC) to conduct the PCS Pre and RO/ARO examination over two days, Mayawati on Tuesday asked whether Uttar Pradesh lacked the basic facilities to conduct the examination in a single day, to the extent that a special exam like PCS had to be conducted over two days. Mayawati wrote on the social media platform X that it is natural for news related to the situation arising from police action on students, who were angry over the failure of the Uttar Pradesh Union Public Service Commission to conduct the preliminary examina-

tion 2024 of PCS and RO-ARO on the same day, to be widely discussed. She asked the government whether Uttar Pradesh lacked such basic facilities to conduct exams in a single day, forcing special exams like PCS to be conducted over two days. She stressed that stopping paper leaks and ensuring the credibility of exams were crucial issues, for which a single-exam system was necessary. "The government should pay attention to this," she added. Mayawati also said that the government's attitude towards students, who are already bearing the brunt of poverty, unemployment, and inflation, should not be cruel but cooperative and sympathetic. She added that the sooner the government completes the recruitment process for all the vacant posts, the better. "People are in dire need of livelihoods," she remarked. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and Congress leaders have already lashed out at the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath-led BJP government in the state over the massive protests by aspirants against the UPPSC exam dates. The SP chief described the agitation from the aspirants as "Yogi vs competitor students" and said that the BJP govern-

ment would now run bulldozers over students' hostels or lodges. "If the BJP had run the government with the same intensity with which it is running the bulldozer of injustice, then today the BJP members would not have to hide in their homes fearing student anger. Scared by the anger of the agitators, BJP flags have been removed from the houses, shops, establishments, and vehicles of BJP members," Akhilesh said. He further stated that people were now rejecting the divisive communal politics and embracing positive politics that unites. "No one is ready to become a mental slave now," he added. Akhilesh Yadav also asked whether the BJP government would run bulldozers over the hostels or lodges of students. He accused the BJP of dividing society and declared that "the rise of the students will be the fall of the BJP." He posted on X, "Unhona chalayai lathi-danda, 'Naukri nahi jinka agenda.'" Targeting the government again on Tuesday, Akhilesh stated that while elections could be held simultaneously across the country, conducting simultaneous examinations in one state was not possible. "BJP's hypocrisy has been

exposed," he wrote. "Talks of reaching the moon and thinking of hell, now the government of liars and talkative ministers will not work. Candidates of today say: 'We don't want BJP. Jobs will come when BJP goes'," he added. He also remarked that elections were only on BJP's agenda, and the only thing that candidates received under BJP rule was stress. Uttar Pradesh Congress spokesman Anshu Awasthi also joined the SP in the attack, questioning the Party that talks of 'One Nation-One Election' but struggles to conduct an entrance examination at the same time. He alleged that the BJP had failed to provide jobs to the youth and, to further cheat them, continued with the propaganda of conducting examinations and then cancelling them for reasons such as paper leaks or court writs to delay the process. Meanwhile, aspirants continued their protest on Tuesday outside the UPPSC office, demanding that the PCS and RO/ARO exams be held on a single day and in one shift. The students are protesting against the upcoming exams, insisting that tests should be conducted in a single shift, as was previously done.

# Businessman alleges death threats by Bishnoi gang

**Gorakhpur (PTI):** A businessman in Kushinagar district has alleged that he received multiple death threats from someone claiming to be a member of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. Deepak Rauniyar, who runs a clothing store in Fazilnagar, said that he received threats twice within a week. Rauniyar on Tuesday told reporters that the caller introduced himself as a member of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang and warned him that police cannot save him. "Your (killing) contract has been issued. I will get rid of you. Try to save yourself if you can," he was told over the phone. On the basis of a complaint by the businessman, a case was registered at Patharwa police station on Monday. Rauniyar said he received threat calls on November 4 and on Saturday night also he received calls from various phone numbers. Patharwa police station SHO Deepak Kumar Singh confirmed that an FIR has been lodged and investigations are underway. The SHO said police are trying to trace the caller's locations. Bishnoi's name recently figured in the NCP leader Baba Siddique's murder case. He has allegedly issued death threats to actor Salman Khan.

# UP evolving into sports hub

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh is steadily evolving into a prominent sports hub, with a keen focus on nurturing and developing young talent. Over the past seven and a half years, the state government has made significant strides in enhancing sports infrastructure, especially in rural areas. More than 18,000 playgrounds have been established across rural regions, providing young athletes with opportunities to hone their skills. The Yogi Adityanath government's commitment to promoting sports extends to ambitious plans to build playgrounds and open gyms in all 57,000 gram panchayats, mini stadiums in each of the 826 development blocks, and well-equipped stadiums in every district. This comprehensive approach aims to create a robust sports ecosystem, ensuring that aspiring athletes from all corners of the state have access to top-notch facilities and a platform to showcase their talent. The Yogi government, working in sync with Centre's schemes for athletes, has made planned efforts over the last seven and a half years to promote sports and support players. As a result, university-level leagues and village-level sports competitions have started in the state, providing athletes with opportunities to advance. In addition, several programmes have been introduced to further promote sports across the state.

According to the state government data, Uttar Pradesh now boasts 84 stadiums, 67 multi-purpose halls, 38 swimming pools, 15 synthetic hockey stadiums, and 3 synthetic running tracks. Additionally, the state has established two international cricket stadiums, 16 hostels, 47 state-of-the-art gyms, 20 synthetic tennis courts, and 19 dormitories for players. Furthermore, two judo halls, 13 wrestling halls, six shooting ranges, two indoor volleyball courts, 12 weightlifting halls, and 14 synthetic basketball courts have been completed across the state. The state government is working with large goals in mind to further encourage sports and support athletes. The government's commitment to building and upgrading sports infrastructure in rural areas is not only empowering athletes but also bridging the urban-rural divide while promoting community welfare. Sports resources are being made available at the village level for athletes, which is helping uncover new talent in rural areas. Additionally, the construction of these fields under the MGNREGA scheme is providing continuous employment opportunities for workers. This initiative aims to encourage sports among schoolchildren and other community members in villages, promoting better health and overall community development. Since the 2017-18 period, over 18,000 playgrounds have

been built across Uttar Pradesh as part of the action plan developed by the Rural Development department. Construction of playgrounds has been ongoing in the state since 2017. In the current financial year of 2024-25, more than 2,700 new playgrounds have already been completed, and work is underway on more than 15,000 additional playgrounds. The development of sports fields in rural areas has significantly increased the youth's interest in sports. This initiative is not only enhancing physical fitness but also contributing to the overall development of the youth. With the availability of sports fields, many talented youngsters who previously lacked access to proper facilities are now able to showcase their abilities. The newly built sports fields are allowing them to excel in various sports and improve their performance. Additionally, the inclusion of running tracks in these sports fields has enabled young people to train for military, paramilitary forces, police, CRPF, and other competitive services right in their villages. The development of sports infrastructure is helping youth with physical training, allowing them to enhance their strength and stamina. This initiative is not only improving their physical abilities but also ensuring their safety during training, ultimately helping them prepare for various competitive exams and sports events.

# Krishnam: True Hindus respect religious figures

**Sambhal (PTI):** Acharya Pramod Krishnam, a former Congress leader and Kalki Peethadhishwar, hit out at Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge over his remarks on Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, saying "true Hindus" do not disrespect their religious figures. Kharge had slammed Adityanath at a poll rally in Nagpur for his 'batenge toh katenge' (if divided, we will be wiped out) slogan, saying these were divisive statements. A day later at a Jharkhand poll rally, he said, "A true Yogi cannot use language like 'batenge toh katenge'. This language is used by terrorists. Yogi is head of a mutt, wears saffron robes, but believes in 'mukh me Ram bagal me chhuri' (A wolf in lamb's clothing)." Kharge said those who truly want a united country should refrain from such statements. Reacting to the Congress president's remarks, Krishnam said on Monday, "The name Mallikarjun Kharge suggests he is Hindu, but his actions do not reflect that." The kind of remarks Kharge has been making indicate a certain hostility towards Sanatan Dharma, he said. "Those who have animosity towards Sanatan Dharma and saints do not deserve a place in Indian politics. Kharge, a senior leader, should not resort to insulting Hindu saints or Sanatan Dharma or the saffron flag. True Hindus do not disrespect their own religious figures," he said.

# 4 die in mud mound collapse



Police personnel conduct investigation as people gather around a mound of mud collapsed in Kasganj on Tuesday

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Three women and a 10-year-old girl died after a mound of mud fell on them Tuesday morning in Mohanpura area in Kasganj district, police said. The incident occurred around 7 am when they were collecting mud from a ditch dug for the construction of a bridge between Rampur and Kataur village. Additional Superintendent of Police Rakesh Bhatti confirmed the deaths. "Nine people had gone to dig mud for some function in their house and got down a 10-foot-

deep ditch whose wall crashed on them. The ditch was dug for the construction of a bridge in the area," he said. "Five people are undergoing treatment," he added. The deceased were identified as Ram Beti, 29, Prema Devi, 36, Saraswati, 27, and Pinky, 10, all of them natives of Rampur village, Nares, the police outpost in-charge of Mohanpura, said. Maheswari, 40, Krishna, 45, Hemlata, 40, Prem Singh, 32, and Arjun, 8, are undergoing treatment, he said. Kasganj Chief Medical Officer Dr Rajiv Agrawal told reporters, "Nine people were brought to

District Hospital in Kasganj, of whom, four died. Two women were referred to Aligarh, while the rest are being given treatment here." Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed grief over the deaths and ordered proper treatment of the wounded. "The Chief Minister has instructed the district administration officials to reach the spot and expedite the relief work and immediately take the injured to the hospital for proper treatment. He also wished for the speedy recovery of the injured," his office said in a post on X.

# Pitbull chews off face of owner's 26-yr-old son

**Bareilly (PTI):** A pitbull chewed off its owner's 26-year-old son's lips and a part of his face in the Khalilpur area here, police said. The man, Aditya Shankar Gangwar, underwent surgery Monday night, Dr Kaushal Kumar, a senior surgeon at a private hospital, said on Tuesday. Forest department ranger Vaibhav Chaudhary said the dog was caught by the municipal corporation team. The civic body's risk in-charge Guru Charanjit Singh said the dog has been kept in the Animal Birth Centre, so that it does not attack anyone else. Though the dog is calm since, the workers present there are scared of going near it, he said. According to local residents, they heard Aditya screaming when the dog attacked him and rushed to save him. Pitbull is known for its ferocious temper and is often seen attacking even the owners.

# Digital compantion 'Kumbh Sahayak' to assist devotees

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

In a groundbreaking initiative for 'Maha Kumbh 2025', the Uttar Pradesh government is introducing an advanced AI generative chatbot named 'Kumbh Sahayak' to assist devotees. This digital companion, set to be launched for the first time at the grand event, will offer comprehensive information in over ten languages, supported by the Bhashini app. Equipped with Google navigation, interactive conversation features, and personalised GIF responses, the "Kumbh Sahayak" chatbot promises a seamless and enriching experience for millions of visitors. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has expressed strong support for this innovative project, highlighting his commitment to integrating tradition with modernity. 'Maha Kumbh 2025' now stands as a testament to his vision, blending ancient Sanatan traditions with

advanced digital tools. The event is shaping up to be a 'Digital Maha Kumbh', showcasing how AI and advanced digital tools can enhance the experience of cultural and spiritual gatherings. Additional Mela Officer Vivek Chaturvedi stated that, for the first time, the 'Kumbh Sahayak' chatbot is being developed for the event. Built using advanced generative AI technology, this chatbot will serve as a personal guide for attendees and can be accessed through the 'Maha Kumbh 2025' app or on WhatsApp. The chatbot will offer essential information about Maha Kumbh in over ten languages, including Hindi and English, with help from the Bhashini app. Through interactive conversations in both text and voice, it will provide details on the event's history and traditions, information about sadhus and akhadras, key bathing ghats, dates, routes, parking, and accommodation options.

The additional mela officer further shared that the chatbot will come equipped with Google navigation, allowing visitors to easily locate sectors, arenas, Kalpvas tents, and bathing ghats within the Mahakumbh area. The chatbot will also guide users to popular sightseeing spots, temples, railway stations, and bus stands across Prayagraj, ensuring smooth navigation both inside and outside the Maha Kumbh grounds. Meanwhile, Director General of Police Prashant Kumar and Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh on Tuesday visited Prayagraj and reviewed the preparations for 'Maha Kumbh 2025'. A site inspection of Airport Road and Subedarganj Bridge was done and preparations for the mega event were also reviewed. Guidelines were given to all the departments at PCCB (Integrated Command and Control Centre regarding the progress of the works in view, Digital/Swachh Kumbh, police plan and other action plans.

# Woman dies after assault by group, two cops shunted

**Bulandshahr (PTI):** A 30-year-old woman succumbed to her injuries a day after being allegedly assaulted by a group of women here, police said on Tuesday. Two policemen have been suspended for alleged negligence in handling the case, they added. Shikarpur CO Vikas Pratap Singh Chauhan said on November 9 Sunita Devi and her husband Omkar were returning home after collecting water chestnuts from a pond in Papri village. On the way, an altercation broke out between Sunita and a group of local women in the village. The women started assaulting Sunita. Omkar intervened and took his wife away, but she succumbed to injuries the following day. A case has been filed against two women, who have been taken into custody for questioning, and a minor girl, Chauhan said. "Prima facie, Sub-Inspector Saurav Kumar and Constable Ashu Kumar have been transferred to the police lines after being found negligent in this matter," Chauhan said.

# Tribal participation festival to take place from Nov 15

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government will celebrate the International Tribal Participation Festival from November 15 to 20 in honour of Birsu Munda's birth anniversary (Tribal Pride Day). Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will inaugurate the event. To be held at the Uttar Pradesh Sangeet Natak Academy, the festival will feature a vibrant showcase of folk culture from India and abroad, with artists from over 20 states and special performances by folk artists from Slovakia and Vietnam. Following the inaugural ceremony, a grand cultural procession will commence at 11 am, featuring artists from across the nation. Daily cultural programmes will run from 5 pm to 9 pm, highlighting traditional dance forms such as those of the Saharia and Buksa tribes, as well as presentations of tribal folk instruments. The festival will also feature a book-house with an array of tribal

literature. Participating states include Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar, Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, West Bengal, Goa, Assam, Tripura, Punjab, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, and the host state, Uttar Pradesh. Artists from various states will perform traditional dances, such as Jammu and Kashmir's 'Mungwa' and 'Bakarwal' dances, Rajasthan's 'Terah Tali' dance, Karnataka's 'Fugdi' and 'Siddhi' dances, and Madhya Pradesh's 'Ramdhola' dance. Additional performances will include Maharashtra's 'Sangi' mask dance, Odisha's 'Ghudia' dance, Chhattisgarh's 'Maati Mandri', and Sikkim's 'Singhi Chham' dance. Local artists from Uttar Pradesh will perform traditional acts like 'Changeli', 'Nagmatiya', and 'puppetry' on stage. A dedicated bookhouse will offer visitors a glimpse into tribal life through literature covering their lifestyles,

cuisine, and culture. From November 16 to 20, daily folk dance and song performances from various states will continue, accompanied by themed discussions beginning at noon. Topics include 'The contribution of revolutionary Birsu Munda in the freedom struggle' (November 16), 'Tribal education and healthcare solutions' (November 17), 'Entrepreneurial opportunities for tribes: Local to global' (November 18), 'Heritage conservation and promotion' (November 19), and 'The role of NGOs in tribal development' (November 20). On November 19 and 20, a theatre group from Madhya Pradesh will present a play based on the life of Birsu Munda. There will also be live performances of tribal folk instruments and traditional dances from tribes such as Buksa, Sahariya, Tripura's Hojagiri, and Chhattisgarh's Bhunjia. The programme will conclude with a tribal poetry session, magic shows, and a local food fest showcasing Indigenous flavours.

# Protest by aspirants in Prayagraj enters 2nd day

EXAM DATE ROW

PTI/PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ



Civil services aspirants in Prayagraj on Tuesday staging a protest against Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission's (UPPSC) decision to conduct the Review Officer and Assistant Review Officer (RO-ARO) and Provincial Civil Service (PCS) preliminary examinations on different dates.

The protest by aspirants against the UPPSC's decision to conduct the RO-ARO and PCS preliminary examinations on different dates entered its second day on Tuesday. The protesters laid siege to the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission (UPPSC) headquarters here on Monday, staging a sit-in even as a large posse of police personnel tried to disperse them. While the district magistrate and the police commissioner held a meeting late on Monday, it remained inconclusive. Most of the protesters spent the night under the open sky while those who had gone home returned on Tuesday morning to join the agitation at the commission's gate. The students were seen holding placards with slogans like, "We will not retreat, we will remain united until we get justice", and "One day, one exam". In a statement issued on Monday, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) said in light of the concerns raised by the aspirants over the conduct of the PCS and RO-ARO preliminary exams, the commission should take prompt steps to address the issues related to exam centres, normalisation of

scores and conduct of exams in two shifts to ensure the integrity of the process. "The candidates have been raising concerns over the guidelines set by the commission for the upcoming PCS and RO-ARO exams, leading to protests at different levels. The ABVP demands the UPPSC to promptly resolve these concerns. The integrity and transparency of the exams must not be compromised and all the issues regarding centre allocation and normalisation must be addressed with utmost seriousness," ABVP national secretary Ankit Shukla said in the statement. ABVP secretary,

Kashi region, Abhay Pratap Singh, said, "We demand the UPPSC to resolve the concerns raised by the candidates at the earliest. We also call upon the commission to increase the number of districts where the exams will be conducted. The ABVP condemns the use of force against the protesting candidates and reiterates that dialogue is the only solution to all such issues." On Monday the UPPSC said maintaining the integrity of exams and ensuring candidates' convenience were its top priorities. On the concerns raised by some candidates about the nor-

malisation process, a commission spokesperson said that to uphold the sanctity of its examinations and to safeguard students' future, exams are being conducted exclusively at centres where the possibility of irregularities is entirely eliminated. The spokesperson claimed that various irregularities surfaced at the remote exam centres in the past, creating uncertainty for the deserving students. To prevent this and to ensure a merit-based exam process, such centres have now been removed from the list, he added. In a statement issued here, the spokesperson announced that to ensure the

integrity and quality of exams, only government or funded educational institutions located within a 10-km radius of a bus stand, railway station or treasury are being designated as examination centres. This arrangement has been implemented in response to the demands of the candidates for maintaining exam purity and quality. To maintain the integrity and quality of exams, it is essential to hold them in multiple shifts when there are over 5,00,000 candidates, he added. Consequently, the Provincial Civil Services (PCS) preliminary exam will be conducted over two days, on December 7 and 8, while the Review Officer (RO) and Assistant Review Officer (ARO) preliminary examination 2023 will be held in three shifts on December 22 and 23. Meanwhile Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya came out in support of the students. He said, "Officials should listen to the demands of the students sensitively and find a solution soon. Make sure that the valuable time of the students is spent in preparing for the exam, not in agitation." On the other hand, former IPS Amitabh Thakur, who was going to join the students' protest, was taken into custody by the police.

# Thousands take holy dip on Prabodhini Ekadashi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI



Devotees offering prayers on the occasion of Prabodhini Ekadashi at Panchganga Ghat in Varanasi on Tuesday.

Thousands of devotees took a holy dip in the sacred water of Ganga river at different ghats on the auspicious occasion of Prabodhini Ekadashi, also known as Devotthan Ekadashi, here on Tuesday. The festival was celebrated with traditional gaiety and religious fervour. It also marked the end of Chaturmas and beginning of Hindu wedding season. After taking bath in the Ganga, groups of women assembled at different ghats to celebrate the marriage of Lord Vishnu and Goddess Tulsi. A huge number of women observed a fast and offered prayers to Tulsi. Meanwhile, the activists of Namami Gange have geared up for cleaning Ganga ghats before Dev Deepawali festival. On Devotthan Ekadashi, they collected garbage thrown by devotees at Panchganga, Durga, Brahma and other ghats. They motivated people not to litter. They, along with women, performed Tulsi and Lord Shaligram's marriage and Aarti at Panchganga Ghat and prayed for freedom from diseases in the society. Aarti of Bindu Madhav was performed and 'Makhana Mishri' was offered.

Tulsi plants were also distributed among devotees present at Panchganga Ghat on the occasion of Prabodhini Ekadashi. They also pledged for environmental protection and Ganga cleanliness. Regional coordinator (Kashi) and Swachhata Brand Ambassador of Nagar Nigam Rajesh Shukla said public participation is very important for cleanliness of river. "This festival of Lord Vishnu waking up from Yog Nidra is a festival of waking up and awakening others towards their duties and responsibilities. With the resolve, cleanliness and awareness for the commitment to cleanliness, Maa Ganga will move towards daily purification", he said. Prominent among others present were city coordinator Sarika Gupta, city incharge Pushpalata Verma, Nidhi Agarwal and Ragini Sinha.

# Goods worth lakhs gutted in blaze

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Goods worth lakhs of rupees were gutted in a fire which broke out in a chair godown in Juhi police area late on Monday night. The residents informed the fire brigade which rushed to the spot and worked hard to extinguish the fire. However, the cause of incident could not be ascertained. Reports said that a chair godown in Parampurwa, Juhi, suddenly caught fire around 2 am. On seeing the devastating fire, the residents informed the fire brigade and police. Immediately a fire tender followed by others rushed to the spot and extinguished the fire. However, no casualty was reported in the incident.

In another incident, a four-wheeler driver was fatally knocked down by an unidentified speeding vehicle near Navodaya Nagar in Sarsaul under Maharajpur police station area. Station House Officer (SHO) Sanjay Kumar Pandey said on receipt of information, he rushed to the spot and made efforts to ascertain the identity of the deceased. He was identified as Jitendra Singh of Barra police station area. The kin of the deceased had been informed. On their arrival, the body had been sent for an autopsy after panchama. Besides a security guard was killed on being hit by a speeding train under Hardoi railway overbridge in Sadar Kotwali police area of Unnao.

# Gender resource centre inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI



ACP Sarnath Circle Atul Anjan Tripathi at the inauguration of Gender Resource Centre in Varanasi on Tuesday.

Ensuring the rights of children is not only their natural but also a constitutional requirement, because the reins of the country are in their hands. These views were expressed by Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Sarnath Circle Dr Atul Anjan Tripathi while speaking at the inauguration of Gender Resource Centre established in Sarnath area on the eve of Child Rights Protection Fortnight by Dr Shambhunath Singh Research Foundation and Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiative here on Tuesday. "Today, if the children of the country and especially the adolescents, are educated and aware, then they will become an asset not only for themselves but also for their fami-

ly, society and the entire nation", said the ACP Sarnath, adding that today the country needs such institutions which work for social justice, gender equality and peace and harmony among adolescents. Presiding over the programme, the president of Shambhunath Foundation

Vijayashree Singh said in today's changing era, the youth and adolescents are going through a phase of cultural transition. While welcoming the guests in the beginning, the programme director of the organisation Dr Roli Singh said the organisation, in collaboration with APF, has started the Shakti Pari Project in 15 new urban settlements in Varuna river, in which work will be done in the field of education, health, nutrition and skill development of girls aged 11 to 19 years. In the same sequence, she said that this Gender Resource Centre was inaugurated. On the occasion, hundreds of girls from Sarnath and nearby settlements took part in sports and cultural activities. The programme was organised by the organisation's general secretary Rajiv Kumar Singh while the vote of thanks was proposed by the project manager Pooja Srivastava. The programme was coordinated by Diksha Singh, in which Parvesh Maurya, Ajay, Manoj, Priyanka, Priya, Varsha, Rashmi, Kajal, Pooja, Kalpana etc provided support.

# Foundation stone of interlocking work laid



UP minister Ravindra Jaiswal inaugurating a tin shed in the court premises in Varanasi on Tuesday.

Under the MLA Fund Scheme. Addressing the people present the minister said with the construction of this tin shed and interlocking the advocates will get facilities and people coming to the court will get better facilities. Former president of UP Bar Council Harishankar Singh, Central Bar Association president Murali Singh, general secretary Suryanath Tripathi, Banaras Bar Association chief Awadhesh Singh, advocates, corporators, senior citizens and others were present.

# Youth commits suicide

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A youth allegedly committed suicide by jumping in front of a speeding train on Delhi-Howrah rail route near Gajumau village under Rura police station area of Kanpur Dehat late on Monday night. His body was recovered from the railway track on Tuesday morning. Police sent the body for autopsy after primary investigation. After a quarrel with family members, Nilesch Yadav (22) of Muktapur, Akbarpur Kotwali, had left home on Monday evening. On his failing to return home till late night, his family started searching for him. On Tuesday morning on seeing the body the trackman informed the Rura station master and cops from Rura police station rushed to the spot and carried out investigation. Cousin Yogesh and kin of the deceased identified the body. SO Rura JP Sharma said during prima facie investigation, it was revealed that Nilesch had committed suicide in anger.

# Special camps organised for making Ayushman cards

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI



Special camps were organised at Arya Mahila PG College, Chetganj, and Ajgara Bazar, Chhapra on Tuesday to make Ayushman cards for the elderly above 70 years of age in the district. In the camp at Chetganj, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary himself made the card of Dr Shashikant Dixit, resident of Dhoochandri. Speaking on the occasion, he said the beneficiaries will be able to avail the facility of free treatment up to ₹5 lakh under this scheme by getting admitted to any registered hospital. He motivated the people present to make their own Ayushman cards and appealed that the beneficiaries should make their own Ayushman cards from mobile phones. The CMO said such camps will continue to be organised in the coming days so that maximum number of elderly people can get benefit. He said Android mobile users will be able to download this app from Play Store and iPhone users will be able to open it from HSTP site. Such elderly people can now get their Ayushman cards made through self-registration from Ayushman App or from Ayushman Mitras or

Panchayat Sahayaks in Jan Seva Kendras, Panchayat Secretariats or through CHOs, kotedars and ASHA workers in Ayushman Arogya Mandirs. ACPMO and nodal officer Dr SS Kanojia said on Tuesday Ayushman cards of 27 elderly people were made in Arya Mahila PG College and 72 in Ajgara Bazar Chhapra. A total of 1,524 cards have been made in the entire district during the day and in one week, 8,384 cards for the elderly have been made in the entire district, he said, adding that Aadhaar-based e-KYC is mandatory for issuing enrolment of Ayushman Card for eligible senior citizens of both existing and new families. Principal of PG College Dr Manish Tripathi, Manager and regional secretary of BJP

Mahila Morcha Pooja Dixit, DISM Navendu Singh and others were present. TRAINING: Various efforts are being made in the district to provide health facilities to the rural and urban areas regarding family planning and population stabilisation. Under the family planning programme, awareness has also increased along with access to the community regarding permanent and temporary means. A one-day training of gram pradhans on health services, especially family planning, was organised at the BDO office auditorium Araziline here. The objective of this training was to get better benefits of health services in the gram panchayats along with family planning services.

# Locked house burgled

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The locked house of a constable was burgled in Kidwai Nagar police station area. Miscreants stole the entire jewellery made for the marriage of his son apart from the cash from there. The victim has lodged an FIR with the police. Some residential quarters for constables are situated behind Juhi police station which fall under the Kidwai Nagar police station area. One of the quarters is allotted to constable Vijay Kumar Singh, posted in Ayodhya. Presently, he is posted on duty in Prayagraj Kumbh area. According to son Aditya, as his marriage was scheduled to be held on November 18, his father had got jewellery worth around ₹7 lakh made which

were lying in the house. He said on November 6 he had gone to ancestral village with mother Sarita. On finding the moment opportune miscreants broke into the house and stole jewellery worth around ₹7 lakh and ₹15,000 cash from there. Kidwai Nagar Inspector Dharmendra Kumar Ram said on the basis of complaint, FIR had been lodged and efforts are on to work out the case. In another incident a motorcyclist died and the pillion rider was seriously injured when their bike rammed into a stationary truck near Farqi village under Barasagar police station area of Unnao on Monday night. The incident took place when he was going to attend the mundan ceremony of his grandson. Police sent the body for autopsy.

# Youth meets tragic end

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The driver died when a tractor-trolley went out of control and overturned in Pipirsa village under Ghurpur police station of Yamuna Nagar on Tuesday. On getting information the police took the driver's body out after hours of effort. After completing the paperwork, the body was sent for post-mortem examination. Reports said Sandeep Kumar (22) of Pipirsa village under Ghurpur police station area, was the eldest of three brothers. He used to drive a tractor of a person in the neighborhood. Early on Tuesday morning, he was going at a very high speed after loading soil. Suddenly driver Sandeep lost control over the steering outside Pipirsa village. As a result of which the uncontrolled tractor trolley overturned in the pit and Sandeep was crushed between the tractor-trolley and died. The villagers informed his family members after which the police was informed. Station House Officer (SHO) Ravindra Singh said the body has been sent to the post-mortem house. The matter is being investigated. In another incident, a 24-year-old girl student, who was preparing for competitive exams in Rasulabad committed suicide by hanging herself allegedly due to a love affair. The police came to know about it after two days. On getting the information, Shivkuti police reached the spot and investigated. The police did not find the suicide note and the girl's mobile phone from the room. The police got the room sealed and started investigating the matter. The victim's family claimed that she took the extreme step due to a love affair. Meanwhile a lekhal working in Soraoon tehsil was arrested while accepting a bribe of Rs. 6,000. The Anti-Corruption team caught the Lekhal taking bribe. A case has been registered against him under the Prevention of Corruption Act. Inspector Surendra Singh said that lekhal had demanded ₹6,000 from the complainant.

# PCCM inspects stations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI



PCCM of NER AK Satpathy inspecting Mahakumbh preparations at Jhusi station of Varanasi division

Principal Chief Commercial Manager (PCCM) and Principal Chief Operating Manager (PCOM) of North Eastern Railway (NER) Anoop Kumar Satpathy inspected Prayagraj Rambagh and Jhusi stations on Monday evening in view of expansion of passenger facilities and management of passengers during the forthcoming Mahakumbh Mela-2025. On the occasion Senior Divisional Commercial Manager (SDCM) Sheikh Rehman, Senior Divisional Operating Manager (SDOM) Ajay Pratap Singh and other officers of Varanasi division of NER were also present. During his inspection, Satpathy conducted a thorough inspection of Jhusi and Prayagraj Rambagh stations to provide ease and proper passenger facilities to the devotees coming to Mahakumbh Mela-2025 and took stock of the progress of passenger facility expansion works going on at the stations in the context of preparations for the Kumbh Mela. He directed the officers concerned to complete all the development works within the given time frame on the basis of proper standards with quality. The PCCM/PCOM

thoroughly inspected the passenger waiting rooms, boundary walls, high mast lights, temporary toilets, approach roads for night movement etc being constructed in the circulating area of the second entry at Jhusi station. After this, he saw all the progress works including the station building, foot over bridge, construction work etc being done on the platforms. Apart from this, he obtained information about the facilities to be provided to the passengers during Kumbh Mela, their alternative arrangements and the identified places where they would be installed. He also conducted a thorough

inspection of Prayagraj Rambagh station and inspected the passenger reservation centre, unreserved ticket counters, temporary food and water vending stalls, waiting rooms, additional entry and exit routes, permanent and temporary platforms, passenger shed, RCC benches, foot over bridge, temporary waiting rooms, CCTV surveillance, boundary walls and control room for proper crowd management and passenger facility development works under construction for the convenience of passengers during Kumbh Mela and gave necessary instructions to the officers concerned in this regard.

# Quotation writing contest held on British and American drama

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR



The winners of quotation writing contest at MMV Kidwai Nagar on Tuesday.

A quotation writing contest on British and American drama was organised by the Department of English, Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Kidwai Nagar, on Tuesday. On the occasion Principal Prof Anju Chaudhary addressed the students and motivated them to focus and learn through various activities organised in the college. She said this quotation writing contest focused on British and American drama, will let students explore and celebrate the richness of English literature. Head, Department of English and convener of the programme, Dr Nishi Singh, introduced the subject and gave valuable information about the event and said the event aims to encourage students to delve into renowned plays, appreciate the dramatic arts, understand the cultural and thematic nuances of British and American drama. The participants were asked to select powerful quotations from plays by prominent British and American play

writers like Shakespeare, George Bernard Shaw, A Miller etc. Each student presented the chosen quotes, accompanied by explanations on why these lines were impactful. This allowed students to showcase their interpretation skills, as well as their appreciation for literary devices, character development and underlying themes. The judges for the event were faculty members from the English department Dr Parul Awasthi, Dr Indu Mishra and Dr Archana Trivedi, who evaluated submissions on originality, depth of interpretation, and relevance to contemporary issues. The winning quotes and interpretations were displayed on campus to inspire other students. Overall, the contest was a success, highlighting the timeless appeal of British and American drama fostering a deeper love for literature among students. Around 150 students from UG level participated in this event and won prizes. The members of the English faculty Dr Nishi Singh, Dr Parul Awasthi, Dr Indu Mishra and Dr Archana Trivedi coordinated to make the event successful.

# BJP's Ravi Shankar Prasad accuses Congress of conspiring with divisive Muslim elements

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad on Tuesday alleged that the Congress party was conspiring with divisive elements in the Muslim community, sensing defeat in the upcoming Maharashtra and Jharkhand Assembly polls. In a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, Prasad claimed that Congress and other INDIA bloc members were trying to appease the Muslims to get their votes.

"The BJP is very clear that the Congress party is conspiring with all the conservative, divisive elements in the Muslim community for the sake of votes, as they are apprehensive about their imminent defeat," he said.



"PM Modi says 'Ek rahenge toh safe rahenge,' and they (Congress) are making fun of it and knocking on the doors of the Election Commission," he said. The BJP MP also questioned Congress leader Rahul

Gandhi's stance on the Constitution and criticised his party's approach to religious reservations. "They have a problem with unity and are conspiring with forces who want to break the country and are

trying to take away the rights of the poor OBCs to give them to Muslims. BJP will oppose every attempt to strip the marginalised and backward OBCs of their rights," Prasad said.

The BJP had on Saturday claimed that the Maharashtra unit of Congress assured a Muslim body that it would take steps to fulfil its demand of a 10 per cent quota for the community in jobs and education.

Prasad said the BJP would like to ask the Congress and INDIA bloc whether the benefits given to Scheduled Castes will also be extended to the Muslims. "It contradicts the principles of the Constitution, we will oppose it completely," he added.

# Odisha police tighten security along Jharkhand border ahead of Assembly elections

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Ahead of the first phase of polling for the assembly elections in Jharkhand on Wednesday, the Odisha police have tightened security in the districts sharing the border with the neighbouring state to ensure peaceful voting there, a senior police officer said.

Security has been tightened on the borders of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts close to Jharkhand. Check posts have been installed and armed personnel deployed round the clock to prevent entry of unwanted people and materials to the poll-bound state, said Odisha's ADG Law and Order Sanjay Kumar.

"The measures were taken after a meeting with the Election Commission of India (ECI). Odisha has already established 29 check posts in the border districts and intensified patrolling in all the sensitive



areas," the ADG said. Meanwhile, a report from Rourkela said that the Sundargarh police were in touch with the West Singhbhum district police. The objective of the coordination is to ensure that any attempt by Maoists to disrupt the elections is prevented.

Sundargarh has 75 km border with Jharkhand and most of the places are forested areas. The security arrangements were made in the wake of Bihar-Jharkhand Special Area Committee of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) outfit asking Jharkhand voters to boycott the election through posters and banners.

# Indian Army's Project Akashteer takes flight

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The phased induction of control and reporting systems under 'Project Akashteer' of the Indian Army is currently underway and out of a total requirement of 455 systems, 107 have been delivered, official sources said on Tuesday.

The project aims to deliver a situational awareness and control for the force to ensure safety of friendly aircraft and engage hostile aircraft in contested airspace. Through this project, a cutting-edge initiative designed to automate air defence control and reporting processes by digitising them, the Indian Army is positioning itself at the forefront of air defence technology, ensuring a secure and vigilant airspace over India, a source said.

Project Akashteer's phased induction is already underway. Out of a total requirement of 455 systems, 107 have been delivered, with an additional 105 expected by March 2025. The remaining units will be delivered by March 2027, ensuring comprehensive coverage across the Indian Army's defence units and formations, the source added. This significant achievement underscores the commitment of India's defence forces to innovate and enhance capabilities in response to "ever-evolving security dynamics", the sources said. Recently, "real-time validation" of Project Akashteer was carried out simulating scenarios as expected in future wars. A senior officer from military hierarchy witnessed the validation and



appreciated the achievements of the project and commended the team involved in developing it, a source said. The officer acknowledged their efforts and mentioned that it has realised a "transformative leap" in the Indian Army's air defence capabilities.

In the 'Year of Technology Infusion' (2024), the Army has boosted its air defence capabilities with 'Akashteer Control and Reporting Systems'. The deployment of 'Akashteer' had begun in April with the flagging off of the first batch of control centres from BEL-Ghaziabad. Developed by the Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) as part of the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative, this project is poised to significantly enhance the operational efficiency and integration of the Army's air defence mechanisms, sources earlier said. Some of the key features of 'Project Akashteer' include comprehensive sensor fusion; automated operations for faster response; decentralised engagement authority; advanced real-time air picture; built-in redundancy and scalability; and flexible deployment across formations, the sources said.

# India and Bangladesh strengthen ties: joint infrastructure development plans for shared border



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Bangladesh on Tuesday decided to enhance cooperation in building infra-

structure and operational efficiency at the various land ports and check-posts located along the 4,096-km long shared international border. The commitment was made

during the 6th Subgroup meeting of the Land Port Authority of India (LPAI) with the Bangladesh Land Port Authority (BLPA) here. The LPAI functions under the Union home ministry. The bilateral meeting aims to strengthen ties and discuss issues related to cross-border infrastructure, connectivity and facilitation of trade between the two nations. The Indian delegation was led by LPAI Member (Planning and Development) Sanjeev Gupta with officials drawn from the border management division of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Border Security Force (BSF),

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), and Customs, among others. The Bangladeshi side was led by BLPA Joint Secretary and Member (Development) Tahmina Yeasmin along with officials from the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and ministries of industries and shipping, among others. "Building on the discussions held at the last subgroup meeting in Dhaka in November 2023, the meeting reviewed the progress made on the previous initiatives and identified new areas for cooperation to enhance infrastructure and operational efficiency at the

land ports," an official statement said. The major agenda items discussed included developing port facilities at Gede (Darshna in West Bengal) and Bholaganj (Meghalaya), expediting clearance of Bangladesh's export cargo at Petrapole (West Bengal) and Agartala, prioritising the development of land ports and integrated check-posts (ICPs), and considering a common cargo gate at Bhomra (Ghojadanga in West Bengal), the statement said. The meeting also discussed facilitating the movement of Bangladeshi trucks carrying

exports to Nepal and Bhutan through Burimari and Banglabandha ports in that country, operationalising the land port at Sabroom (Tripura), developing the Tegamukh (Bangladesh)-Kawrpuchhuah (Mizoram) port, and establishing certain ports operational 24x7, it added. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to "deepen" India-Bangladesh relations, enhance bilateral trade, and advance shared goals for regional connectivity and economic growth through "collaborative" border management, the statement said.

# Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Dr. PK Mishra stresses need to mitigate glacial lake risks for safer communities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Dr. PK Mishra, on Tuesday highlighted mitigating risks associated with glacial lakes in order to ensure a safer future for our communities. Mishra was speaking on the occasion of 4th Workshop of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction (CoDRR) on Strategies for GLOF (Glacial Lake Outburst Flood) Risk Reduction here today. Complimenting the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the Department of Water Resources for organizing the workshop, he focused on international perspectives and experiences, pertinently India's experiences, gaps and challenges in mitigating the risks and related aspects. Mishra said that the discussions on Sikkim glacial lake outburst flood disaster has brought to focus the enormity of the challenge. Indeed, the South Lhonak GLOF was a wake-up call for



importance of collaboration in addressing global challenges like GLOF risks. On the International Cooperation side, Dr Mishra emphasized that India's commitment extends beyond national borders; hence the vital aspect of engaging with GLOF experts from countries such as Bhutan, Nepal, Peru, Switzerland and Tajikistan. He iterated that such collaboration is vital to enhancing our understanding of response strategies. Mishra underlined the key contributions from Experts from the country and abroad, who have enriched our understanding of the critical issues. He stressed that the Government of India initiated a coordinating platform named the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction (CoDRR). He also mentioned that States were encouraged to conduct expeditions to assess all A-category lakes in summer 2024, leading to significant engagement from local authorities.

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# No oral mentioning, only email or written: says CJI Sanjiv Khanna

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna on Tuesday said no oral submissions for urgent listing and hearing of cases will be permitted and urged lawyers to either send emails or written letters for it. Usually lawyers mention their cases before the CJI-led bench at the outset of the day's proceedings for out of turn listings and hearing of cases on grounds of urgency. "No written or oral mentionings anymore. Only in email or written slip/letters. Just state the reasons for urgency," the CJI said. The CJI has outlined a citizen-centric agenda for judicial reforms and said ensuring easy access to justice and equal treatment to citizens regardless of their status is the constitutional duty of the judiciary. Justice Khanna, who was sworn in as the 51st CJI by President Droupadi Murmu at the



Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday, expressed deep honour in leading the judiciary, the third pillar of democracy. "Judiciary is an integral, yet distinct and independent part of the governance system. The Constitution trusts upon us the role of constitutional guardian, protector of fundamental rights, and responsibility to fulfil the important task of being a service provider of justice," the CJI had said in his first statement on Monday. He said, "The justice delivery

framework in terms of providing equal treatment necessitates fair opportunity to succeed to all, regardless of status, wealth or power, and a just and unbiased adjudication. These mark our core principles." "The responsibility entrusted upon us affirms our commitment as protectors of citizens' rights and as dispute resolvers. It is our constitutional duty to ensure easy access to justice to all citizens of our great nation," he said. Chief Justice Khanna identified pressing challenges facing the

judiciary, including the need to reduce case backlogs, make litigation affordable, and simplify complex legal processes. Recognising that the justice system must cater to all citizens, he outlined a vision to make courts more approachable and user-friendly, said CJI. The CJI aimed to adopt a self-evaluative approach which is receptive and responsive to feedback in its working, the apex court said in a statement. "Making court judgments comprehensible to the citizens and promoting mediation will be a priority," it said. With a focus on criminal case management, the CJI pledged to prioritise reducing trial durations, adopting a systematic approach, and ensuring that legal procedures are not gruelling for citizens. He also highlighted the importance of promoting mediation to resolve disputes efficiently and provide timely justice.

# PM Modi to lay foundation stone for AIIMS Darbhanga



PTI ■ PATNA

All preparations have been made for the laying of the foundation stone for AIIMS Darbhanga by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday, Bihar Health Minister Mangal Pandey said. The north Bihar town will become the second place in the state, after capital city Patna, to have an All India Institute for Medical Sciences (AIIMS). "Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone for the second AIIMS in the state in Darbhanga tomorrow. All preparations have been made for the event. It will be a historic moment for the people of Mithila region in particular, and entire Bihar in general. The project will come up on Ekmi Shobhan Bypass at a cost of around Rs 1,700 crore," Pandey told PTI on Tuesday. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Union ministers Chirag Paswan and Jitan Ram Manjhi will also be present at the function. "The AIIMS at Darbhanga is a great gift given by the Centre to Bihar and its people. We thank the PM and Union Health Minister J P Nadda for giving the nod for it. "Under the leadership of our prime minister and chief minister, work on improving medical facilities in the state has progressed at a rapid pace and it will continue further. AIIMS Darbhanga will not only provide the best healthcare facilities to the people of Bihar but will also benefit the people of the neighbouring states," Pandey said. The Bihar government had recently transferred over 37 acres of additional land on Ekmi Shobhan Bypass to the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for the construction of the AIIMS, he said, adding the state government has so far provided 187.44 acres of land to the Union ministry for the project.

# Rahul Gandhi vows financial empowerment for women, youth and farmers ahead of Jharkhand elections



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said the INDIA bloc will give more money to women, youth, farmers and poor than the BJP has given to its "billionaire friends", adding that the alliance in Jharkhand has decided to hike the honorarium given to women to meet their needs to Rs 2,500. Rahul Gandhi's reiteration came a day ahead of the first phase of Assembly elections in Jharkhand to be held on November 13. "Yesterday, the fourth instalment of Maiyaa Samman Yojana was credited

to the accounts of mothers and sisters in Jharkhand. This scheme is especially helping women fight inflation and live with self-respect. That is why we have decided to further increase the amount given under this scheme," Rahul Gandhi said in a social media post in Hindi. From December 2024, women in Jharkhand will be given an honorarium of Rs 2,500 under the scheme which is benefiting 53 lakh women in the state, the Congress leader said. "I have said it before and I am repeating it -- INDIA (bloc) will give more money to women, youth, farmers and poor to meet their needs than what the BJP has given to its billionaire friends," the former Congress chief said. The Congress-Jharkhand Mukti Morcha combine is seeking to retain power in the 81-member Jharkhand Assembly, while the BJP is seeking to oust the ruling coalition in the polls to be held in two phases on November 13 and November 20. The results will be announced on November 23.

# India eyes \$100 billion Russia trade target ahead of 2030 deadline: EAM S Jaishankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India is confident of achieving USD 100 billion in annual bilateral trade with Russia well ahead of the timeline of 2030 and a more substantive relationship between the two nations has a larger global resonance, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said here on Tuesday. There have been challenges to trade, especially with regard to payments and logistics and perceptible progress has been made in that regard, but there is still some work to be done, he said. The external affairs minister was speaking at the 25th India - Russia International Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC). The Russian delegation at the meeting was led by First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov. In his televised opening remarks at the 25th session of the (IRIGC-TEC), Jaishankar said the trade between the two countries needs to be "more balanced and that would require



addressing current constraints and undertaking greater facilitative efforts." "As two major nations in an increasingly multipolar world, a more substantive relationship between us has a larger resonance," he said. The external affairs minister said New Delhi welcomes and fully reciprocates Moscow's growing interest in exploring economic opportunities in India. "Our economies are not only complementary in many respects but benefit from the trust and confidence built over many years.

programme and it would encourage joint ventures and other forms of collaboration between the two sides. "I am confident that we will achieve the trade target of USD 100 billion by 2030, well before that," he said. The external affairs minister also highlighted India's impressive growth rate in the last few decades. "India that has many decades of 8 per cent growth at least ahead of it obviously values a reliable partner when it comes to resources, technology and best practices," he said. Jaishankar also touched upon Russia's supply of fertilizers, crude oil and coal to India. "Russia has emerged as a major source of fertilizers for us. Its supply of crude oil, coal and uranium are indeed important. Similarly, India's pharmaceutical industry has emerged as an affordable and reliable source for Russia." "Looking ahead we are also exploring the mobility of talent, skills, customising them for the Russian market has to be a shared enterprise," he said.

The external affairs minister also talked about the importance of various connectivity projects. "Our joint endeavours in regard to connectivity, such as the International North-South Transport Corridor, the Chennai-Vladivostok Corridor and the Northern Sea Route must go forward," he said. "We will also be discussing cooperation critical for our food, energy and health security," he added. In his remarks, Manturov also delved into fast evolving trade ties between India and Russia. "Over the last five years, the trade turnover of our country has grown more than fivefold. And India is now the second country among all the foreign economic partners of Russia," he said. "Among other things, we confirm our strong commitment on signing the free trade agreement between the EEU (Eurasian Economic Union) and India, as well as the bilateral agreement on services and investments. This fully meets the needs of our business community," he said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Deliver tangible results

With 2024 set to be the hottest year on record, the stakes for COP29 are higher than ever

The 29th annual UN climate summit, COP29, has officially begun in Baku, Azerbaijan. This year's conference brings together diplomats, climate experts, activists, and political leaders from nearly 200 countries to address critical issues in the fight against climate change. However, the event is already facing challenges, both from the host country's fossil-fuel-centered economy and the re-election of Donald Trump as US President, which could impact future climate commitments from one of the world's largest emitters. COP29 is being held in Azerbaijan's capital, Baku, a decision that has sparked criticism from environmentalists worldwide, with activists like Greta Thunberg referring to the summit as a "greenwash conference." This year's COP has been dubbed the "Finance CoP" due to its focus on securing adequate funding for climate action. Low-and middle-income countries are advocating for significant financial support to help them reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to renewable energy. The UN estimates that developing countries, excluding China, need more than \$2 trillion annually by 2030 to make meaningful progress.



The current debate centers on who will finance these initiatives. In 2009, wealthier nations pledged \$100 billion annually in climate financing for developing countries, a goal they only reached two years behind schedule. Now, many of these recipient countries are calling for a new target of at least \$1 trillion per year to effectively address climate challenges. Countries such as China and the UAE, which are still classified as "developing" but are major emitters and fossil-fuel producers, face pressure to contribute more substantially to the climate finance fund. Another core issue at COP29 is the review of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the plans each country submits outlining their goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. With the next round of NDC updates due in early 2025, this summit is a crucial opportunity to solidify targets that align with the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius by 2100. The hope is that countries will commit to more ambitious emission reductions and be transparent about their paths toward net-zero emissions. COP28, held in Dubai in 2023, marked the first time a COP agreement openly called on countries to transition away from fossil fuels. However, progress has been inconsistent. The International Energy Agency's (IEA) tracking tool, established in April 2024, shows mixed results, with many countries struggling to meet their renewable energy targets. COP29 in Azerbaijan faces substantial challenges, from balancing climate goals with fossil fuel interests to addressing the financial needs of developing nations. If COP29 is to be a success, it must result in tangible commitments to climate finance, renewable energy, and unity among nations. This will be essential to ensuring that COP29 is remembered as a turning point in the global response to climate change—not as a missed opportunity.

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### PICTALK



Students pass by a wall painting depicting a scene from 'Krishna Leela', in Prayagraj

# Domestic tensions add to Oli's predicament



ASHOK K MEHTA

Amid a mounting internal criticism, Nepal's Prime Minister KP Oli faces daunting challenges, from managing a coalition to dealing with China

My Diwali and Tihar vacation in Nepal is continuing. Here is a flash report from Pokhara. After a turbulent 18-month rule, in which former Prime Minister Prachanda had to seek a vote of confidence five times, the two leading parties Nepali Congress and Unified Marxist Leninist unholy alliance ended CPN(Maoist) kingmaker Prachanda's rule of just 32 seats in a 205-member house. PM KP Oli-led coalition is short of a two-thirds majority. They share 4 to 3 in NC's favour in ruling the seven provinces. The promise of Ram-Rajya is unlikely to materialise. Two things stand out: an uneasy stability in government; and Oli's apparent unpopularity. Oli's only claim in his first 100 days is a positive stock market. And breaking the tradition of a Nepalese PM's first overseas visit to India by going first to China from 2 to 6 December, which high profile foreign minister Arzu Rana is organising, India not inviting Oli to become PM is a deliberate omission which was served to late PM Sushil Koirala also a decade ago. Oli's standing as a leader has diminished because he is a junior partner to NC which is seen favoured by India, and due to his apparent loss of control and power over UML. A front-page report in Kathmandu Post (5 November) illustrates this. But alleged corruption cases against him and his supporters including the super department store chain Bhat Bhateni owner Min Bahadur Gurung have dimmed his reputation. On occasions, he was greeted with the chant "Oli chor, desh chhod". Still, Oli retorted: "wait and watch my party perform during 2027 elections". He is hoping to resuscitate his image from his visit to China. His stock with India is low. While Rana was given a red carpet welcome in India - meeting PM Modi, NSA Ajit Doval and Secretary to Prime Minister PK Misra - Oli's meeting with Modi on the sidelines of UNGA was low-key. The China visit will have the Oli hallmark. He will meet President Xi Jinping, his counterpart Li



Qiang and Foreign Minister Wang Yi. He will try to convert the USD 250mn loan from the Exim Bank of China for the China-constructed Pokhara International Airport - a white elephant like Hambantota in Sri Lanka - to grant though China has insisted it is part of the BRI loan. Oli is expected to sign the BRI implementation plan which China has been pressing but so far, Nepal has resisted as Kathmandu wants BRI to come under a grant scheme and not a high-interest loan. The BRI deal has been pending since 2020. Oli during his 2018 China visit had outlined 35 projects which were trimmed to nine projects under BRI. If Oli can persuade China of his 'grant scheme for BRI' or place some of the nine projects under it, he will have made a big breakthrough. Strangely few protest about Chinese intrusions in the north. The Jeevan Bahadur Shahi report which had recently mapped Chinese encroachments, missing border pillars and illegal construction, has been quashed. Nepali leaders willingly oblige Beijing over the One China policy that has ensured the 'Great Wall of China' on the border to prevent Tibetan infiltration and migration to Dharamsala. Only one or two Tibetans slipped through this year. China wants Nepal to sign and ratify 'the Border

OLI'S ONLY CLAIM IN HIS FIRST 100 DAYS IS A POSITIVE STOCK MARKET. AND BREAKING THE TRADITION OF A NEPALESE PM'S FIRST OVERSEAS VISIT TO INDIA BY GOING FIRST TO CHINA FROM 2 TO 6 DECEMBER, WHICH HIGH PROFILE FOREIGN MINISTER ARZU RANA IS ORGANISING

Management System' which Kathmandu has not done so far. But Beijing hopes Oli will. China-Nepal relations were upgraded to Strategic Partnership during Xi's historic 2019 visit. The Xi visit was unique because none of the agreements signed had been implemented. A power trade agreement may be facilitated now after the completion of the 220 KVA transmission line from Rasuwagharhi to Kirung to sell power from Chinese hydro projects. It is in the energy sector that Nepal will eventually prosper. Bangladesh, Nepal and India signed a tripartite agreement for the 40MW sale of Nepal electricity to Bangladesh in the rainy season. India holds the key to the development of Nepal's power sector. Nepal is complaining about the Bureau of Indian Standards withholding certification of exports, especially with Chinese components which will hit Kathmandu, not Beijing. The opposition is in disarray with former Home Minister, once a rising star, Rabi Lamichhane, back in jail for the Pokhara Cooperative fraud. His party and his image have taken a beating though independents like Kathmandu Mayor, Balen Shah and Dharan Mayor, Harka Sampang, are progressing relentlessly to clean politics. While King Gyanendra's pop-

ularity may appear to be rising, a return to constitutional monarchy is unlikely despite his recent visit to Bhutan which triggered unusual speculation. It is India that is making quiet gains, the embassy keeping a low profile, letting PMO Delhi run the show. Lingering negativity about Indian interference has all but vanished. On Agniveer, the feeling among Indian Gorkha ex-servicemen is that Nepal should lift the embargo on it. "Something (even four years service) is better than nothing". Foreign Minister S Jaishankar's remarks in July on Agniveer (relating to Nepal) were clear. "India's foreign policy is determined by its national interest. Not by any other country". The message reportedly conveyed to Arzu Rana in Delhi was: "no change in terms of engagement on Agniveer" even as a review is ongoing. COAS Gen Dwivedi is arriving here on November 21 for a ceremonial appointment as Honorary Chief of Nepal Army which has lost its lustre because not a single Nepali has been recruited in the Indian Army for five years. (The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff; the views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### CHADRACHUD'S IMPACTFUL TENURE

Madam — Apropos your editorial, "A rich legacy," published on November 11. Justice DY Chandrachud's tenure as the CJI of India, which concluded on last Sunday, was marked by transformative rulings and substantial reforms, carving out a unique legacy in the Indian judicial history. The list of judgements penned by him is long and covers almost all aspects of law. They blend scholarship and jurisprudence and are likely to inform both future decisions and how the law is studied. Striking down the Electoral Bonds Scheme and upholding the abrogation of Article 370 are among his influential verdicts that stand pillars of his legacy. His decisions resonate not only within the corridors of the Supreme Court but also in the lives of countless Indians whose rights and freedoms he defended. Through humour, resilience, and an unwavering dedication to constitutional ideals, Chandrachud exemplified judicial leadership. As India's judicial landscape evolves, his tenure will be remembered as a testament to the power of law to uphold equality, integrity, and the spirit of democracy.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

### PRIORITISE MENTAL WELLBEING

Madam—Apropos to "Creating a workplace culture that truly supports mental health," published on November 11. It is good that they chose to focus on mental health in the workplace on Mental Health Day on October 10. Because the way few professionals in both the private and government sectors have taken their lives due to undue work pressure in the last few months is alarming, to say the least. Now a days, whoever is entering the corporate world is expected to be mentally strong to cope with the rising pressure and huge mismatch in work-life balance, but how would we justify the death of a young girl who has done well academically to clear CA and get into one of the top 4 consulting firms in the country and was forced to take her life in Pune? We in India have a very abysmal psychiatrist-patient

## A boost to women entrepreneurs



The Finance Minister launched five Nari Shakti branches of Union Bank of India for women entrepreneurs in a step to boost women's power. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman virtually inaugurated five Nari Shakti branches of Union Bank of India

from Bengaluru. She urged the bank to develop technology-driven, cluster-based schemes specifically tailored to support women, aiming to empower female entrepreneurs and strengthen financial inclusion for women across the country. Furthermore, she encouraged women entrepreneurs to make use of these schemes and contribute to job creation.

The Nari Shakti operates with a focus on extending credit to women entrepreneurs. In addition to financing women-owned manufacturing and service units, the bank will also focus on advisory services, workshops on start-ups, skill development programs, mentorship, networking, and collaborations. Union Bank of India has opened Nari Shakti branches in Bengaluru, Chennai, Visakhapatnam and Jaipur. It is a right step in the right direction.

Akhilesh Krishnan | Mumbai

ratio. We have 0.75 psychiatrists per 100,000 mental patients against the prescribed 3 psychiatrists. Though things are changing a bit and people are approaching mental health professionals after many celebrities have opened up about this, we still need to cover a long distance in terms of enhancing mental health infrastructure and speak openly about this. GoI would need to go all out to open thousands of mental health education institutes and hospitals to bridge this huge gap and encourage young students to take up this profession. We will have to teach our children about the importance of mental and emotional health and need to bring a drastic change in our society when it comes to talking about mental health issues. There should not be any stigma attached to it.

Bal Govind | Noida

### SMOKING BAN

Madam — The decision of the Karnataka government to ban smoking and tobacco consumption in government offices

and on its premises, though laudable, boils down to its efficacious implementation. Moreover, the state government circular has said precious little about the punishment for flouting rules. Having said that, the move is indeed praiseworthy because it will send a strong message to all stakeholders about the perils of smoking and chewed tobacco. Furthermore, passive smokers can have a sigh of relief as they stand to suffer as well from smoke. It is also time the Centre revisits COTPA and contemplates better execution of the Act. By "The Cigarette and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act 2003," also referred to as COTPA, smoking and consumption of other tobacco products in public places is prohibited nationwide. This Act also encompasses other requirements like displaying signage and enforcement.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Organic farming: Cultivating a climate-conscious future

Organic farming is emerging as a sustainable agricultural solution, offering an eco-friendly alternative to conventional farming practice

With a growing focus on environmental issues, organic farming has emerged as a powerful ally in the fight against climate change. As global temperatures climb and natural ecosystems deteriorate, there is a shared conviction among scientists, environmental activists and farmers about the pressing need to create sustainable methods for food production. Organic agriculture holds significance not just for cultivating food without synthetic pesticides and fertilisers, but also for fostering farming systems that harmonise with nature. Could organic farming be the answer to the climate crisis?



The fundamentals of organic farming lies in its significant potential to greatly diminish greenhouse gas emissions. The production of these, in conjunction with chemical pesticides, demands significant amounts of fossil fuels, whereas organic farms prioritise natural fertilisers and composts that enhance soil health over time. Environmental scientists, states, "Soil in organic farms often contains more carbon

because of the organic matter used." Healthier soil retains more moisture and serves as a carbon sink, effectively capturing CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere. Organic farming promotes a rich variety of life forms. The importance of biodiversity cannot be overstated when it comes to creating resilient ecosystems. Traditional monoculture farming strips the soil of essential nutrients, reduces the diversity of habitats, and leaves crops vulnerable to numerous pests and diseases. Organic farming often embraces a variety of crops, fosters the growth of wild plants in and around the farm, and supports pollinators like bees and butterflies. Organic farms can have as much as 30 per cent greater

species richness than conventional farms, allowing for a greater diversity of birds, insects, and other wildlife to flourish alongside agricultural activities. This is similar, in part, regarding the conservation of water. Organic farms utilise techniques such as mulching and crop rotation to effectively conserve water. These methods enhance the soil's composition and increase its ability to retain moisture. This is why the organic farm is more adept at managing droughts, as numerous regions impacted by climate change are grappling with this issue. Through organic farming, we're cultivating more than just crops; we're fostering a sustainable water cycle. While there are several advan-

tages to consider, some contend that relying solely on organic farming may not suffice to nourish the global population, as it tends to produce lower yields compared to traditional practices. Incorporating organic practices, such as crop rotation and minimising reliance on chemicals, into extensive agricultural operations significantly impacts the fight against climate change. Organic farming may not be a perfect solution, yet its environmental advantages are clear: reducing carbon emissions, conserving water, and boosting biodiversity are integral components of a comprehensive strategy in sustainable agriculture. As consumers, we can contribute by opting for organic products whenever we have the chance. Together, we can achieve significant strides towards a more sustainable world. The path to achieving climate resilience is intricate; nonetheless, by embracing organic farming, we can certainly sow the seeds for a greener future.

(The writer is a motivator and a freelance writer; views are personal)



RACHNA LAKHPATRI



## FIRST COLUMN

## BLESSINGS OVER BILLIONS

If we want to be happy, then we should earn blessings which is our real wealth



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

We all love money ...don't we? It's a fact that money makes the world go round because it can make the impossible possible and the unimaginable real. Hence, it won't be an exaggeration to say that money can do almost everything. (At least those who have it feel so for sure) There is a famous Hindi film song that says "The whole thing is that ki bhaiya Sabse Bada Rupaiya". We all have experienced how money can make people change their moods and colours in a jiffy. Haven't we? It can close the eyes, seal the mouth and deafen the ears wherever needed. We have seen in many scenes of movies how witnesses of crime turn a blind eye and a deaf ear and maintain a stony silence even though they know the truth.

Similarly in the world of business, money is the prime force behind the movers and shakers of mega deals, mergers and break-ups. Whether it's sports, entertainment or any other business, money can make cut-throat competitors get into cooperative mode in mutual interest. Money can match the mismatched, miss targets and change roles. At present it is observed that money has a considerable clout even in matters of faith. Like, it can gain you easy access to the holy citadels of godmen who may anoint you as their ardent follower. With money, you can also have a quick darshan of your favourite lord at the temple without having to wait in long queues. The list is unending. In short, money can buy anything and everything under the sun that can be bought. Though money creates this illusion that we are living in paradise money cannot



do any of the following for us. Like, money can buy us a beautiful house but not a happy home; it can buy us delicious food and expensive health-care but not good health; it can provide us with high security but it cannot guarantee even minimum safety; it can buy us countless things for entertainment but not cheer and joy; it can buy us a comfortable bed but not sound sleep; it can buy name and fame but not real respect; it can buy the best contacts and relations but not true and honest love; it can buy crowns and thrones but not real power; it can buy good education but not intelligence and wisdom & lastly it can bail us out from the worst crimes but it cannot help us escape divine justice & buy us liberation from our sins and sufferings.

So, no matter if money does make the world go round, at the end of all the going round, we reach nowhere and get nothing substantial and real and end up being more impoverished than ever. Since ages, our scriptures and sages have spoken about the vices and virtues. Of all the vices like lust, anger, attachment, greed and ego, the most dangerous and subtle is "Greed". It is said that greed is such a kind of hunger that's never satisfied. Our desire for food ends when our hunger is appeased, our anger also subsides when its purpose is achieved, but! Greed is not satisfied even if we get the kingdom of the whole world.

Hence, it is this tendency, which is created by wealth, in a person who possesses it, that leads to corruption at all levels. So, does it mean one should not recognise the importance of money? Not really! Instead, we must understand that money or wealth is merely a tool that has to be used wisely and without greed, attachment or selfishness to create happiness for all. Hence, as long as we use it as a master's, it will bring us benefit and happiness. As soon as we become slaves to it, it will bring loss and misery. An enlightened person would always use money for the maximum good of a maximum number of people, whereas for a spiritually empowered soul, money becomes a tool to create good karma and a good destiny for the self and others. So, the story's moral is that money has never made man permanently happy, nor will it. Hence if we want to be happy, then we should earn blessings which is our real wealth and which would go along with birth after birth. Think about it!

(The writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist; views are personal)

## IFFI 2024: A global stage for cinema, culture and talent



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

This year's edition reaffirms IFFI's role as a powerful force in global cinema, connecting storytellers, industry leaders and audiences in a shared appreciation of the cinema



The 55th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) is set to bring a fresh wave of cinematic celebration to the scenic coast of Goa from November 20th to 28th, 2024. This year's festival promises to be more than just a film showcase; it's a convergence of global cultures, a launchpad for emerging voices, and a profound tribute to India's cinematic legacy. IFFI 2024 is a bold step forward, not only in its evolution but as a distinctive international film festival that celebrates both India's vibrant culture and the art of cinema on a global stage. This year, IFFI spotlights Australia as its "Country of Focus," emphasising the festival's commitment to bridging cultures and fostering international understanding. This section invites Indian audiences to dive into the heart of Australian cinema, exploring a curated selection of films that range from gritty dramas to adventurous comedies and reflective documentaries.

Through this focused lens, audiences will experience the unique and evolving cinematic language of Australia, making IFFI a powerful platform for cross-cultural appreciation and dialogue. In doing so, IFFI 2024 goes beyond traditional film screening to create an immersive experience that positions the festival as a bridge between the stories, people, and cultures of the world. IFFI 2024's newest addition, the "Best Debut Director of Indian Feature Film" award, shines a spotlight on the next generation of Indian filmmakers. This award isn't just a recognition; it's a pivotal moment in a young director's career, marking a path for fresh perspectives in Indian cinema.

By dedicating this category to first-time directors, IFFI signals its commitment to nurturing innovative voices and helping them gain visibility in an increasingly competitive industry. While many international film festivals focus on established talents, IFFI's recognition of debut filmmakers reflects its dedication to fostering growth and embracing the future of Indian cinema. This year's festival also pays homage to four towering icons of Indian cinema: Raj Kapoor,



WITH OVER 200 FILMS FEATURED IN ITS VIEWING ROOM, FILM BAZAAR IS WHERE STORIES FIND INVESTORS, FILMS CONNECT WITH DISTRIBUTORS, AND COLLABORATIONS ARE BORN

Tapan Sinha, Akkineni Nageswara Rao (ANR), and Mohammed Rafi. These legends shaped India's cinematic legacy and captured the hearts of audiences across generations. By featuring restored classics and specially curated presentations, IFFI brings their artistry to life for a new generation and provides international attendees with a meaningful glimpse into India's rich cinematic history. This tribute serves as a reminder of the depth of Indian cinema, its transformative impact on culture, and the enduring relevance of these trailblazers. IFFI's Film Bazaar, now in its 18th year, stands out as a dynamic marketplace that brings together filmmakers, financiers, distributors, and international industry leaders.

With over 200 films featured in its Viewing Room, Film Bazaar is where stories find investors, films connect with distributors and collaborations are born. This dedicated platform sets IFFI apart from other festivals focused solely on screenings by creating opportunities for projects to grow and flourish beyond the festival circuit. For both Indian and international filmmakers, Film Bazaar represents a gateway to global audiences and a rare chance to network and secure support for future projects. The Indian Panorama section of IFFI has become a hallmark of the festival, offering audiences a diverse selection of contemporary Indian cinema. With 25 feature films and 20 non-feature films selected for their cinematic excellence, thematic resonance and aesthetic creativity, Indian Panorama showcases the vibrancy and diversity of Indian storytelling.

For international attendees, it provides an authentic insight into India's socio-cultural landscape, spotlighting everything from regional narratives to avant-garde experiments. This section rein-

forces IFFI's mission to present Indian cinema in all its depth and diversity, making it an invaluable part of the global cinematic conversation. One of IFFI 2024's standout initiatives is "Creative Minds of Tomorrow" (CMOT), a programme by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) dedicated to nurturing young filmmakers. CMOT provides a platform for emerging voices to showcase short films, documentaries and animations, facilitating connections with seasoned industry professionals. Through CMOT, IFFI is not only showcasing young talent but also empowering the next generation of Indian filmmakers with the resources and connections to succeed.

This initiative solidifies IFFI's role as a festival that goes beyond celebration to become a nurturing ground for creativity and growth. In line with the essence of Bharat Parv, which captured the world's attention at Cannes 2024, IFFI brings forth a celebration of India's diverse cultural heritage. Bharat Parv, a campaign highlighting India's rich traditions and unity in diversity, finds its cinematic expression at IFFI, where films, events, and programming reflect India's multifaceted identity. This celebration of Indian culture provides international visitors with an immersive experience and a deeper understanding of India's story, offering a window into its heritage through the powerful lens of cinema.

IFFI 2024 arrives at a transformative moment for Indian cinema, serving as a platform to elevate Indian filmmakers onto the world stage. The festival's emphasis on emerging talent, global collaboration, and cultural exchange aligns with India's aspirations to be a global leader in the arts. IFFI's unique combination of industry

initiatives, recognition of fresh voices and celebration of cinematic heritage enables it to play a pivotal role in the growth of Indian cinema and its reception on the global stage. This year's edition promises to leave an indelible impact on the industry, redefining IFFI as a festival that doesn't just reflect India's cinematic culture but actively shapes its future. For international filmmakers, IFFI 2024 offers an unparalleled opportunity to connect with India's vibrant cinematic landscape.

By providing exposure to a diverse Indian audience, access to Film Bazaar's resources and engagement with sections like the Australian showcase, IFFI offers international filmmakers insights into India's tastes, trends, and opportunities. IFFI's homage to iconic Indian artists also provides a rich cultural context that enables international guests to appreciate the legacy and contributions of Indian cinema. Through these interactions, IFFI creates a unique, collaborative environment that enriches both Indian and global cinema.

The 55th IFFI is a festival that seamlessly merges tradition with forward-thinking innovation, paying tribute to the giants of Indian cinema while embracing the voices of tomorrow. From the spirit of Bharat Parv to the debut of a new award for emerging talent, IFFI 2024 embodies the evolving nature of cinema and celebrates the power of storytelling as a tool for connection. As the festival draws international filmmakers, industry leaders, and audiences together, it positions India as a key player in global cinema and reaffirms IFFI as a festival of lasting impact and vision.

(The writer is former additional DG, DFF and festival director, IFFI; inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavi Srinivasan; Views expressed are personal)

## Staying grounded: Lessons from the 1984 elections and anti-Sikh riots

Both politicians and journalists risk misjudgment when they distance themselves from the realities on the ground

The 1984 election results were a shock to many. Rajiv Gandhi won a record-breaking 414 seats, toppling major political figures. Veteran leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Chandra Shekhar faced unexpected defeats—Vajpayee in Gwalior and Chandra Shekhar in Ballia. But this story is less about the triumphs or losses and more about a crucial lesson this journalist learned from an open-hearted conversation with Chandra Shekhar. In an interview, this journalist asked the seasoned leader if he had anticipated the wave that swept away even stalwarts like himself. Chandra Shekhar replied candidly: "To be honest, I had become



MANOJ RAHGUVANSHI

disconnected from the grass roots. I didn't realise there was such a wave." This realisation left a lasting impact on the journalist, shaping their perspective going forward.

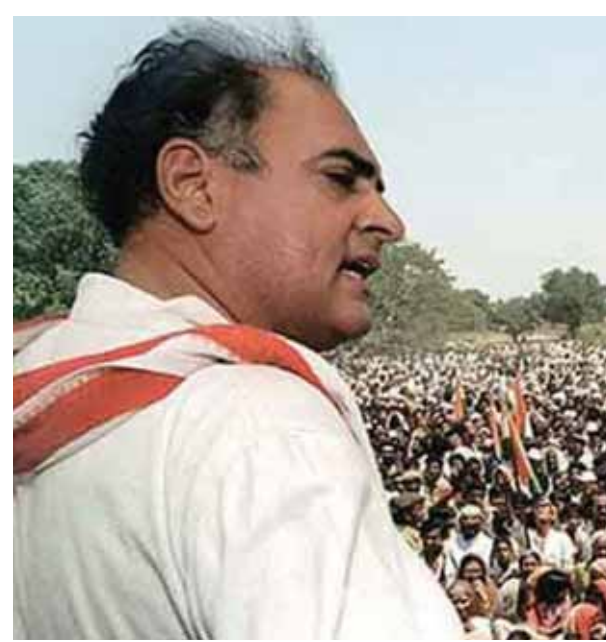
The same kind of shock had reverberated through the nation during the 1977 elections, but in the opposite direction. Indira Gandhi was

ousted from power, losing her own seat in Rae Bareilly, while her son Sanjay Gandhi lost in Amethi.

The Congress party was routed, failing to win a single seat in Uttar Pradesh or Bihar. Despite her stature and the counsel of her closest advisors, Indira Gandhi had also become detached from grassroots sentiment. This disconnect was something this journalist later witnessed in the field of journalism itself. During the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, this journalist returned from the field after witnessing the violence firsthand. His editor, Ayub Syed, was discussing the events with a senior journalist, OP Sabherwal, who was analysing the riots from afar.

Sabherwal likened the situation to 1947, predicting that the riots would continue indefinitely.

The journalist respectfully intervened, sharing what he had observed in RK Puram: a Gurdwara under attack, granthis being rescued by the army, looters scattering when a single soldier raised his hand, and a crowd dispersing with just a shout. He explained to his seniors that the violence was being stoked by the Congress government, with rioters emboldened by police assurances of impunity. The journalist conveyed that the riots were far from uncontrollable and could be stopped whenever the government chose. And he was proven right; the violence



ceased once the government decided it had gone too far. The lasting lesson? Whether a politician or a journalist, detachment from reality clouds judgment. Without a connection to the ground, even the most obvious forces at play can go unseen. The 1984 election and subsequent events taught a vital lesson about staying connected to the grassroots. Rajiv Gandhi's landslide victory, which swept aside prominent leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Chandra Shekhar, highlighted how even seasoned politicians could lose touch with public sentiment.

In a candid interview, Chandra Shekhar admitted his own disconnect from the grassroots, mirroring

the misjudgment that cost Indira Gandhi the 1977 election. This theme resonated again during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, where a journalist's firsthand observations clashed with distant analyses in the newsroom. The violence, stirred by political agendas, was ultimately controllable when authorities chose to act.

The takeaway? For both politicians and journalists, a disconnect from on-the-ground realities can obscure clear judgment, leaving critical forces unrecognised. Staying rooted is essential to understanding and addressing the true dynamics at play in any situation.

(The writer is a senior journalist; views expressed are personal)





# UK reiterates support for India's permanent UNSC seat

PTI ■ LONDON

The UK has reiterated its support for permanent membership for India in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as part of an expansion of the international panel to ensure it can continue to rise to the pressing challenges faced by the world.

Brazil, Germany and Japan. "The UK believes that a reformed Council, coupled with a collective, renewed commitment to the UN Charter, would strengthen the Council, so it can continue to rise to the challenges the world is facing; that is why we remain a strong supporter of UN Security Council Reform. The Council must be expanded, to better reflect the world today," said Young.

UN representative recalled the perilous and dangerous state of the world at the time and the challenge this posed to the multilateral system. He noted: "A year later, the situation is even more acute, and the need to strengthen our multilateral system through reform, ever more pressing."

and security – is as important now as it has ever been," he added. Young admitted that agreeing on a model of reform for the Security Council will be "difficult" but asserted the importance of tackling the issue.

# Developing countries must not leave Baku empty-handed: UN Secretary-General

PTI ■ BAKU

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres Tuesday urged world leaders to ensure that COP29 must tear down the walls of climate finance, warning that "developing countries must not leave Baku empty-handed".



Addressing the opening ceremony of the World Leaders Climate Action Summit at COP29 here, Guterres sought urgent measures to support developing nations, which are bearing the brunt of climate-fuelled catastrophes despite contributing relatively little to global emissions.

"The rich cause the problem, the poor pay the highest price," Guterres said, pointing out that developing nations face disproportionate impacts from climate change, such as food insecurity, infrastructure damage, and biodiversity loss.

adequate support. He proposed a five-point finance plan that includes boosting concessional public finance, tapping into innovative revenue sources, and transforming multilateral banks to channel greater investment into these regions.

# Trump taps Marco Rubio as Secretary of State

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President-elect Donald Trump has tapped Florida Senator Marco Rubio as his Secretary of State and Congressman Mike Waltz as his National Security Adviser. Rubio, 53, is considered to be a friend of India and has been an advocate of the India-US relationship, while Waltz, 50, is an old-India hand and has been co-chair of the Congressional Caucus for India and Indian Americans for years.



By picking Rubio and Waltz as his top diplomat and NSA guarantees a continuation of bipartisan support and further strengthening of India-US relationship under the second Trump administration. The news of these two major appointments came as the Republican party won a majority in the House of Representatives, thus giving Trump control over both the wings of the US Congress. The role of NSA does not require Senate confirmation.

# 35 killed as man rams car into crowd in China

PTI ■ BEIJING

Thirty-five people were killed and 43 others injured when a 62-year old man rammed his car into a crowd in China's Zhuhai City on Monday, official media reported on Tuesday. Zhuhai is currently hosting China's prestigious airshow.

# UN climate chief calls for urgent climate action to counter economic fallout

PTI ■ BAKU

Issuing a stark warning on the massive economic toll of climate change, UN Climate Change chief Simon Stiell on Tuesday said its worsening impacts will put "inflation on steroids" and urged nations to take more decisive action.

with impacts already draining up to 5 per cent of GDP in various countries. Highlighting the urgent need for bold policies, Stiell underscored how climate impacts have evolved from a "distant concern" to an "immediate financial threat", and emphasised that worsening climate events are no longer just a future generations' issue.

warned. Drawing parallels with the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on supply chains and economic stability, Stiell urged nations to tread climate finance as "global inflation insurance" rather than an optional agenda item.

lution. The UN climate chief also emphasised the importance of setting a robust global climate finance goal, framing it as a non-negotiable outcome for COP29.



Smoke rises after an Israeli airstrike on Dahiyeh, in the southern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon on Tuesday. AP/PTI

# Israeli strikes set off explosions in Beirut suburbs

AP ■ DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA)

Israeli airstrikes hit a cafeteria and a home in Gaza, killing at least 14 people, medical officials said. In Lebanon, warplanes struck the capital Beirut's southern suburbs on Tuesday after the military ordered a number of houses there to evacuate.

northern Israel. At the same time, Israel has continued its campaign in Gaza, now more than 13 months old, triggered by Hamas' October 7, 2023 attack on southern Israel. An Israeli strike late Monday hit a makeshift cafeteria used by displaced people in Muwasi, the centre of a "humanitarian zone" that Israel's military declared earlier in the war.

Hospital, which received the casualties. The strike also wounded 11 others, it said. The Israeli military had no immediate comment on the strikes. Hours earlier, the Israeli military announced a small expansion of the humanitarian zone, where it has told Palestinians evacuating from other parts of Gaza to take refuge. Hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians are sheltering in sprawling tent camps in and around Muwasi, a largely desolate area of dunes and agricultural fields with few facilities or services along the Mediterranean coast of southern Gaza.

allowed in for more than a month, the siege has raised fears of famine among the tens of thousands of Palestinians believed still sheltering there. An October 13 letter signed by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin gave Israeli 30 days to, among other things, allow a minimum of 350 truckloads of goods to enter Gaza each day.

So far, Israel has fallen short. In October, 57 trucks a day entered Gaza on average, and 70 a day in the 10 days of November, according to Israeli figures. The UN puts the number lower, at 37 trucks daily since the beginning of October. Israel has announced a flurry of measures in recent days to increase aid, including opening a new crossing into central Gaza. But so far the impact is unclear.

# Aid groups say Israel misses US deadline to boost humanitarian help for Gaza

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel has failed to meet United States demands to allow greater humanitarian access to the war-ravaged Gaza Strip, where conditions are worse than at any point in the 13-month-old war, international aid organisations said Tuesday.

downplay the deadline, telling reporters on Monday he was confident "the issue would be solved." The Biden administration may have less leverage after the reelection of Donald Trump, who was a staunch supporter of Israel in his first term.

Israel to halt legislation that would hinder the operations of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA. Despite Israeli steps to increase the flow of aid, levels remain far below the U.S. benchmarks. The promised fifth crossing was set to open Tuesday, but residents remain crammed in the tent camps and access for aid workers to northern Gaza remains restricted.

Save the Children. US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller last week said Israel had made some progress, but needs to do more to meet the US conditions. "What's important when you see all of these steps taken is what that means for the results," he said.

ute aid on the Gaza side. In October, 57 trucks a day entered Gaza on average, according to Israeli figures, and 81 a day in the first week of November. The UN puts the number lower, at 37 trucks daily since the beginning of October.

agencies' failure to collect aid that entered Gaza, leading to bottlenecks, and looting from Hamas and organized crime families in Gaza, he said. He estimated as much as 40% of aid is stolen on some days.

third of whom are believed to be dead. Israel's bombardment and ground invasion have killed over 43,000 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to local health authorities, who do not say how many of those killed were militants.

staunch defender of Israel during his previous term, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says they have spoken three times since his reelection last week. Israeli President Isaac Herzog, whose role is mostly ceremonial, is scheduled to meet with U.S. President Joe Biden on Tuesday.

# Vistara flies final journey as it merges with Air India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



After operating for nearly 10 years, full service carrier Vistara flew into the sunset on Tuesday early morning operating its last flight from the national capital to Singapore.

Vistara a joint venture between Tata and Singapore Airlines has now merged with Air India, creating an enlarged entity that is now the country's largest international carrier and second-largest domestic carrier.

UK115 flight from Delhi to Singapore was the last flight of Vistara with the code 'UK' while UK986 from Mumbai to Delhi was the carrier's last domestic flight. Starting a new chapter in India's fast-growing civil aviation space, the merged entity operated its first flight with the code 'AI2286' from

Doha to Mumbai. In the domestic sector, the integrated entity's first flight AI2984 took off from Mumbai to Delhi. All the four flights landed at their respective destinations early in the morning on Tuesday, according to information available on the flight tracking website

Flightradar24.Com. According to an official, the two airlines have been merged, passengers are being issued Air India boarding passes and check-in counters of Vistara at airports have become that of Air India. The code 'AI2XXX' is being used for Vistara flights that are being operated by Air

India post the merger to help passengers identify the Vistara flight at the time of booking. On Monday, an official said the integrated entity will be operating services on 103 domestic and 71 international routes. With the merger, first announced in November 2022, Singapore

Airlines will have a 25.1 per cent stake in the integrated entity, which will operate more than 5,500 weekly flights on local and international routes.

A formal announcement about the merger is expected later in the day. Air Group has led the consolidation wave in Indian aviation with two major mergers in less than two months. AIX Connect was integrated with Air India Express on October 1 and now the merger of Vistara with Air India. Air India, Vistara and AIX Connect together had a domestic market share of little over 29 per cent in September, as per latest official data. Together, the Air India group has an operational fleet of 298 aircraft around 208 with Air India and about 90 with Air India Express.

# Nirmala Sitharaman to meet state FMs for pre-Budget

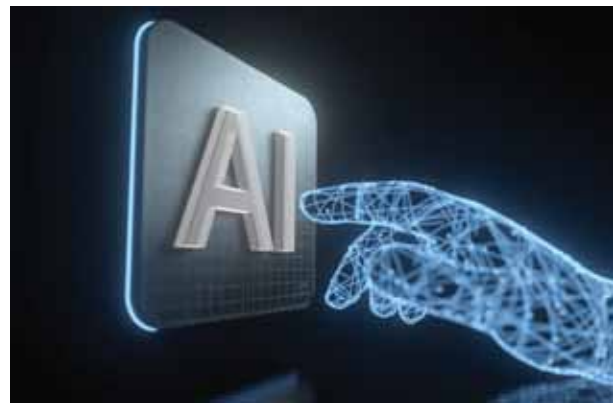
PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is likely to meet her state counterparts on December 21-22 for pre-budget consultations and meeting of the GST Council, an official said. The meeting assumes significance as states finance ministers would present their recommendations for 2025-26 Budget to be unveiled on February 1, 2025. The 55th GST Council meeting would be held during one of these two days in which the much awaited decision on exemption or lower GST rate on health and life insurance would be taken. The Council may also take up some rationalisation exercise and reduce tax rates on a host

of common items from 12 per cent to 5 per cent as per the recommendations of a panel of state ministers.

The two-day meeting is slated to take place in Rajasthan, either in Jaipur or Jodhpur, the official added. Last month, the group of ministers (GoM) on health and life insurance GST broadly agreed on exempting insurance premiums paid for term life insurance policies, and senior citizens' health insurance from GST. Also, GST on premiums paid by individuals, other than senior citizens, for health insurance with coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh is proposed to be exempted. However, 18 per cent GST will continue on premiums paid for policies with health insurance cover of over Rs 5 lakh.

The GST Council in its 54th meeting on September 9 had tasked the GoM to finalise the report on GST levy on insurance by October-end. Separately, the GoM on GST rate rationalisation has also suggested that the GST Council rejig tax rates on a host of goods, including packaged drinking water, bicycles, exercise notebooks, luxury wrist watches, and shoes. This rate rejig is expected to result in revenue gain of about Rs 22,000 crore. The GoM on rate rationalisation proposed reducing GST on packaged drinking water of 20 litre and above to 5 per cent from 18 per cent. If the GoM's recommendation is accepted by the GST Council, GST on bicycles costing less than Rs 10,000 will be reduced to 5 per cent from 12 per cent.



# Majority of Indian businesses invest in AI but only 39 per cent ready to fight ransomware attacks: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Spotlighting a critical vulnerability in the country's cybersecurity landscape, a recent report has said while Indian businesses are actively looking to capitalise on AI and investments are rising, only 39 per cent of them are prepared to survive a prolonged ransomware attack.

Cybersecurity firm Sophos on Tuesday unveiled the "Cybersecurity Playbook for Partners in Asia Pacific and Japan", which stressed the urgent need for enhanced security measures as organisations increasingly face sophisticated cyber threats, especially those augmented by artificial intelligence (AI).

The findings revealed that while 70 per cent of Indian organisations have implemented cloud security strategies and over half of the respondents surveyed are investing in AI-driven security measures, a significant gap remains in overall preparedness.

"Only 49 per cent have established security maturity frameworks and 44 per cent report meeting security standards. Additionally, just 39 per cent feel prepared to withstand a prolonged ransomware attack, underscoring the ongoing need for robust cybersecurity advancements," the report said.

While Indian businesses are embracing AI to enhance operations, they also recognise its dual nature both

as an asset and as a potential security risk, it added. The research, conducted in July 2024, surveyed 900 companies across India, Australia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore, of which 200 were from India.

Commenting on the dual nature of AI in cybersecurity, Sunil Sharma, Vice President of Sales for Sophos in India, said enterprises are taking AI seriously, both as a powerful ally and a potential threat. "The fact that organisations are significantly boosting their cybersecurity budgets is a great sign that the country is committed to protecting its digital infrastructure. The growing investment in key areas such as threat detection, incident recovery, and data protection not only reflects the proactive stance of Indian businesses but also highlights their readiness to tackle the complex challenges posed by AI-driven cyber risks," he said.

Further, the survey revealed that only 5 per cent of Indian firms depend on a single security vendor, while 71 per cent utilise three or more to handle their cybersecurity demands. Multi-vendor setups are anticipated to increase as businesses look for specialised, adaptable solutions. The increasing investments in cybersecurity and the preference towards multiple expert vendors present a significant opportunity for MSPs to help enterprises improve their customers' defences with a customised approach, Sharma said.

# IndiGo seeks extension of Boeing 777 lease amid rising international demand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Finance Minister IndiGo is working with the civil aviation ministry to explore the possibility of extending the wet lease of wide-body Boeing 777 planes from Turkish Airlines, as the existing lease period is ending this week.

Currently, IndiGo is operating two wet-leased Boeing 777 planes for flights from Delhi and Mumbai to Istanbul. These are also the only two wide-body aircraft that are in the fleet of the airline, which is India's largest carrier with a domestic market share of over 62 per cent.

These aircraft were wet-leased to cater to the rising demand for international travel from

India. IndiGo started operating its first wide-body Boeing 777 aircraft on the Delhi-Istanbul route from February 1, 2023, and began operating the Boeing 777 plane on the Mumbai-Istanbul route from May 17, 2023.

Sources in the know said the airline has not received an extension for continuing with the wet lease of the aircraft. When contacted, an IndiGo spokesperson on Monday told PTI that the airline is "working with the ministry to explore solutions to extend the wet lease as our AOG (Aircraft On Ground) related capacity constraints, while improving, are not entirely behind us".

The two Boeing 777 planes will be operated by IndiGo till



November 14 for the flights from Delhi and Mumbai to Istanbul.

From November 15, the airline will be deploying A321 aircraft for operating these flights, according to information available on

flight tracking website Flightradar24.Com.

Wet lease of an aircraft by an Indian carrier involves the leasing of foreign aircraft, along with crew, maintenance and insurance. The plane is also under the

operational control of the foreign operator (lessor) and subject to regulatory requirements of the foreign civil aviation authority concerned.

The safety oversight of such operations is also under the purview of the foreign authority concerned, and the role of Indian carriers is limited to commercial aspects of operations.

While announcing the induction of the second Boeing 777 plane into its fleet in May 2023, IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers said the new aircraft will not only increase capacity on the route but also help keep the fares affordable. The Boeing 777 aircraft has a seating capacity of 400 passengers in a dual-class configuration with 24

business and 376 economy class seats, the airline said. In the wake of Pratt & Whitney engine issues, the airline has grounded many aircraft, impacting its capacity.

Last month, IndiGo, which also became India's first airline to have more than 400 aircraft, said the number of grounded aircraft has reduced to the high 60s from the mid-70s and will further come down to the sub-60 level by the year-end.

At the end of September, the carrier had a fleet of 410 planes. As part of expanding its international network to long-haul destinations, IndiGo, in May this year, placed a firm order for 30 Airbus A350-900 aircraft.

# NSE inks pact with Zomato to empower delivery partners with financial literacy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) on Tuesday said it has inked a pact with online food delivery platform Zomato to promote financial literacy and investor awareness programmes among the gig economy workers.

This partnership aims to launch an extensive financial literacy and investor awareness drive, specifically designed for Zomato's delivery partners, impacting the lives of over 50,000 gig workers across the country, NSE said in a statement.

As a part of the pact, fundamental aspects of personal finance management and the basics of investing will be covered. Topics will include budgeting, saving, investing, debt management, and insurance, among others. To ensure accessibility and inclusivity, the programme will be conducted in multiple regional languages, catering to a diverse audience among the gig workforce.

"This partnership with Zomato is a significant step in expanding our outreach to a



critical segment of the workforce that drives the digital economy. By equipping delivery partners with financial skills, we aim to contribute to their financial independence and overall financial well-being," Sriram Krishnan, Chief Business Development Officer, NSE, said.

Rakesh Ranjan, CEO, Food Delivery, Zomato, said, this programme has been curated to suit delivery partners' needs to equip them with the right knowledge and skill-set to become financially independent.

"Over 2,000 delivery partners have already taken a step toward financial literacy, and we're looking forward to scaling this further in the next few months."

# Rupee closes all-time low against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee fell 1 paisa to a new lifetime low of 84.39 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday as persistent foreign fund outflows and a strengthening greenback against major crosses overseas dented investor sentiments.

Forex traders said the rupee is likely to trade between 83.80 and 84.50 in the medium term, with the Reserve Bank of India likely limiting any significant downside, aided by its robust foreign exchange reserves.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 84.39 against the US dollar. During the session, the local currency touched a high of 84.39 and a low of 84.41. It finally settled at 84.40 (provisional), a decline of just 1 paisa against the US dollar, registering a loss for the fifth straight session.

On Monday, the rupee dropped 1 paisa to hit a new lifetime low of 84.38 against the US dollar.

In the last five sessions, the local unit has lost 32 paisa against the greenback.

"The rupee traded weaker as foreign funds continued their selling spree in the Indian market. However, the rupee received some relief from



falling crude and gold prices, as the reduced pace of decline could potentially improve India's import bill in the coming months," said Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities.

Despite this, the dollar index's continued strength above 105 is expected to maintain pressure on the rupee, limiting any significant recovery in the near term.

"With resistance near the 84.25-84.30 zone and support is seen lower at 84.55. This week's focus will be on the US CPI data release, which could influence the dollar's trajectory. Additionally, US Fed Chairperson Jerome Powell's upcoming speech is expected to provide insights

that may drive price action in the dollar, currently trading at a four-month high of 105.75," Trivedi said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.06 per cent higher at 105.60. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.60 per cent to USD 72.26 per barrel in futures trade.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell 820.97 points, or 1.03 per cent, to close at 78,675.18 points, while Nifty fell 257.85 points, or 1.07 per cent, to settle at 23,883.45 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Monday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 2,306.88 crore, according to exchange data.

Meanwhile, an SBI research report on Monday said that the rupee may depreciate 8-10 per cent against the US dollar during the Trump 2.0 regime. The report, titled US Presidential Election 2024: How Trump 2.0 Impacts India's and Global Economy, emphasised that the rupee can have a brief spell of depreciation against the US dollar, followed by appreciation.

# Sensex, Nifty slump one per cent



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty slumped 1 per cent each on Tuesday due to widespread selling pressure amid uninterrupted foreign fund outflows and sluggish global trends.

The BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled 820.97 points or 1.03 per cent to settle at 78,675.18. During the day, it plunged 948.31 points or 1.19 per cent to 78,547.84. Falling for the third day running, the NSE Nifty tanked 257.85 points or 1.07 per cent to 23,883.45.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, NTPC, Asian Paints, HDFC Bank, State Bank of India, Tata Motors, JSW Steel, Maruti and Power Grid were among the major laggards.

On the other hand, Sun Pharma, Infosys and ICICI Bank were the gainers. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,306.88 crore on Monday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) infused Rs 2,026.63 crore in shares, according to exchange data.

"Two strong factors have been at play in this consolidating market. One, the relentless selling by FIIs has been favouring the bears and pulling the market down. Two, the sustained buying by DIIs has been supporting the market preventing a crash in the market. How the market will trend in the coming days will depend on the relative strength of these two factors," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the negative territory. European equity markets were also trading in the red. Wall Street ended higher on Monday.

# SEBI extends deadline for comments on proposed specified digital platform

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday extended the deadline for public comments till November 26 on the proposal concerning requirements for recognition as specified digital platforms (SDPs).

Earlier, the comments from the public were sought till November 12.

"Based on the representations received by Sebi from some of the entities/organisations, it has been decided to extend the timeline to submit the public comments on the consultation paper till November 26, 2024," the regulator said in a statement. In its consultation paper, Sebi proposed requirements for recognition as specified digital platforms whereby such platforms should proactively prevent fraud, impersonation, unauthorised claims, and unregistered



entities from operating. The regulator suggested that specified digital platforms use artificial intelligence or machine learning (AI/ML) tools to identify content or ads related to securities, ensuring the entity is Sebi-registered or permitted, no unauthorised advice, recommendations, or performance claims are made.

The platform should ensure that genuine investor education content is allowed and content does not redirect users to other media such as WhatsApp or Telegram for unauthorised activities, Sebi stated.

Also, the platform should share data with the regulator when requested and act on its inputs. It should provide badges to

Sebi-registered entities to help users identify authorised participants. The regulator proposed that only Sebi-registered entities, permitted advertisers, or educational content providers can post securities-related content on the platform. Additionally, such platforms can remove fraudulent or non-compliant content and

penalise offenders.

On October 22, Sebi provided a three-month window to entities registered with it, and their agents, to terminate their existing contracts with unregistered financial advisors.

This was part of Sebi's move to curb unauthorised financial advice and performance claims in the securities market.

The rule restrains intermediaries, their agents, or associated persons from having direct or indirect ties with any entity that provides investment advice or recommendations without being registered or permitted by Sebi or makes performance or return-related claims unless specifically authorised by the regulator to do so.

However, if these interactions occur through specified digital platforms, they will not be subject to these restrictions.



# Industrial output up in September: Government data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's industrial production expanded by 3.1 per cent in September, mainly due to improvement in the manufacturing sector, according to official data released on Tuesday. The factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), witnessed a growth of 6.4 per cent in September 2023.

However, it was in the negative territory in August 2024 at (-) 0.1 per cent. "The IIP growth rate for the

month of September 2024 is 3.1 per cent which was (-) 0.1 per cent in the month of August 2024," an official statement said.

The data released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) showed that the growth in mining, manufacturing and electricity for September 2024 stood at 0.2 per cent, 3.9 per cent and 0.5 per cent, respectively.

In April-September this fiscal, the IIP grew 4 per cent against 6.2 per cent in the year-ago period.

# Deepika's brace hands India 3-2 win over South Korea

PTI ■ RAJGIR (BIHAR)

Striker Deepika converted a penalty stroke three minutes from the final hooter to lead India to a tense 3-2 win over South Korea in the women's Asian Champions Trophy, here Tuesday. India raced to a 2-0 lead in the first half through goals from Sangita Kumari (3rd minute) and Deepika (20th, 57th) before Korea mounted a strong comeback in the third quarter and drew parity with goals from Yuri Lee (34th) and skipper Eunbi Cheon (38th).

The match headed for an exciting finish with both teams pushing for that deciding goal and it was Deepika, who scored from the spot to seal India's second consecutive victory in the tournament. India had defeated Malaysia 4-0 in their tournament-opener on Monday. The hosts will next play Thailand on Thursday. In the first match of the day, minnows Thailand held Japan to a 1-1 draw, while reigning Olympic silver medallist China defeated Malaysia 5-0 to register their second consecutive win. The Indians started from where they left on Monday and continued to play attacking hockey from the onset. India's dominance can be gauged by the fact that the Koreans didn't have a single shot at the Indian goal in the first two quarters. India, on the other hand, attacked the Korean defence relentlessly and created chances which resulted in two field goals. It didn't take long for the Indians to surge ahead as they opened the scoring in the third minute through Sangita.



Neha Goyal initiated the move and passed it on to Navneet Kaur, who found Sangita inside the circle. The striker beautifully received the ball, sidestepped her marker and then found the back of the net with a fine reverse hit. India kept up the pressure on the Korean defence and their efforts bore

fruit in the 20th minute when Deepika slammed one home from close range from Beauty Dung Dung's pass from the right flank. A minute later Preeti Dubey's reverse hit was saved by an outstretched right leg of Korean goalkeeper Seoyeon Lee. In the 24th minute, Sangita came tantalisingly close to scoring her second goal of the day, but her push from a Deepika pass went just wide of the post. If the first half belonged to India, Korea came out all guns blazing after the change of ends and secured back-to-back penalty corners in the 34th minute and Lee pulled one back for her side from a rebound. Motivated by the goal, the Koreans put pressure on the Indian defence and four minutes later secured a penalty stroke after an Indian defender unnecessarily brought a Korean striker inside the circle. Skipper Cheon stepped up and made no mistake to level the scores. Penalty corner conversion continued to haunt the Indians as they failed to make use of the eight set pieces they secured in the match -- four consecutively in the 39th minute. In the last match also India earned as many as 11 penalty corners but converted just three. Held to a 2-2 draw, the Indians decided to throw numbers upfront and mounted raids after raids on the Korean citadel and in the process secured penalty corners in quick succession but they lacked variation from the set pieces and the efforts were mostly one dimensional. But the Indians got a chance in the 57th minute in the form of a penalty stroke, which Deepika converted with ease.



## World's first high-altitude parasports centre to come up in Leh ahead of 2028 Paralympics

PTI ■ LEH (LADAKH)

The world's first high-altitude para sports centre will be established in Leh, Ladakh, aiming to advance the skills and confidence of athletes ahead of the 2028 Paralympics. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to this effect was signed by the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh, and the Aditya Mehta Foundation (AMF). "It is a very proud feeling for us that Leh will be establishing the world's first-ever high-altitude centre for para sports. Indian para-athletes have won 29 medals, including seven gold, in the 2024 Paralympics in Paris and it is a testament of the talent we have in our country," said Advocate Tashi Gyalson, Chief Executive Councillor (CEC) of LAHDC. Till the time the centre is getting completed, the AMF

will identify 15 Children with Special Needs (CwSN) from the Leh-Ladakh UT region and they will undergo screening, counselling and training at their Infinity Parasports Academy and Rehabilitation Centre in Hyderabad. "The opening of Leh Ladakh as a hub for para sports marks a new era not just for the region, but for India's future in international competitions," said Aditya Mehta, Founder, AMF. List of Sports to be included: Para Sports: Archery; Athletics; Badminton; Blind Football; Boccia; Canoeing; Cycling; Equestrian; Goalkab; Judo; Powerlifting; Rowing; Shooting; Volleyball; Swimming; Table Tennis; Taekwondo; Triathlon; Wheelchair Basketball; Wheelchair Fencing; Wheelchair Rugby and Wheelchair Tennis. Winter Games: Para Alpine Skiing; Para Biathlon; Para Cross-Country Skiing; Para Ice Hockey; Para Snowboard and Wheelchair Curling.

## Alcaraz struggles with stomach issue in loss to Ruud at ATP Finals



AP ■ TURIN (ITALY)

Carlos Alcaraz struggled with a stomach issue and looked far from the player who won two Grand Slams this year while losing to Casper Ruud 6-1, 7-5 at the ATP Finals. It marked Ruud's first victory over Alcaraz in five career meetings, and the result could make it difficult for Alcaraz to advance from the round-robin stage at the season-ending event for the top eight players. "I didn't feel well on court," Alcaraz said. "A few days before coming here, I got sick at home. ... This morning, I feel uncomfortable in the stomach." In the same group, Alexander Zverev began his bid for a third ATP Finals title by beating Andrey

Rublev 6-4, 6-4. The top two finishers from each group advance to the semifinals. On Sunday, top-ranked Jannik Sinner and U.S. Open finalist Taylor Fritz beat Alex de Minaur and Daniil Medvedev, respectively, in the other group. Alcaraz won the French Open and Wimbledon to boost his career total to four Grand Slam titles. But he also struggled at the Paris Masters recently and dropped behind Zverev to No. 3 in the rankings this week. "I have no experience playing on indoor courts," Alcaraz said. "I'll be a really good player on indoor courts, I'm sure about it. But I think it's about time, about getting experience. ... A lot of players are better than me on indoor court."

Ruud reached the 2021 semifinals and 2022 final in his first two appearances at the finals. But he has struggled recently, too, losing his first or second match in his last seven events. "I'm not full of confidence," Ruud said. "A match like today might be able to change it." Alcaraz was broken when he served for the second set at 5-4. Alcaraz led 25-16 in winners but committed 26 unforced errors to Ruud's 10. Ruud converted all four of his break points while Alcaraz was just one of six in that category. "I'm tired mentally," Alcaraz said. "Obviously a lot of matches, really tight schedule, really demanding year with not too many days off." ZVEREV ROLLING AFTER

PARIS MASTERS TITLE Zverev, who won the finals in 2018 in London and 2021 in Turin, extended his winning streak to six matches following a title run at the Paris Masters. Rublev is making his fifth consecutive appearance at the finals but hasn't won a match at the event since 2022. Zverev served nine aces and dropped only 10 points on his serve in 10 service games. "He served wide 220 (kph) on the deuce side," Rublev said. "Normally everybody serves slice and it's 190. He find(s) a way to serve 220 wide on the deuce side. It's not easy. "Even if you catch the direction, when the flat serve comes 227, slice serve comes 219, 215, it's tough to just see the ball."



## Sinner awarded trophy for finishing year at No. one in the ATP rankings

AP ■ TURIN (ITALY)

Jannik Sinner was awarded the trophy for finishing the year at No. 1 in the rankings before his home fans at the ATP Finals. Sinner won the Australian Open and U.S. Open for his first two Grand Slam titles. He mathematically secured the year-end No. 1 a month ago. "There's no place better to celebrate this trophy," Sinner said as his mom, Siglinde, looked on in tears. "Thanks for all of your support." Sinner is playing at home for the first time since it was announced before his U.S. Open title that he tested positive in two separate drug tests this year. A decision to clear Sinner of wrongdoing was appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency in September.

"I think he's the man to beat for a long time," said former No. 1 Boris Becker, who took part in the trophy presentation. Sinner beat Alex de Minaur in his opening match on Sunday at the year-ending event for the top eight players and meets Taylor Fritz on Tuesday in a rematch of the U.S. Open final. Sinner is playing at home for the first time since it was announced before his U.S. Open title that he tested positive in two separate drug tests this year. A decision to clear Sinner of wrongdoing was appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency in September.

## Manassero looks to cap career revival in Dubai as McIlroy eyes season-ending title

AP ■ DUBAI

Matteo Manassero quit golf five years ago at the age of 26, tormented by a sport that gave him so many highs but was no longer making him feel happy. On Sunday, he could punch a ticket to play across the Atlantic on the lucrative PGA Tour and be back in the big time, where so many think his game belongs. The 31-year-old Italian will look to cap his career revival this week by becoming one of 10 players from the European tour to be eligible to claim dual membership and a PGA Tour card for the 2025 season. The season-ending World Tour Championship starts on Thursday in Dubai and only an unlikely run of events will deny Rory McIlroy from being crowned as the European tour's best player for a sixth time, leaving him two off Colin Montgomerie's record haul.

There will be more suspense elsewhere, though, notably in that race for those PGA Tour cards — a structural tweak created in 2022 in the wake of the so-called strategic alliance between the European tour and PGA Tour in the face of mounting pressure from the breakaway LIV Golf series. The presence of Manassero in the 10-man list, as it stands, only elevates the interest levels. Blessed with a smooth swing and a deft touch, Manassero was a golfing prodigy, winning the British Amateur in 2009, the silver medal at the British Open for low amateur the same year, and also becoming the No. 1 amateur in the world. By 2013, he'd won four events on the European tour — including the BMW PGA Championship, the flagship event on the tour, to move into the world's top 25. Then came the career dip, which plunged him into self-

doubt and ultimately retirement — albeit for only a few months while he assessed where to go with his life. He eventually decided to give golf another go, beginning his rebuild on the lowly Nordic Golf League and the Alps Tour, which is on the third tier of European golf. His talent shone through and last year he sealed a return to the European tour with a win at the Jonsson Workwear Open in March being universally celebrated in the golf fraternity. That helped to put him in a strong position to claim the end-of-season bonus of a PGA Tour card, and he headed to Dubai in fifth place among non-exempt players, behind Thriston Lawrence, Rasmus Hojgaard, Paul Waring — the winner in Abu Dhabi last week — and Niklas Norgaard. Jesper Svensson, Thorbjorn Olesen, Rikuya Hoshino, Sebastian Söderberg and



Jordan Smith make up the list, though the tour says any non-exempt player in the 50-man field can, statistically, break into the top 10. Robert MacIntyre is living proof of how life-changing that can be. He was one of the 10 to claim a PGA Tour card after last year's World Tour Championship and he blossomed, winning two big PGA events — the Canadian Open and the Scottish Open — and rising to a career-high

15th in the world in August. He is No. 16. "Career-changing, 100%," MacIntyre said on Tuesday. "I've now got to the top level of professional golf, the top 25% of professional golfers. "You can then pick your schedule and you're in all the major events and you're in all the top events you can play in and you can pick and choose, and that's where you want to be. "I think," MacIntyre added, "the majority of golfers out here have got that dream, as well." If Hojgaard secures his PGA Tour card, he will join his twin brother Nicolai in the United States. McIlroy on brink Lawrence leads that list of PGA Tour hopefuls but has other things on his mind. The South African is the only player who can prevent McIlroy from winning the Race to Dubai title — formerly the Order of Merit

— and join the late Seve Ballesteros on six. Lawrence has to win — nothing less is good enough — and then needs McIlroy to finish tied for 11th or lower. "Rory has been an idol for me since growing up as a youngster," the 27-year-old Lawrence said, "and being able to clinch it this week would be the cherry on the cake for myself." The smart money, however, is on McIlroy, who has shown extraordinary consistency in collecting a win — at the Dubai Desert Classic in January — as well as four runner-up finishes and three more top fives in his 12 European tour events this season. "Rory is held to a higher standard than pretty much everybody else in the world of golf," Tommy Fleetwood said. "But, I think he's shown amazing golf again this year, and he's shown why he's one of the best to ever do it."

# 3rd T20I: India eye batting revival against SA at Centurion

PTI ■ CENTURION

Indian batting line-up needs to get its mojo back against a resurgent South Africa to regain the lost ground on rather unfamiliar SuperSport Park conditions when the two teams clash the third T20I here Wednesday.

Since 2009, India have played only one T20I at this venue, which they lost by six wickets in 2018 and have only one survivor from that squad in this side -- Hardik Pandya.

Along with that unfamiliarity factor, India will also grapple with the ordinary form of their batters, particularly when the pitch here is touted to be similar to the one at Gqeberha – quick and bouncy.

In the second T20I, India batters struggled against South African pacers upfront, getting restricted to 124 for six, and Centurion has similar characteristics.

The problem starts from the top – more precisely with Abhishek Sharma, whose extended lean run with the bat has now snowballed

into a serious concern. He is in desperate need of a good outing here before the management thinks of juggling the combination.

Even now, they can think of giving the job of partnering Sanju Samson at the top to Tilak Varma and bring in Ramandeep Singh in the middle to add more muscle to the unit.

However, the senior batters like skipper Suryakumar Yadav, Pandya and Rinku Singh too cannot absolve themselves of the blame entirely for India's struggles.

Both Suryakumar and Rinku have shown only fleeting images of their prowess here while Pandya made 39 in the second match but he consumed 45 balls for it.

In fact, the power-hitter took 28 balls to find his first boundary and, again, could not find the ropes between balls 39 and 45.

So, these three batters will have to chip in more to support in the inform Samson or to carry India to a strong total even when the Kerala man has a vapid day.



Similarly, pacers Arshdeep Singh and Avesh Khan had two contrasting games. Arshdeep returned with figures of 1 for 25 at Durban, but in the second game he had stats of 1 for 41.

The left-arm pacer's third and fourth overs which went for 28 runs – including four fours in an over against Tristan Stubbs – made a deep impact on the low-scoring match.

So, they will be eager to change the script here, unless the management looks at other options such as Yash Dayal or Vysakh Vijaykumar.

However, the efforts of Varun Chakravarthy, who bagged a maiden wicket in the previous match, and Ravi Bishnoi over the last two matches have been outstanding and the spinners will be looking for an encore in the third match to hand back the advantage to India.

The expected bounce and pace on the pitch here will be an encouraging factor as well for the Indian duo.

From a batting perspective, South Africa too face a similar issue as

senior pros skipper Aiden Markram, David Miller and Heinrich Klaasen are yet to fire in this series.

They required runs from less- pedigreed batters Tristan Stubbs and Gerald Coetzee to get over the line in the second contest, and the Proteas will certainly cherish a heftier contribution from their veterans, especially against Indian spinners.

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

South Africa: Aiden Markram (c), Otneil Baartman, Gerald Coetzee, Donovan Ferreira, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Patrick Kruger, Keshav Maharaj, David Miller, Mithali Pongwana, Nqaba Peter, Ryan Rickelton, Andile Simelane. Lutho Sipamla, Tristan Stubbs.

## Perth pitch to have really good pace and bounce: Curator cautions India

PTI ■ PERTH



India will be accorded a tough welcome to Australia as the Optus Stadium pitch for the opening Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy has been prepared to offer 'good bounce and pace' true to the tradition of the fiery tracks in Perth.

India will enter the Perth Test, beginning from November 22, without playing any practice match as the visitors had cancelled an intra-squad side game that was scheduled to be played behind closed doors from November 15 to 17.

Now, India will focus on centre-wicket training at the nearby WACA stadium, where Australia will also polish their skills.

"This is Australia, this is Perth... I'm setting ourselves up for really good pace, really good bounce and really good carry," Western Australia Cricket head curator Isaac McDonald told 'ESPNewsInfo'.

McDonald is trying to prepare a pitch that has similar traits of the one

that he readied for the first Test against Pakistan in December last year. In that match, Pakistan were bundled out for 89 in the second innings as the Aussies celebrated a massive 360-run victory. The pitch too had developed cracks as that match wore on and batters like Marnus Labuschagne copped blows on their hands.

Overall, the three Aussie pacers – Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc – grabbed 12 of the 20 Pakistan wickets.

More recently, Pakistan pacers Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah and Haris Rauf

tore through Australian line-up, bowling the hosts out for 140 in the third ODI here.

McDonald said he is looking to leave some grass on the pitch to make it a bit spicier.

"It's (10 mm) a good starting point. Ten millimetres was pretty comfortable with the conditions that we had (last year) and that held the conditions together nicely for the first few days. Live grass on the pitch is speed."

"Both bowling units (Australia and Pakistan) were pretty rapid last year and hoping for much the same this year (for India match)," he added.

## Australian opener McSweeney braces for 'unique' Bumrah challenge

PTI ■ ADELAIDE



Australia opener Nathan McSweeney, who is set to debut against India in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, said he has been preparing for the "unique" challenge of facing star pacer Jasprit Bumrah.

McSweeney was drafted into the Australia squad after a slew of impressive performances in the Sheffield Shield tournament and in the recent 'A' series against India.

The 25-year-old South Australian will partner Usman Khawaja at the top in the series opener in Perth and during the upcoming five-Test series.

"There's probably not (much I can do to replicate how Bumrah bowls). Obviously, he's got a unique action. He's one of the best bowlers in the world." So, it's going to be hard to mimic that. I'm just looking forward to all of that and I can't wait," McSweeney told SEN.

McSweeney, who captained

the Australia A side in the 2-0 series win against India A, said he has been watching the bowling clips of Indian quicks including Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj to be mentally ready for the task.

"I'll definitely dive a lot deeper into it when I get to Perth. I've looked at a few clips of what they're bowling

attack stacks up like. I'm just trying to visualise how I'm going to go about it. Facing a new bowler can be a slight challenge to just pick up their action," he said.

"I've got a whole week before I head off to Perth, so I can get mentally ready and I guess it starts now in preparation to hopefully start

really well," he added.

However, a quiet confidence runs through the young batter ahead of the important series.

"In the last month or so I really feel like I'm batting the best I ever have. I think I'm the best I've ever been prepared to take this opportunity, so hopefully I

can do that.

"No doubt there's plenty of learning and experiences that I haven't experienced yet and I'm looking forward to learning all about the challenges of Test cricket and challenging my game against the very best," he said.

McSweeney will step into the shoes of David Warner, who retired from international cricket after the home Test series against Pakistan in January this year, and the Adelaide man realises the enormity of the job.

The right-hander has a plan for it.

"Being an opening batter, it's making sure I'm leaving the ball well and making the bowlers are bowling to me. Then being ready and positive to score when they miss is as simple as I want to make it.

"If I'm reacting well and doing those things well, hopefully, it equates to me spending time in the middle and chipping away at the scoreboard," he said.

## Blind T20 WC: Indian team eyes clearance from MHA, MEA; Sports Ministry clears travel to Pakistan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI/KARACHI



The Sports Ministry has given NOC, with no cost to the government, to a 17-member Indian cricket team to travel to Pakistan to participate in the T20 World Cup for the Blind, and the side now awaits clearance from Home and External Affairs ministries.

The fourth edition of the Blind World Cup, in which India are the reigning champions, is scheduled to be played at Lahore and Multan from November 22 to December 3.

Upon receiving the clearance from the ministries concerned, the squad is scheduled to travel to Pakistan via the Wagah Border on November 21.

The development came in the backdrop of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) informing its Pakistan counterpart that the Men in Blue will not travel to the neighbouring nation for next year's Champions Trophy.

The BCCI sent a mail to the International Cricket Council to that

effect, leaving the future of the marquee event in limbo.

Meanwhile, Shailender Yadav, General Secretary of the Cricket Association for Blind in India (CABI) said the 17-member Indian squad for the T20 World Cup was picked after 26 players underwent a 12-day selection trials in Gurugram.

"The team has been training in

Gurugram. The players now await an NOC from the Ministry of External Affairs and remain hopeful for a positive response," said Yadav.

Apart from India and Pakistan, the T20 World Cup features teams from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, South Africa, Nepal and Sri Lanka. India won the three previous events, defeating

Pakistan twice and Bangladesh once. Tournament as scheduled: PBCC The Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) said the tournament will go ahead on schedule irrespective of India's participation.

"Pakistan will be hosting the event on schedule and it makes no difference whether the Indian team comes or not," PBCC chairman Syed Sultan Shah said.

Shah said arrangements for hosting the World Cup had been completed by the PBCC.

"All the other teams in the event have also sent confirmation that they have no issues playing in Pakistan," he said.

Indian team for T20 Blind WC: Ajay Kumar Reddy, Debaraj Behera, Nareshbhai Tumda, Nilesh Yadav, Sanjay Kumar Shah, Praveen Kumar Sharma, Venkateswara Rao, Pankaj Bhue, Lokesh, Rambir Singh, Irfan Diwan, Durga Rao Tompaki, Sunil Ramesh, Sukhram Majhi, Ravi Amiti, Dineshbhai Rathva, Dhingar Gopu.

PTI ■ SHARJAH



Afghanistan all-rounder Mohammad Nabi has announced that he will retire from One-Day Internationals after next year's Champions Trophy in Pakistan.

After Afghanistan's 2-1 series win over Bangladesh here on Monday, the 39-year-old said he had been pondering about quitting the format since last year's ODI World Cup.

"In my mind, from the last World Cup, I was retired. But then, we qualified for the Champions Trophy, and I felt if I could play that, it would be great," he told the official broadcaster after being adjudged the Player-of-the-Series.

Nabi has featured in 167 ODIs since 2009, scoring 3,600 runs in 147 innings at an average of 27.48 and a strike rate of 86.99, including two centuries and 17 fifties, with a top score of 136.

With the ball in hand, he has bagged 172 wickets in 161 innings at an average of 32.47 and an economy of 4.27, including four four-

wicket hauls and a fiver (5/17). Afghanistan qualified for the Champions Trophy, thanks to their sixth-place finish during last year's World Cup.

It would also be Afghanistan's first-ever appearance in the eight-team competition scheduled to be held in Pakistan in February next year.

## Players believing in our style of play is the key, says Manolo Márquez

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Indian football team head coach Manolo Márquez on Tuesday said it is critical for his players to follow a synchronised approach while representing the country, in order to start getting results in the international arena.

The Indian senior men's national team began its training camp ahead of the friendly match against Malaysia on November 18 in Hyderabad. With the Indian Super League going into a break with the start of the November FIFA international window, the Blue Tigers checked into the city on Monday and will have a total of six days of training sessions before the match. "We were supposed to play

two games last month but due to external reasons, Lebanon couldn't come. For people, more games is better. But it's difficult to train the day before and after the match. We need to train tactically as well. "I feel it's necessary to prepare for not just the match against Malaysia but the official matches which will come in March," Márquez said.

Márquez had a rough start to his coaching stint with the national team as India were held 0-0 by Mauritius in September and beaten 0-3 by Syria in the Intercontinental Cup, also in Hyderabad.

His boys put up an improved showing, especially in the second half, against Vietnam in a 1-1 draw last month in Nam Đ?nh.

The Spaniard has continued the

trend of calling up new players in each FIFA window so far. This time, Hmingthanmawia Ralte, Vibin Mohanan, Irfan Yadwad and Thoiba Singh Moirangthem earned their first national team call-ups.

The latter was a last-minute arrival after Anirudh Thapa suffered an injury during the match between Mohun Bagan Super Giant and Odisha FC on Sunday.

Since taking charge in July, Márquez's priority has been to utilise the friendly matches and training sessions to find the best group of players for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers, scheduled to start in March 2025.

"It's true that we want to check some new players. But obviously it's impossible to change the whole



group and call 40 players in March. It's true that we are finding the group. It means that we have maybe 14, 15, 16 players who will be there, but we don't know exactly. And there are a lot of players who can get there," the coach said.

"Obviously, it's still four months, and the situation can change with a lot of things unfortunately with injuries and the players' domestic form. But, I repeat again, as a coach you need to find the group which can play the style that we want.

"I am fully focussed on the Malaysia match at the moment. In a way, it's a dangerous game because the players are in the middle of the fight for the ISL and this is just one friendly game in November, and the next camp will be in four months.

"But I am very confident in this group and I feel we will have a good performance next Monday," said Márquez.

Still awaiting his first win with India, Márquez remains patient. For now, the key is to find the groove with the right bunch and get results where they matter the most.

"Obviously everyone wants to win every game. But the feeling we got after the draw with Vietnam was completely different from what we got after drawing with Mauritius or losing to Syria.

"In some moments, we played superb. The one key thing is that the players have to believe in our style of play. I want to win every game and even every training session. The Malaysia game is the last friendly window before the official games."

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