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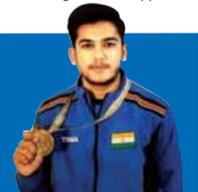
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SC demolishes 'bulldozer justice'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Terming 'bulldozer justice' as illegal, the Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday laid down pan-India guidelines and said no property should be demolished without a prior show cause notice and the affected must be given 15 days to respond. The Executive cannot assume Judicial powers to punish citizens by demolishing their properties without following due process, the SC said while terming such excesses "high-handed and arbitrary" and ruling that they need to be dealt with the "heavy hand of the law", said the Bench of Justices BR Gavai



and KV Viswanathan, adding that it is "chilling" the sight of a bulldozer demolishing a building,

rendering women, children and aged persons homeless overnight. The 95-page judgement

written by Justice Gavai started with the famous lines of Hindi poet 'Pradeep'. "Apna ghar ho, apna aangan

ho, is khawab mein har koi jeeta hai; Insaan ke dil ki ye chahat hai ki ek ghar ka sapna kabhi naa choote' (To have one's own home, one's own courtyard - is a dream that lives in every heart. It's a longing that never fades, to never lose the dream of a home)." "This is how the importance of shelter has been described by the famous Hindi poet 'Pradeep', the Bench said. The SC warned that if these directions are flouted, the officials responsible will be liable for contempt of Court and prosecution. Such officers shall be held liable to reconstitute the demolished property at their own cost and also pay compensation, the top court said. The Court

further made it clear that these directions do not impact action taken against illegal buildings or structures on roads, river banks etc. The Bench reiterated that such high-handed and arbitrary actions have no place in the Constitution, which rests on the foundation of the rule of law. Passing a slew of directions, the Bench made clear that they will not be applicable if there is an unauthorised structure in a public place such as road, street, footpath, abutting railway line or any river or water bodies and also in cases where there is an order for demolition made by a court of law. Continued on page 8



Season's signature smog has arrived

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Dense smog blanketed Delhi for the first time this season on Wednesday pulling the visibility down to zero at the Indra Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), and the lack of a strong breeze continued to prevent the dispersion of pollutants deteriorating the air quality to the top of the "severe" category at 418 AQI. Of the 36 monitoring stations in Delhi, 30 reported air quality in the 'severe' category, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The first smog of this winter season affected multiple flight operations leading to diversion and delays at Delhi airport as well as several airports in north India. Meanwhile, the Delhi BJP has asked the Delhi government to urgently close all schools up to Class 5, as the national capital has turned into a gas chamber. According to IGI airport sources, at least 10 flights were diverted from the airport. Six flights were diverted to Jaipur and one to Lucknow at 7 am due to bad weather. Zero-metre visibility was recorded at IGI

airport at 8.30 am with the Runway Visual Range varying between 125 and 500 metres at different locations, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Sources added some flights have been delayed. The Vice President, Jagdeep Dhankhar, was unable to land in Ludhiana due to poor visibility. He was diverted to Amritsar, where he stayed for a few hours before returning. The IGI airport ranks amongst India's most frequented aviation hubs. While the airport continued operations at Delhi, flights not compliant with Category III (CAT III) landing systems, which are designed to allow landings in low-visibility conditions, were particularly affected. "Low visibility procedures" were put in place, with authorities cautioning that non-CAT III aircraft could face disruptions. As the smog worsened, the airport authorities had to issue advisories regarding potential flight delays or diversions. "Flights that are not CAT III compliant may get affected," the Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) posted on social media platform X. Continued on page 8

Impressive voter turnout in Jharkhand, Wayanad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The first phase of voter turnout for the 43 Assembly Constituencies (AC) in Jharkhand recorded 64.86 per cent on Wednesday. Simultaneously, by-polls were also held peacefully in 31 Assembly Constituencies (ACs) in 10 states and in Wayanad Parliamentary Constituency of Kerala, where Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is contesting. Wayanad recorded 64.27 per cent voter turnout. In the previous election, the percentage was 72.92 per cent. Sporadic incidents of violence, including a crude bomb attack in Bhatpara near Naihati Assembly constituency that killed a local Trinamool Congress (TMC) worker, marred the West Bengal bypolls. Two Assembly constituencies in Sikkim were

uncontested. According to the Election Commission's data, a voter turnout of 64.86 per cent was recorded at the polling stations in Jharkhand which has already surpassed 63.9 per cent voting in these 43 ACs in 2019. Lohardaga district topped the list with 73.21 per cent polling while Hazaribag district recorded the lowest at 59.13. Former Chief Minister Champai Soren and ex-MP Geeta Kora were among the 683 candidates in fray in the first phase. "Today is the first round of voting in Jharkhand Assembly elections. I urge all voters to vote with full enthusiasm in this festival of democracy. On this occasion, my heartfelt congratulations to all my young friends who are going to vote for the first time! Remember - first vote, then refreshment!" Prime Minister Narendra Modi



wrote on X. Jharkhand Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar cast his vote at the ATI polling booth in Ranchi. "Today is the first phase of voting for the Jharkhand Assembly elections. I urge all

voters to exercise their constitutional right to vote. Remember, first vote and then refreshment!" Gangwar said. Chief Minister Hemant Soren sought people's support in the elections. In a post on X, he said, "If you like our work, please support us. I promise that I will do 10 years of work in the next 5 years so that no one can stop our pace of progress." Unfazed by threats and boycott calls from Maoists, people in Left Wing Extremism-affected areas in Jharkhand turned out in impressive numbers to vote. In Budha Pahad area in Garhwa district, once considered a stronghold of extremists, long queues, and peaceful polling at Hesatu Polling station signalled the deep penetration of democratic ethos. Continued on page 8



Age of marriage discussion to resume soon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Parliamentary Standing Committee will take up the issue of the age of marriage for men and women next week as a Bill aimed at bringing uniformity in the matter has lapsed with the dissolution of the 17th Lok Sabha. The secretary of the Women and Child Development Ministry (WCD) and representatives of the National Coalition Advocating for Adolescent Concerns (NCAAC) and the Young Voices Campaign will appear before the panel at its November 22 meeting on the proposed changes in the marriage age for children and other women-related legislation. According to the agenda of the meeting, the panel on education, women, children, youth and sports headed by Congress MP Digvijaya Singh will also hear the WCD secretary on the functioning of various statutory and autonomous bodies such as the National Commission for Women, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Central Adoption Resource Authority, and the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development. The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which was introduced in the Lok Sabha in December 2021 was referred to the standing committee and got several extensions. The Bill ultimately lapsed with the dissolution of the 17th Lok Sabha. Asked about the issue being taken up even as the Bill has lapsed, a senior member of the panel said, "There is no bar on taking up the issue". The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021, aimed to amend the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, to increase the minimum age of marriage of females to 21 years. The Bill, had it been passed, would have overridden any other law, custom, or practice. Continued on page 8

No more false advertising, CCPA tells coaching centres



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant move to protect the rights of consumers and maintain transparency in the coaching sector, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has issued comprehensive guidelines to address the issue of misleading advertisements in the coaching sector. The CCPA has also taken suo moto action against 45 coaching centres and imposed penalty of Rs. 54,60,000 on 18 coaching institutes for misleading advertisements. "Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisement in Coaching Sector, 2024," aim to

safeguard students and the public from deceptive marketing practices commonly employed by coaching centres, shared Nidhi Khare, Chief Commissioner CCPA and Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India while interacting with media on the subject here on Wednesday. These guidelines were drafted in the wake of growing concerns about false/misleading claims, exaggerated success rates, and unfair contracts that coaching institutes often impose on students. Such practices have been found to mislead students, influencing their

decisions by concealing important information and giving false guarantees. The guidelines will apply to every person engaged in coaching, meaning not just the coaching centres, but also any endorsers or public figures promoting their services through advertisements. Endorsers, who lend their name or reputation to coaching centres, will now be responsible for ensuring that the claims they endorse are accurate and truthful. Endorsers who endorse coaching institutes must verify the claims they are promoting. If they support false success rates or misleading guarantees, they will be held accountable alongside the coaching centres. The guidelines explicitly prohibit coaching institutes from making false claims related to the courses offered, their duration, faculty qualifications, fees, and refund policies. Selection rates, success stories, exam rankings, and job security promises. Continued on page 8

Trade Fair's unfair traffic scene

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

While the wedding season, which began on Tuesday, has already added to the National Capital's traffic woes, more awaits the city, especially Central Delhi which will likely remain choked from Thursday as the India International Trade Fair (IITF) at Pragati Maidan will add to the misery of the commuters amid traffic restriction being imposed in different areas for the event which will continue for a fortnight. It is expected that around 60,000 visitors will visit the fair on each day with the number going as high as 1.5 lakh per day during weekend and holidays leading to massive traffic jams along Mithra Road, Bhairon Marg, Ring Road, Shershah Road and Purana Quila Road. These important passages, which already see a rush of vehicles during peak hours, will further be packed with extra commuters trying to make their way to the IITF, resulting in choke points and traffic snarls. The Delhi Traffic Police Department has requested people not visiting the trade fair to avoid or bypass these roads to ensure hassle-free journey. But



office-goers and commuters who take the same route everyday will have to take the pain of going through diversions and leaving early for at least 14 days to avoid any delay. "While travelling from Mayur Vihar to Bhagwan Dass road, which is usually my route every day, I'll have to now take alternative routes which will cost me extra time and fuel, that too for about 14 days when there is already wedding season disrupting traffic flow every now

and then," said a 49-year-old working professional. Only business visitors will be allowed into the IITF from November 14 to 18, while the fair will be open for the general public from November 19 to 27 at 9.30 am to 07.30 pm. In light of this, to ensure smooth traffic management in the vicinity of Pragati Maidan, the traffic police said that no vehicle will be allowed to halt or park anywhere along Mithra Road and Bhairon Marg. "No vehicles will be allowed to be parked on Sher Shah Road, Purana Quila Road, Bhagwan Dass Road and Tilak Marg. Vehicles found parked on the above roads shall be towed away and prosecuted for improper parking and disobedience of lawful instructions. Towed vehicles would be parked in National Stadium parking at Gate No. 5," the traffic department stated. Even as there will be heavy pedestrian movement on Mithra Road and heavy traffic is also expected to ply on this road throughout the day, the police asked people to use the foot-over bridge on Mithra Road. Continued on page 8

Government doctor stabbed in Chennai by patient's son

PTI ■ CHENNAI

A medical oncologist at the Kalaigai Centenary Super Speciality Hospital here was stabbed multiple times on Wednesday by the son of a patient allegedly over grievances regarding the treatment of his mother at the same facility, a hospital official said. The man assaulted the doctor inside the outpatient room during a conversation regarding his mother's treatment. He was immediately apprehended by the hospital staff and handed over to the police, and he was arrested. The doctor is being treated, and he is stable, the official said. The attack led to an outrage and doctors and nurses gathered in front of the hospital entrance to mark



their strong protest. "We do not have safety while doing our duty," one of the protesting KCSSH doctors said. Government doctors announced a strike and Health Minister Ma Subramanian is set to hold talks with them. Expressing shock, Chief Minister MK Stalin said the assailant had been arrested and that he had ordered a detailed probe. All steps will be taken to prevent the recurrence of such incidents in the future, the CM said. All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) chief Edappadi K Palaniswami said there was no security for a government doctor in a government hospital, and it showed the status of the law and order situation. Continued on page 8

Try to stand on your own legs, Ajit Pawar gets pro-tip from SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday advised the Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) faction to try standing on its own legs and asked it not to use the picture of Sharad Pawar in poll campaigning with whom the party has "ideological differences". A Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan also asked both factions of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) led by Sharad Pawar and his nephew Ajit Pawar to focus on the "battlefield" (Maharashtra Assembly elections) instead of doing rounds of the courts. "Tell your party functionaries that they will not use old or new video clips or use the photographs of Sharad Pawar with whom your party is having ideological differences.



You try to stand on your legs," the Bench told senior advocate Balbir Singh, appearing for the Ajit Pawar-led faction. It asked the Ajit Pawar faction to circulate an online circular among its leaders, party workers and representatives associated with the Assembly elections that they will not use the picture or video/audio clip of Sharad Pawar, whether it is old or new. "People of India are very intelligent and they have a fair idea about who Sharad Pawar and Ajit Pawar are. They cannot be fooled so easily," the

Bench told senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Sharad Pawar group after he complained that an MLC from Ajit Pawar faction had circulated a video clip of Sharad Pawar to showcase his support. The Bench said though people are intelligent enough to differentiate between both Ajit Pawar faction and Sharad Pawar faction but they may be confused for a short while in this era of Artificial Intelligence, where voice and pictures of leaders can be misused. The court was hearing a plea of Sharad Pawar alleging misuse of the 'clock' symbol and his picture by the Ajit Pawar-led group. The SC listed the matter for further hearing on Tuesday. Polling for 288 Assembly seats in Maharashtra will be held on November 20 and the counting of votes will take place on November 23.

JHUKI JHUKI SI NAZAR...



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar took everyone by surprise at an event in Darbhanga when he tried to touch Prime Minister Narendra Modi's feet. In a video that has gone viral on social media, Nitish Kumar, 73, walked towards PM Modi, 74, with folded hands and bowed to touch his feet in a third such instance this year. However, PM Modi quickly stops the JD(U) leader from touching his feet and is seen shaking his hands. Another video that has gone viral from the same event shows Modi pulling Nitish Kumar to his side as party workers garland the Prime Minister. PTI

14 schoolchildren hurt as car hits 3 e-rickshaws

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Fourteen schoolchildren were injured when a car hit three e-rickshaws ferrying them to different private schools. Due to the heavy impact of collision, the e-rickshaws overturned. "All the injured were rushed to the nearby railway hospital where four of them were discharged after first aid while eight are undergoing treatment. Two of the injured have been referred speciality hospital," ADCP (East) Pankaj Kumar Singh said. He said the car was seized by the police. The ADCP (North) said the accident took place at Tedhi Pulia crossing in Alambagh and at school time on Wednesday. As per reports, the pavement dwellers and shopkeepers selling grocery items, snacks and milk packets heard loud bang followed by screams of children and rushed to the spot. The children were immediately admitted to the hospital. The car which hit the e-rickshaws had 'Advocate' written on its front. The car driver fled after the accident, which took place at 7:20 am on Wednesday. The leg of a student, identified as Hariom, fractured in the mishap and he also suffered serious injuries in his mouth. Nishant Pal (9), Nancy Pal

5 injured in Pilibhit as man opens fire over old enmity

Pilibhit (PTI): Five people were injured when a man opened fire at them to avenge his son's death over an old enmity in Sungarhi police station area, police said. The accused was also caught and thrashed by the other faction with sticks. The incident took place in the evening when two groups which harboured old enmity over village head elections clashed. Jagan Lal, under the influence of liquor, opened fire with his .12 bore gun at the house of Prem Shankar, police said. Prem Shankar, his wife Omshree, Rajnish, Vikas and Anil sustained pellet injuries, they said. The family members of Prem

(11), Sanya Kashyap (11), Jian (8), Alfia (6), Sonakshi (11), who were injured in the mishap are children of railway employees. e-rickshaw driver Lal Bahadur has been admitted to the SPM (Civil) Hospital with a fracture in his leg. He called the sports teacher of the school's Anand Nagar branch and informed him about the accident. Suman Pal, mother of injured Nishant and Nancy, said that

Shankar later caught Jagan Lal and beat him with sticks after which he was rushed to the hospital in a serious condition. Circle officer Deepak Chaturvedi said firing took place due to old enmity. Heavy force was deployed in the area to avert any untoward incident, he said. Police said Jagan Lal's son was killed in 2014 during the elections for the village head. Prem Shankar, Anil Kumar, Kandhai Lal and Harswarup had gone jail in the case and were released from the court in 2022 after they were acquitted. The police said prima facie it appeared that Jagan Lal opened fire to avenge his son's death. A detailed probe is on in the matter.

she had sent her children to school in the morning and ten minutes later, she got a call that her children had met with an accident. A spokesperson of a private school said that only five children of the school were injured in the mishap. "Three of them have suffered serious injuries. They are being treated at the railway hospital. One has been referred to another hospital," he said.

Seized valuables missing from police malkhana

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Unidentified miscreants stole seized valuables related to different crime cases from the malkhana (store room) of Hazratganj police station. The incident came to light only when the court asked the investigation officers to present the seized goods in the court. The Hazratganj police wrote to the joint commissioner of police (crime and headquarters) and a committee headed by ADCP (Central) Manisha Singh was formed to open malkhana to take out the goods in compliance with the court's order.

However, to the surprise of the officials, the goods related to different cases were missing. It could not be ascertained if the goods that were to be presented in the court were missing or not. Some of the packets containing jewellery and other ornaments recovered from the accused were found empty when opened by cops in the presence of the committee. Inspector Vikram Singh lodged a report against unidentified miscreants on November 9. The charge of the malkhana was handed over to a head constable after the earlier in-charge and head moharir, Ashok Yadav was arrested in 2019 for

alleged misappropriation of goods. The then malkhana in-charge, head constable Priya Kumar Tripathi, died of cancer in 2022. The malkhana was locked and sealed since then. In fact, head constable Priya Kumar Tripathi was the malkhana in-charge in Hazratganj police station from 2019 to December 2022. After his death, the malkhana was sealed due to the disappearance of the goods. On the other hand, the goods were not sent to the trial court from the police station. The malkhana was opened and its videography was done in the presence of the committee

members and investigation revealed that goods worth lakhs of rupees were missing. Cash, jewellery and foreign currency were missing from the boxes which were found lying empty. Further investigation revealed that the goods disappeared during the tenure of Priya Kumar. The Hazratganj police station's malkhana was in dispute for several years. Its earlier in-charge Ashok Yadav was not new to controversies. He who was the malkhana in-charge before Priya Kumar, and was accused of embezzling seized Rs 10 lakh. The then Inspector Radharaman Singh had registered a case in connection with

the incident that took place on March 29, 2019. Ashok was arrested and the charge of the store was given to Priya Kumar Tripathi. In October, a case of theft of two bikes recovered from Chinhat police station came to light. One bike belonged to Inspector JP Yadav posted in Jaunpur. It was stolen from Chinhat. Police recovered the bike and parked it in the police station premises. When the inspector's brother Omprakash reached the police station on October 22 with the court order for release of the vehicle, it was found that two bikes, including that of the inspector, were missing.

STF arrests 2 duping people in name of jobs

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Lucknow unit of the Special Task Force of Uttar Pradesh, on Wednesday, arrested two persons who were duping people in the name of providing jobs by posing as secretary, joint secretary and review officer of the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh. Those arrested were identified as Pradeep Dubey of Jaunpur (presently living in a rented house in Ruchi Khand-2, Shardanagar, Aashiyana, Lucknow) and Maan Singh of Sambhal (presently living at Bhuhar Ring Road, Kamaladevi Hospital Samrat City Dubagga, Lucknow).

The STF recovered two cars, one Aadhaar card, three mobile phones and a driving licence from the accused who were arrested from near Gaughat Road, Pipapul, at 6:32 pm on Wednesday. The STF was receiving information about miscreants cheating people in the name of providing them jobs by posing as secretary, joint secretary, review officer in chief minister's office. "In this regard, various teams/units of UP STF were directed to take necessary action. In this sequence, intelligence was gathered under the supervision of Deputy Superintendent of Police (STF) Deepak Kumar Singh and the

intelligence network system was activated," the spokesman said. During investigation, an informer tipped-off the STF that two persons duping people in the name of providing jobs by posing as secretary, joint secretary and review officer were going to meet someone near Pipapul, Gaughat Road in Thakurganj. The STF laid a trap and arrested both. During interrogation, accused Pradeep Dubey told police that he along with his partner Maan Singh, by posing as secretary, joint secretary in the chief minister's office, used to take money from youths in the name of getting them jobs.

Pradeep had taken Rs 50 lakh from Dr Narendra Verma in the name of getting his land vacated. Out of this amount, Rs 25 lakh was given to Man Singh. Along with this, he has duped several youths in the name of providing them jobs. Meanwhile, a software engineer was duped of Rs 98,000 by cyber bullies in Talkatora police station area. The incident took place on August 15 but it came to light on Tuesday. The victim was identified as Avinash Srivastava of Rajajipuram Sector 1 here. The victim was bullied in the name of a courier parcel on the pretext that it was carrying

banned psychotropic substance. "I received a call from FedEx Courier and was told that some banned material like MDMA had been couriered to Taiwan using my Aadhaar card. When I denied having done so, the caller connected my call to Mumbai Cyber Crime where, posing as police officers, a person intimidated me to make a transaction of Rs 98,000 in an account. I reached Talkatora police station two hours after the incident and informed the police and filed a complaint by calling 1930," he said. Police have registered a case in this connection and have started an investigation.

Rape survivor, father threatened with dire consequences

Lucknow (PNS): A rape survivor and her father were threatened of dire consequences if she did not change her statement in court and did not turn hostile. The incident took place in Hazratganj and the police allegedly sat on the case until it came to light. Inspector Hazratganj could not be contacted for his comment. The victim woman's father, in his complaint, said his daughter had registered a case against Vivek Gupta on December 20, 2022 under Sections 376, 323, 504, 506 IPC. He said on 9-7-2024, his daughter appeared in the court for recording her statement and supported the statement given in the First Information Report during cross examination. "Since then Vivek's father Dayashankar and his driver Amarnath Pandey are

pressuring me and my daughter not to testify against Vivek Gupta in the cross-examination in the court. On 9-10-2024, I went to meet my friend in the LIC office in Hazratganj at Lucknow. Then prime accused's father's driver, Amarnath Pandey sent a WhatsApp message to me asking where I was. After a while Dayashankar Gupta and Amarnath Pandey came there and me with them to the lunch room where they both said that they wanted to talk to me," he said. He said the above incident took place between 4:30 pm and 5 pm. He alleged that Dayashankar Gupta abused him and his daughter and asked him to tell his daughter not to speak against Vivek. Police registered a case under relevant sections of the BNS and started investigation.

Mission Shakti: UP govt to equip council school girls with financial literacy skills

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a major push for financial empowerment, the Yogi Adityanath government has set a target to equip 1.25 lakh girls in council schools with essential financial literacy skills by December 31. The initiative seeks to empower young girls with critical financial knowledge and management skills, helping them become self-reliant and financially savvy. Under Mission Shakti, the state government aims to provide financial education to 80,000 girls in Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs), 35,000 girls in PM SHRI scheme schools, and 10,000 girls in other upper primary schools. With technical support from UNICEF, this initiative will educate girls on savings, bank-

WHAT GIRLS WILL LEARN

- They will be taught ways to moderate future needs by managing expenses according to the family's total income. Practical activities will provide them with real-life tasks.
- Methods to reduce unnecessary expenses and increase savings will be taught.
- Skills to plan savings from income will be taught so that sufficient funds can be gathered for large expenses.
- Opening a bank account, understanding banking services and the importance of saving for emergencies will be explained. They will receive information on cheque books, ATM cards, interest, fixed deposits and recurring deposits.
- Girls will gain practical experience through stories, activities and bank visits.

ing, digital payments, insurance and other financial topics, empowering them to become economically self-sufficient. To enhance the effectiveness of the campaign, an orientation programme for 2,200 teachers

was completed on October 28 with support from UNICEF. Additionally, there are plans to complete the training of 3,000 nodal teachers by November 30. They will subsequently train the girls in financial literacy.

In this training programme, girls will be taught various financial concepts, money management, digital payments, insurance and risk management, currency identification, and ways to protect against financial fraud. Additionally, they will be introduced to future employment opportunities as part of career awareness. After the completion of the training, the girls will be given certificates, which will certify their skills and increase their confidence. Minister of State for Basic Education (Independent Charge) Sandeep Singh said that this campaign was an important step towards economically empowering girls and their financial independence. He said efforts were underway to complete the training by December 31.

Man poses as PSO of minister

Lucknow (PNS): An unidentified miscreant, posing as PSO of Finance and Parliamentary Affairs minister, Government of Uttar Pradesh sent an application to the WhatsApp number of Special Secretary, Medical and Health, Shiv Sahay Awasthi while recommending that a case be addressed. The fraud came to light when the minister denied any such instructions from his side and through the PSO. A case was registered on the complaint and an investigation started. The complaint was given by Chhote-I who is principal private secretary to Finance and Parliamentary Affairs Minister, of Uttar Pradesh. In the complaint Chhote-I said Special Secretary, Medical and Health, Shiv Sahay Awasthi informed the office that on 8-11-2024 a person called the latter and gave orders by claiming to be the PSO of the minister and an application was also sent on WhatsApp. The complainant said the mobile number from which the accused called the senior bureaucrat was found displaying the name of the minister on True Caller. "But this is not the mobile number of the minister. On calling on the said number, the person told his name as Arvind Kumar Srivastava, PSO, whereas a PSO of this name is not posted in the office of minister," he said. The said person is a fraud and there is also a suspicion that the above said person, who has done this fake work, can illegally benefit or harm someone by using the name of minister in this manner anywhere else. Therefore, immediate action is required, he said.

App to monitor Mining leases

Lucknow (PNS): In compliance with the instructions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Directorate of Geology and Mining has developed an inspection app for monitoring lease areas through mobile teams. Through this app, inspection related investigations of mining lease areas can be viewed with complete transparency and timeliness at a single click. While giving this information, Director Mining Mala Shrivastava said that the monitoring app would be able to curb illegal mining leases in the state, adding that effective action would be taken on illegal mining through the app and strict action would be taken as per the rules.

UP witnesses tourism boom

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has taken measures for the transformation of the tourism sector following the significant 44.9 per cent growth in tourist foot fall in the state from 2020-21 to 2023-24. The initiatives taken by the state government aim to increase tourist arrivals, boost the local economy and create more employment opportunities. Building on this success, the government has set a target of 19.2 per cent growth for 2024-25, with plans to develop numerous tourist destinations and showcase the state's cultural heritage on a global stage. The government envisions

Uttar Pradesh as a premier tourist destination, with its rich cultural heritage gaining global recognition. A key priority is improving accommodations for visitors; in response to the state's shortage of hotel rooms — currently at 30 rooms per 100,000 people compared to the national average of 180. The government has eased policies for hotel construction. New hotel projects will not only enhance tourist lodging but also support local businesses and entrepreneurs. Comprehensive plans are in place to enhance top tourist destinations, including a dedicated tourism master plan for iconic sites like Naimisharanya and Prayagraj.

Detailed project reports have been approved, and agencies are being selected to execute these developments. Additionally, the government is advancing plans for six major tourist circuits, commissioning experts to identify infrastructure improvements needed to enrich the tourist experience and encourage repeat visits. These efforts by the Yogi Adityanath government promise to not only increase tourist numbers but also generate local jobs, strengthening the state's economy. The growth of tourism will uplift regional artisans, local cuisine and cultural traditions, creating a thriving and vibrant experience for visitors to Uttar Pradesh.

FORM No. URC 2
Advertisement giving notice about registration under Part I of Chapter XXI

(Pursuant to section 374(b) of the Companies Act, 2013 and Rule 4(1) of the Companies (Authorised to Registrar) Rules, 2014)

1. Notice is hereby given that in pursuance of sub section (2) of Section 366 of the Companies Act, 2013, an application has been made to the Registrar at Uttar Pradesh that Rawat Associates (partnership firm) may be registered under Part I of Chapter XXI of the Companies Act, 2013, as a company limited by shares.

2. The principal objects of the proposed company are as follows:

1. To convert/acquire the running business of Partnership concern, under the name and style of M/s RAWAT ASSOCIATES, having Registered office at 701, MIG, Avas Vikas Colony, D M Road, Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh-203001 with all its assets and liabilities on as is where is basis with effect from the date of incorporation of this Company or at any such later date which may be decided by the Board after the incorporation of the Company.
2. To carry on the business of contractors, sub-contractors, quasi contractors and to undertake contracts and subcontracts relating to construction, modification, repairing, alteration, construction, removal, redecoration, redesigning, enlarging, improving and designing of civil work, building for whatever use, roads, approach roads, streets, circles, squares, parks, gardens, statues, parking places, bridges, dams, watercourses and reservoirs, tunnels, earthworks, sewers, tanks, drains, sewage, lighthouses, towers, transmission towers, pipelines, underground cables, railway tracks, railway sidings, runways shipyards, stockyards, culverts, channels whether on a turnkey basis or on labour contracts or otherwise.
3. To carry on the business as builders, property developers, Engineering Contractors, Civil, mechanical and labour contractors, building and erection engineers, consultants, dealers in, importers, exporters and manufacturers of prefabricated and precast houses, materials, tools, implements, machinery and metal ware in connection therewith or incidental thereto and also to alter, demolish, removal or carry out repairs on such favorable terms and deemed fit and to carry on the business of designers, Real Estate owners, layout promoters and also act as real estate brokers, realtors and agents and other service providers and to carry on any other business that is customary, usually and conveniently carried on there within or outside India and to purchase, acquire, take on lease or in exchange or in any other lawful manner any area, land, buildings, structures and to turn the same into account, develop the same, dispose of or maintain the same and give away for rentals.
4. To carry on the business of contractors, sub-contractors, quasi contractors and to undertake contracts and subcontracts relating to construction, modification, repairing, alteration, construction, removal, redecoration, redesigning, enlarging, improving and designing of civil work, building for whatever use, roads, approach roads, streets, circles, squares, parks, gardens, statues, parking places, bridges, dams, watercourses and reservoirs, tunnels, earthworks, sewers, tanks, drains, sewage, lighthouses, towers, transmission towers, pipelines, underground cables, railway tracks, railway sidings, runways shipyards, stockyards, culverts, channels whether on a turnkey basis or on labour contracts or otherwise.
5. To carry on the business of establishing and/or promoting support services whether information technology-enabled or otherwise including but not limited to placement services, enterprise content and data services, web services, transports, Back office operations, manpower supply, maintenance of information systems and act as consultants for the aforementioned services and businesses.

3. A copy of the draft memorandum and articles of association of the proposed company may be inspected at the office at 701, MIG, Avas Vikas Colony, D M Road, Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh-203001

4. Notice is hereby given that any person objecting to this application may communicate their objection in writing to the Registrar of Firm/ Society, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh within twenty-one days from the date of publication of this notice, with a copy to the company at its registered office.

Names of Applicants
1. Arjun Rawat, 2. Poonam Rawat, 3. Karan Pratap Rawat

Dated: 11 day of November 2024

AYUSH University to be completed this month

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR

The construction of Uttar Pradesh's first AYUSH University in Gorakhpur, which is rapidly gaining recognition as the 'City of Knowledge' under Yogi Adityanath's leadership, is set to be completed by the end of this month and will become operational by the end of the year. This university, named after the renowned Mahayogi Guru Gorakhnath, will offer a variety of traditional courses covering all medical systems related to AYUSH. In addition to these, the university will introduce innovative and unique courses tailored to meet contemporary demands. Under the guidance of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the AYUSH department officials have been conducting a comparative study of AYUSH programmes being offered in other states across the coun-

try. This study aims to develop and implement new, specialised courses that will be offered at the university. Currently, a framework has been established to introduce a range of programmes, including a PhD course, with plans for at least a dozen different courses to be offered. The foundation stone for this university, being built on a 52-acre area in Pipri, Bhatat, was laid on August 28, 2021, by the then President Ram Nath Kovind. The AYUSH University is one of CM Yogi's dream projects. Since the foundation stone ceremony, he has visited the site several times to review the progress of construction. Currently, finishing touches are being given to the construction which is expected to be completed by November 30, 2024. Before the establishment of this university, there were separate institutions for the

various AYUSH systems — Ayurveda, Unani, Homeopathy, Naturopathy, Yoga, and Siddha. However, from the 21st-22nd academic session onwards, all government and private AYUSH colleges in the state are now regulated by this university. In the current 2024-25 academic session, 97 AYUSH colleges/institutes (covering Ayurveda, Homeopathy, and Unani) are affiliated with the university, with around 7,000 students enrolled in undergraduate and post-graduate courses across these institutions. Vice-Chancellor of Mahayogi Guru Gorakhnath AYUSH University, Prof AK Singh, shares that in alignment with the chief minister's vision, several new job-oriented courses will be introduced alongside undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. The university's future plan

includes offering a variety of courses, such as PhD, BSc Nursing Ayurveda, BPharma Ayurveda, BPharma Homeopathy, BPharma Unani, Panchakarma assistant diploma, Panchakarma therapist diploma, diploma for international students, Ksharsutra diploma, Agnikarma diploma, Uttarvasti diploma, and Yoga-Naturopathy diploma. Additionally, some certificate courses will also be launched. On February 15, 2023, Chief Minister Yogi inaugurated the AYUSH OPD. Since then, an average of 300 patients have been consulting for Ayurveda, Homeopathy and Unani treatments every day. With the OPD (out patient department) now fully operational, nearly one lakh patients have already benefited from consultations with AYUSH doctors. Soon, an AYUSH hospital will also begin operations, provid-

ing excellent treatment options in Ayurveda, Unani, Homeopathy, Yoga, and Natural Healing therapies. Promoting AYUSH medicine is expected to create employment opportunities in the AYUSH health tourism sector. If properly developed, this initiative could link local villages around the university to jobs in various forms. Once the university is fully operational, it will not only benefit farmers but also create job opportunities for the youth. People in the surrounding areas will be able to earn extra income by collecting medicinal herbs that grow locally. Farmers will see increased profits from medicinal crops. The AYUSH University is poised to be a catalyst for widespread employment and positive change in the region.

shubham **SHUBHAM HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CO. LTD.**
Corporate Office : 425, Udyog Vihar Phase IV, Gurgaon-122015 (Haryana)
Ph. : 0124-4212530/31/32, E-Mail: customercare@shubham.co website : www.shubham.co

POSSESSION NOTICE (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)

Whereas the undersigned being the authorized officer of the Shubham Housing Development Finance Company Limited (hereinafter called Shubham) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued demand notice calling upon borrowers to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described hereinbelow in exercise of powers conferred on him under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with the property will be subject to the charge of Shubham Housing Development Finance Company Limited for an amount detailed below and interest thereon.

The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets. Details are as below:

S. No.	Loan No/Borrower(s), Co-Borrower	Demand Notice Amount	Date of Demand Notice	Secured Asset	Date of Affirmation
1.	OALB221100000503606, Ansu, Asha Devi, Raj Kumar	Rs. 11,72,742/-	23-08-2024	H.No. 110, Mauza Sirsa Mohalla Katra Heera Ram Tappa 84, Tehsil Meja District Prayagraj Allahabad Uttar Pradesh - 212305	11-11-2024
2.	OLK12107000005037504, MANNO, MANSHU	Rs. 18,85,624/-	23-08-2024	Plot Part of Khasra No- 370, KA Min tuated at Gram Bhamrauli Shahpur, Ward- Haiderganj Tehsil & Distt Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh-226001	11-11-2024
3.	OLKW1705000005006048, Legal Heirs (Deceased) Shri. Laxmi Sharan Awasthi, Harsh Narayan Awasthi	Rs. 16,61,918/-	23-08-2024	Shop No. 03 With Land at Ismailganj Sector -15, Indira Nagar- Yojna Kh. No. 30, Tehsil & Distt.- Lucknow Uttar Pradesh - 226012	11-11-2024

PLACE:- GURGAON, DATE :- 13-11-2024

Authorized Officer,
SHUBHAM HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FINANCE COMPANY LTD.

Maha Aghadi alliance lacking policy and moral conviction: Yogi

PNS ■ WASHIM/THANE

On his Maharashtra tour on Wednesday, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath drew a stark contrast between the Maha Yuti and Maha Aghadi alliances while rallying support for the Bharatiya Janata Party, which, he said, was dedicated to building an Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat. He emphasised that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the Maha Yuti coalition of BJP, Shiv Sena-Shinde faction and NCP-Ajit Pawar faction was unified and focused on Maharashtra's development, whereas the Maha Aghadi was a directionless alliance, likening it to a vehicle without steering or wheels and mired in internal power struggles. Yogi further criticised the Maha Aghadi, led by Congress, as a "maha anaadi"

alliance lacking both policy and moral conviction, driven by anti-social and anti-national agendas with no intention of advancing the country. According to him, the Maha Aghadi is engaged in a divisive campaign, focused on appeasement rather than national welfare. On Wednesday, Yogi addressed public meetings in support of BJP candidates from various constituencies: Saiprakash Dahake (Karanja), Shyam Ramcharan Khode (Washim), Kumar Uttam Chand Ailani (Ulhasnagar), Narendra Lalchand Mehta (Mira Bhayandar), and Shiv Sena Shinde factions' candidate from Ovala Majiwada. Yogi remarked that before 2014, Pakistan frequently infiltrated India's borders. He added, "Whenever calls for action were made, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government would discourage them,



Mumbai: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and BJP leader Yogi Adityanath with party candidates Narendra Mehta and Pratap Sarmaik during a rally ahead of Maharashtra Assembly elections, in Mumbai, Wednesday.

claiming it would harm diplomatic relations. However, in the last decade, India has transformed under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, becoming a nation that both defends its borders firmly and stands ready to retaliate against aggression." He highlighted the historic repeal of Article 370, calling it a milestone in combating terrorism. "While Congress expresses discontent and talks of reinstating it, PM Modi has assured that even four generations of Congress would not manage to bring back Article 370 in Kashmir," he added. Yogi also acknowledged the progress of the Banjara community, which was once marginalised and now thrives as part of the mainstream under the BJP. Yogi said that anti-national forces seeking to convert and mislead the community would no longer succeed. He also emphasised the BJP's com-

mitment to the welfare of the poor, with initiatives like One District-One Medical College, Har Ghar Nal, PM Awas, Ayushman Bharat, and youth employment schemes. Through the Ladli Behna Yojana, each woman now receives Rs 2,100 monthly, he added. In contrast, he criticised Maha Aghadi's lack of action, even during the COVID-19 crisis, accusing it of misusing funds. "Congress, despite its long tenure in power, failed to ensure development, security or prosperity. The double-engine government has accomplished in a short time what Congress could not in 65 years, including the consecration of Lord Ram in Ayodhya — a longstanding issue that, had Congress cared for faith, would have been resolved in 1947 itself," he remarked. Yogi stated that Congress has historically ignored the welfare

of women, youth, and the poor. He accused the party of sowing seeds of divisions along lines of caste, region, language and religion, which weakened the nation. According to Yogi, Congress not only divided the country and society but also fostered terrorism, Naxalism and unrest. Now, he warned, "they are returning to divisive politics". Addressing the people of Maharashtra, Yogi urged unity, emphasising that history has shown the dangers of division. "Bate the, tou kate the, ek hain, tou safe hain," he said, calling on voters to support the BJP in building Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat. Yogi also paid tribute to the icons of Maharashtra, honouring the legacy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Shahu Ji Maharaj, Peshwa Bajirao, Veer Savarkar and Dr BR Ambedkar.

SC order will end bulldozer terror, says Mayawati

Lucknow (PTI): With the Supreme Court applying brakes on bulldozer action, Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati on Wednesday hoped the "terror" of bulldozer will definitely end now while Uttar Pradesh Congress chief Ajay Rai said the verdict would end "jungle raj" in the state. "After today's decision of the honourable Supreme Court regarding bulldozer demolitions and the related strict guidelines, it should be expected that UP and other state governments will manage public interest and welfare properly and smoothly and the terror of bulldozers will definitely end now," Mayawati posted on X in Hindi. UP Congress chief Rai said, "We welcome the apex court's decision. Hopefully this decision will end the jungle raj in Uttar Pradesh." The Samajwadi Party's media cell took to social media, noting the apex court has made very strong comments on the bulldozer action and has warned the governments and reprimanded the officials. Reacting to the Supreme Court decision on bulldozer action, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) said that bulldozer rule would no longer continue in the state. The party demanded a public apology from the Yogi Adityanath government, which has become the leader in bulldozer actions across the country in the last seven years, and compensation for the loss caused to the citizens. CPI (ML) state Secretary Sudhakar Yadav said that the decision of the apex court had confirmed that there was no rule of law in Uttar Pradesh. He said the Yogi government took law into its own hands and arbitrarily demolished houses and shops.

AKY: Supreme Court has parked bulldozer in garage forever

PNS/PTI ■ KANPUR

The Supreme Court has parked the bulldozer in the garage forever, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav stated here on Wednesday in a dig at the Yogi Adityanath government over the apex court's demolition verdict. Addressing a gathering here ahead of the November 20 bypolls in the state, Akhilesh Yadav claimed that the houses of the poor were being demolished in the name of bulldozer action. He claimed that the manner in which bulldozers were used in Ayodhya was the reason behind the ruling party's defeat in the Lok Sabha election. "The date for the by-election to the Milkpur assembly seat in Ayodhya was not announced

by the Election Commission which has declared the date for bypolls to nine other Assembly seats in the state. At the election rally here in support of Samajwadi Party's candidate Nasim Solanki, the party supremo said, "The Supreme Court has issued a big order. This will stop bulldozer action." Equating 'bulldozer justice' with a lawless state of affairs where might is right, the Supreme Court laid down pan-India guidelines and said no property should be demolished without a prior show cause notice and the affected must be given 15 days to respond. The executive cannot assume judicial powers to punish citizens by demolishing their properties without following due process, the apex court said

while terming such excesses "high-handed and arbitrary" and ruling that they need to be dealt with the "heavy hand of the law". Taking a jibe at the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party over the top court verdict, Akhilesh Yadav said, "With the Supreme Court's decision, the bulldozer has been parked in the garage forever. There can be no bigger comment than what the Supreme Court said." "I congratulate and thank the Supreme Court," Yadav said, adding that in a few cases, courts have imposed a fine on the government for bulldozer actions. The Samajwadi Party chief also raised the issue of the ongoing students' protest in Prayagraj and targeted the BJP over the matter, saying those who cannot provide employment are

engaged in harassing students. "Those who set wrong question papers are none other than BJP people. From setting the date of the exam to the people who got the exam cancelled are people the BJP," Akhilesh Yadav claimed. Launching a scathing attack on the BJP government over price rise, the Samajwadi Party chief alleged that people have been pushed into a "quagmire of inflation". Yadav also took on the Uttar Pradesh chief minister over his 'Batenge toh katenge' comment, terming it "unconstitutional and worst slogan in history". He claimed that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath does not know about PDA, an acronym for Picchde (backwards), Dalit and Alpsankhyak (minorities) coined by the SP chief.

'BJP has failed to ensure women's safety in UP'

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav launched a scathing attack on Wednesday against the Yogi Adityanath-led Bharatiya Janata Party government over Uttar Pradesh's law-and-order situation, saying the ruling party's claims of women empowerment have become "mere slogans". Just a week ahead of the bypolls to nine assembly seats in the state, the former chief minister highlighted the efforts made by the SP when it was in power in Uttar Pradesh that included the distribution of over 18 lakh laptops to students for free to improve the educational standards. Noting that the BJP had promised laptops and WiFi in its manifesto, Akhilesh Yadav claimed that the party failed to deliver on its promises. "They distributed a few tablets which are barely functional, whereas the laptops given under our administration are still being used," he claimed. In a press statement, the SP chief said, "The BJP's claims about ensuring women's safety are false. The government cannot point to a single accomplishment based on facts and reasoning. Any attempt to discredit the initiatives undertaken during the Samajwadi Party's tenure will not succeed." The SP chief highlighted several incidents, including the Hathras rape case, to question BJP's commitment to the safety of women. He claimed that the "family of the Hathras rape victim was denied the right" to perform her last rites.



"The incident of a gang rape in BHU involving individuals connected to the BJP IT cell was hushed up and efforts were made to protect the accused," Yadav alleged. Citing NCRB statistics, he claimed that incidents of crimes against women are highest in Uttar Pradesh, indicating the state's failure to curb these crimes. "Women are unsafe even within police stations and several cases of female police officers facing assault have emerged," he added. To underline his government's initiatives in support of women's education and empowerment, Akhilesh Yadav mentioned the initiation of unemployment allowances, financial support for girls' education, and free textbooks for students from Classes one to eight. "Our government's record in promoting educational and financial support for female students remains a challenge for the BJP dispensation," he claimed. The Samajwadi Party's statement also made references to schemes such as the 1090 service for women's safety, and the 108 Ambulance Service that provide quick hospital transport for accident vic-

tims." The BJP has turned the international-standard Dial 100 service, launched to ensure immediate police response, into a corrupt system under "112," Yadav alleged, adding that BJP's "Romeo Squad" initiative for women's safety is nowhere to be seen today. Referring to the dismissal of female workers engaged in the Dial 100 service last year, he termed it "inhumane", adding that these workers were "forced to sit in protest under cold and rainy conditions during Diwali." The Samajwadi Party stood with them during those difficult times," he said. The Samajwadi Party chief slammed the BJP for its "false promises" and alleged that in Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh, women's lives remain precariously insecure. He asserted that attempts to mislead the public would not succeed, as "the truth is that daughters are most fearful under the BJP's rule." Taking to social media, Yadav shared a report that cited comments of women protesters in Prayagraj who are staging a sit-in against the UP Public Service Commission (UPPSC) and lauded them for their bravery. Bypolls will be held on nine assembly seats of the state on November 20 and the Samajwadi Party is contesting all of them as it takes on the BJP in eight seats and its ally Rashtriya Lok Dal in one. The Bahujan Samaj Party was also in the fray. The Congress is not contesting the bypolls and supporting its INDIA bloc partner Samajwadi Party.

Top figures from Israel, US, France to join Ganga aarti

Prayagraj (PNS): In a testament to the global interest sparked by the Yogi Adityanath government's extensive preparations for Maha Kumbh 2025, eminent figures from around the world are set to attend the grand spiritual gathering in Uttar Pradesh. For the first time, dignitaries from countries including Israel, the United States, and France are preparing to join in the revered Ganga aarti, a ritual that highlights the spiritual essence of the event. Senior military personnel will also be present, symbolising solidarity and adding to the solemnity of the occasion. The state administration is committed to providing an unparalleled experience, blending tradition and modernity to captivate both Indian and international devotees with the sacredness and grandeur of the Maha Kumbh. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's

vision to transform Maha Kumbh into a global attraction has inspired many of these international figures to partake in one of the world's largest spiritual congregations. Suresh Chandra, president of the Harihar Ganga Aarti Samiti in Ramghat, Prayagraj, shared that Ganga aarti in Prayagraj began in 1997, inspired by the tradition in Kashi, and has continued without interruption ever since. During the upcoming Maha Kumbh, there are plans to honour Chief Minister Yogi and distinguished saints from all over India. Bringing together saints from India's major pilgrimage sites for this grand event promises to make the Maha Kumbh an unforgettable experience for all. He added that global interest in Chief Minister Yogi is growing rapidly among leaders from powerful nations. "This is evident as prominent figures from Israel, the United States,

France, Vietnam, Italy, Canada, and Myanmar are visiting India to meet him," he said. These international guests will also participate in the famous Ganga aarti, accompanied by senior Indian military officers. All of these special guests will be hosted by the Harihar Ganga Aarti Samiti. Renowned saints from Ayodhya will also contribute to making Maha Kumbh 2025 memorable by planting trees. Swami Dilip Das Tyagi, head of the Ram Vaidehi temple, shared that the saints of Ayodhya have pledged to plant 1,11,000 saplings to promote environmental cleanliness. This initiative will be completed during the Maha Kumbh. Along with Swami Dilip Das, several other prominent saints from Ayodhya are preparing to make the Maha Kumbh an unforgettable experience.

Govt accelerates comprehensive development of Scheduled Tribes

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath remains steadfast in his commitment to the socio-economic and educational uplift of Scheduled Tribes in Uttar Pradesh. Under his leadership, the state government has implemented various welfare schemes aimed at integrating tribal communities into the mainstream of development and ensuring their all-round development. The Uttar Pradesh government, in close collaboration with the Central government, has made significant progress in providing essential facilities such as housing, healthcare, education, electricity and clean water to these communities. Through these initiatives, the Yogi government aims to ensure equal opportunities for the tribal population, enhance their socio-economic status, improve infrastructure, and make strides in health, education and livelihood sectors. The Minister of State for Social Welfare, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Welfare, Asim Arun, shared that under the Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes, the Yogi government is working to improve the living standards of tribal families by providing opportunities for skill development, entrepreneurship and self-employment. This initiative will benefit villages with a population of 500 or

more, where at least 50 per cent of the population belongs to the Scheduled Tribes. The government has identified 47 blocks and 517 villages across 26 districts, including Ambedkar Nagar, Bahraich, Ballia, Balrampur, Barabanki, Basti, Bhadohi, Bijnor, Chandauli, Deoria, Gaziapur, Gorakhpur, Jaunpur, Lakhimpur-Kheri, Kushinagar, Lalitpur, Maharajganj, Mahoba, Mirzapur, Pilibhit, Prayagraj, Sant Kabir Nagar, Shravasti, Siddharth Nagar, Sitapur and Sonbhadra, to receive the benefits of this scheme. The Yogi government will also expand basic services like roads, water and electricity in the identified villages. Each tribal family will be provided a concrete house, and mobile medical units (MMUs) will be set up in these villages to ensure better access to healthcare. Additionally, efforts will be made to set up more Tribal Multi-purpose Marketing Centres (TMMCs) in tribal regions, enabling tribal families to better showcase and market their art, culture, paintings, forest produce, honey, millets, sorghum, mahua-based products and herbal remedies. This will not only enhance the marketing of their skills, but also increase their income within their own villages, helping to prevent migration. The social welfare minister shared that the scheme is being implemented with the collaboration of 17 different departments, including Rural Development, Water

Supply, Electricity, Energy, Health and Family Welfare, Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry, Women and Child Development, Education, AYUSH, Telecommunications, Vocational and Skill Education, Electronics and Information Technology, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Panchayati Raj, and Tourism, along with the Tribal Development Department. He also mentioned that the multi-purpose marketing centres will provide facilities for the collection, processing and marketing of tribal products. Furthermore, financial assistance will be provided for the upgrading of ashram-style schools/hostels and other government residential schools for Scheduled Tribes, along with support for other essential infrastructure improvements. It is noteworthy that this initiative is a part of the central government's holistic development efforts, aiming to integrate tribal communities into the social and economic mainstream on a priority basis. A comprehensive action plan has been made for the overall development of the tribal population over the next five years. The successful implementation of this campaign will provide direct access to basic services for the tribal population in the state. It will lead to improvements in education, healthcare, employment and infrastructure in these areas, contributing significantly to overall national development.

IDFC FIRST Bank Limited
(Formerly IDFC Bank Limited)
CIN : L65110TN2014PLC097792
Registered Office: KRM Towers, 8th Floor, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai - 600031. TEL: +91 44 4564 4000 | FAX: +91 44 4564 4022.

APPENDIX- IV-A
[See proviso to rule 8 (6) & 9 (1)]
SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) & 9 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s), Co-Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) as per column (iii) that the below described immovable properties as per column (iv) mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Symbolicpossession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Formerly known as IDFC Bank Ltd, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" as described hereunder, for the recovery of amount due to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (Formerly known as IDFC Bank Ltd) from Borrower (s) and Co-Borrower (s) as per column (i). For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided on IDFC FIRST Bank website i.e. www.idfcfirstbank.com.

S. NO	(i) Demand Notice Amount	(ii) Agreement/Id	(iii) Name of Borrower (s), Co-Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s)	(iv) MORTGAGED PROPERTY ADDRESS	(v) Reserve Price Amount	(vi) EMD Amount	(vii) Date and Time of Auction	(viii) Date and Time EMD of Auction	(ix) Date and Time of Inspection	(x) Authorized Officer Name & Contact Number
1	INR 32516444.78/- Demand Notice dated: 21-Sep-2022	47651441	Sanjay Iron Stores, Mangalika Shukla (In The Capacity Of Available Legal Heir Of Late Sanjay Shukla), Mangalika Shukla, Shashank Shukla & Shashank Shukla (In The Capacity Of Available Legal Heir Of Late Sanjay Shukla)	All That Piece And Parcel Of House No. 8/83, Admeasuring 344.44 Sq. Mtr. Situated At Arya Nagar, Kanpur, Built On Plot No. 112, Block-M, Scheme-7, Gutaiya, Kanpur Nagar And Bounded As:- East: Plot No.111 (H. No 8/84), West: Plot No. 111 (H. No. 8/82), North: 6.09 Mtr Road & South: 4.57 Mtr. Road	INR 38107200.00/-	INR 38107200.00/-	30-Nov-2024 11.00 AM TO 1.00 PM	29-Nov-2024 10.00 AM TO 5.00 PM	22-Nov-2024 10.00 AM TO 4.00 PM	Name-Sardeep Singh Rathore Contact Number- 9887772255 Name- Aanchal Sharma Contact Number- 7737204242
2	INR 5923621.17/- Demand Notice dated: 20-Sep-2023	17486959 & 33763429	Krishna Kumar Pandey, Deepika Pandey, Rajesh Kumar Pandey & Rakesh Kumar Pandey	All That Piece And Parcel Of Plot No. 154, Admeasuring 205.69 Sq. Mtrs., Situated At Block - H-2, Scheme-II, Kidwai Nagar, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh-208011, Andbounded As:- East: 30 Ft. Road, West: Plot No. 155, North: 60 Ft. Road & South: Plot No. 153	INR 15039120.00/-	INR 15039120.00/-	30-Nov-2024 11.00 AM TO 1.00 PM	29-Nov-2024 10.00 AM TO 5.00 PM	22-Nov-2024 10.00 AM TO 4.00 PM	Name-Sardeep Singh Rathore Contact Number- 9887772255 Name- Aanchal Sharma Contact Number- 7737204242
3	INR 33689061.73/- Demand Notice dated: 31-May-2019	8600115, 8878355, 12700647, 8607773, 8881453, 8606023 & 8880951	M M Traders, V K Steel Traders, Vimal Kumar Agarwal & Ashish Agarwal	Property-1-Premises No- 203, Anandpuri, Omkar Nath, Dhawan School Road, Kidwai Nagar, Kanpur Property-2-Plot No 70, Block G, Ispat Nagar, Kanpur, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh-208020 Property-3-Pvt Plot No 12B, situated at Rajapuram Daheli Sujapur, Kanpur, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh-208021	INR 23839680.00/- INR 8370000.00/- INR 18488000.00/-	INR 23839680.00/- INR 8370000.00/- INR 18488000.00/-	30-Nov-2024 11.00 AM TO 1.00 PM	29-Nov-2024 10.00 AM TO 5.00 PM	22-Nov-2024 10.00 AM TO 4.00 PM	Name-Sardeep Singh Rathore Contact Number- 9887772255 Name- Aanchal Sharma Contact Number- 7737204242

Disclaimer: Please note that the said notice is issued for sale of immovable property only and IDFC FIRST Bank Limited has no right to sale of the movable assets, if any, present at the immovable property.
Date: 14.11.2024 Place: Kanpur

Authorised Officer
IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (Formerly known as IDFC Bank Ltd)

Varanasi declared no-fly zone ahead of Dev Deepawali



CP Mohit Agarwal inspecting a Ganga Ghat to see security arrangements for Dev Deepawali in Varanasi.

Fest to be dedicated to brave martyrs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Old Dashashwamedh Ghat of Kashi will welcome the gods with open arms on Dev Deepawali on November 15 when as per the tradition going on for 34 years, Maa Ganga will be worshipped amidst the chanting of Vedic mantras and the river will be cleansed by anointing her with 151 litres of milk under the aegis of Gangotri Seva Samiti, an organisation that regularly performs aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat. Giving this information while addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, the founder president of Gangotri Seva Samiti Kishori Raman Dubey (Babu Maharaj) said that the decorated 108 kg 'Ashtadhatu' idol of Goddess Ganga seated on the throne on the banks of Ganga and the unique image of her divine Aarti will be the centre of attraction. He said that in the

course of worshipping Maa Ganga in the scriptural way, the entire ghat will be decorated with 500 kg of Indian and foreign flowers. He said Dev Deepawali will be dedicated by Gangotri Seva Samiti to the brave martyrs of police, PAC and armed forces of the country who sacrificed their lives to protect the society and the country. In the same direction, the girls will repeat the resolution of respecting women power during the Maha Aarti of Ganga in the form of 42 Riddhi-Siddhis. "In this year's event, 21 Damru Dals along with 21 Batukas will enhance the beauty of Ganga Aarti", said secretary of Gangotri Seva Samiti, Pandit Dinesh Dubey, adding that the event will be presided over by Peethadishwar of Kashi Sumeru Peeth Swami Narendranand Saraswati. After the Ganga Maha Aarti, the cultural evening will captivate everyone, he informed.

Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) Section 163 (power to issue order in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger) has replaced Section 144 of the erstwhile CrPc.

PTI ■ VARANASI

Varanasi has been declared a no-fly zone ahead of the Dev Deepawali festival on November 15, police said on Wednesday. According to an order issued by the Additional Police Commissioner (Law and Order) Shivasimpi Channappa, the restriction under the pre-existing Section 163 of the BNSS came into force at 12 am on November 12. It will be in place till midnight on November 16. The directive states that due to the anticipated influx of lakhs of devotees, local residents, and various VIPs for Dev Deepawali, it is critical to

Exam date row: Students protest for third consecutive day



Civil services aspirants in Prayagraj on Wednesday staging a protest against UPPSC's decision to conduct the RO-ARO and PCS preliminary examinations on different dates. PTI

PTI/PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

"One day, one exam" read the placards as students protested for the third consecutive day on Wednesday against the decision to conduct the RO-ARO and PCS preliminary examinations over two days, Kumar said. THEFT: Thieves broke into a jewellery shop in Kothaparcha market and decamped with gold and silver jewellery worth lakhs of rupees. On getting a complaint police reached the spot and started investigation. Reports said that Rajesh Singh of Kothaparcha runs a jewellery shop near his house. He closed the shop around 9 pm and went home. When he opened the shop the next day he was stunned to see the scene inside. On one side there was a hole in the wall and an iron rod was lying on the other side. Jewellery worth Rs 15 lakh were stolen from the shop. As soon as the theft came to light a crowd of traders gathered at the spot. District president of Allahabad Jewellers' Association Dinesh Singh and its members Anoop Verma, Ranjiti Sisodia, Raju Singh etc. reached the spot. Police investigation revealed that the thieves had climbed the roof of the adjacent shop which was closed for a long time with the help of a ladder. After that they broke into the jewellery shop. Police also found a ladder installed at the spot. The police also questioned the businessmen but failed to get any clue regarding the theft. The police also questioned the private security guard who was on duty in the market at the time of the incident. He too could not tell anything. SHO of Kotwali police station said that a report has been registered and search for the thieves is on. SPORTS MEET: The first inter IIT Employee Sports Meet will be organised by IIT-Allahabad on Jhalwa campus from November 15. As many as 184 employees from eight IITs will compete in the three-day sports meet. The participating IITs include IITDM Kancheepuram, IIT-DM Jabalpur, IITDM Kurnool, IITM Gwalior, IIT Nagpur, IIT Ranchi, IIT Kalyani and IIT Allahabad.

Jaiswal: Ganga lifeline of human civilisation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Kashi Ganga Mahotsav began with Ganga Pujan on Tuesday evening at Assi Ghat. UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Stamp and Court Fee and Registration Ravindra Jaiswal inaugurated the cultural programme of the festival by lighting the lamp. Addressing the people on the occasion, he said that the festival organised every year on the banks of Ganga has now become a programme not only of Kashi but also of the people of the country and the world. Jaiswal emphasised that it would not be an exaggeration if the music is said to have originated from the waves of river Ganga. "Musical instruments, dance and drama were created from the waves of Ganga and cultural artistes also resided on the banks of Ganga. The waves of Ganga are music in themselves", he said. Praising Maa Ganga, he said that this is not an ordinary river but the lifeline of human civilisation. "Wherever the Ganga river passed by while covering a distance of 2,323 kilometres from its origin, people settled on its banks and human civilisation developed. People also got livelihood. The beauty of Ganga ghats of Kashi is famous all over the world", he said. Under the cultural programme, classical singing by Padma Bhushan Pandit Sajjan Mishra of Banaras Gharana, bhajan and folk singing by Aradhana Singh, star playing by Dr Supriya, Birha singing by Parasnath Yadav, folk singing by Vipul Choubey, bhajan singing by Shikhar Vishwakarma, Kathak dance by Dr Yasmin Singh from Delhi, Kuchipudi by Himanshi Katradda of Hyderabad (Telangana), classical playing by Kashi Ras Band and singing by Kolkata vocalist Dr Navneeta Chaudhary were the highlights of the opening day. Earlier, Jaiswal, along with MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma, Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal and others worshipped Maa Ganga and performed the Ganga-aarti. Additional District Magistrate (ADM/City) Alok Kumar Verma, besides a large number of dignitaries and music lovers were also present.



Illegal constructions bulldozed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The enforcement squad of Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) bulldozed illegal constructions on 45 metre road in Shatabdi Nagar on Tuesday. People attempting to protest the move were chased by the accompanying police force. Officials warned that people carrying out illegal construction without approved layout will have to face action. Under the directives of the Vice-Chairman Madan Singh Garbhal, the squad of zone 2 led by its incharge Ravi Pratap Singh reached Shatabdi Nagar. With the help of three backhoe loaders, it bulldozed all the permanent and temporary constructions illegally carried out on both sides of the two km road from KESCO chauraha to Gambhirpur chauraha. Thereafter, the squad demolished the illegal pucca and kuccha constructions from Cambridge chauraha to Kashiaram chauraha on both sides of 45 metre road. It also razed the boundary wall construction on plot No 20A in Shatabdi Nagar Sector 1 scheme. Officials warned to lodged FIR against people who again carry out illegal construction on KDA land. The KDA also served notices on constructions being carried out in Jawaharpuram violating the prescribed norms. Junior Engineer CP Pandey was also present with the squad. On the other hand, the zone 3 squad sealed two constructions being carried out in Saket Nagar and Keshav Nagar against the norms and got many other illegal constructions stopped for which legal notices would be served in due course. The squad led by its incharge Ajay Kumar of zone 3 also sealed the construction work being carried out in House No 127/467 W-1 Saket Nagar and House No.193 W Block, Keshav Nagar, beyond the approved layout.

American group to present dance on theme of 'Cosmic Shiva'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The glory of Mahadev (Lord Shiva) has drawn the devotees from America to Kashi on Dev Deepawali. On the world famous festival of Dev Deepawali, falling on Kartik Purnima (on November 15), artistes of American 'Sapt Tandav Group' will present a dance on the theme 'Cosmic Shiva' based on the glory of Lord Shiva. For the first time, an American group will present a dance on Dev Deepawali. Sujata Vinjamuri considers it the greatest fortune of her life to present a programme in front of Chief Minister and Gorakshapeethadishwar Mahant Yogi Adityanath in Kashi, the city of Lord Shiva. She is also very impressed with

the development of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham and Kashi. Kashi is attracting the world towards itself with modern facilities. The attraction of Dev Deepawali, which has gone from local to global, has drawn American artists to Varanasi. Indian American citizen Sujata Vinjamuri along with her four American disciples and three Indians are very excited to present a dance based on Lord Shiva in front of Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar and CM Yogi Adityanath and other dignitaries in the programme of Dev Deepawali. Neelam Chaudhary, spokesperson and yoga instructor of 'Sapt Tandav Group' living in Australia, said in the last eight years, the Yogi government has made Kashi, the centre of

faith of Sanatan, friendly to religious tourists. "The Yogi government has transformed the holy city Kashi, the world is watching the cleanliness of Ganga and ghats. The sense of security has increased among the tourists coming from outside due to which the devotees living in the country and abroad are coming to Kashi", she said, terming CM Yogi Adityanath as the 'Mahayogi of Kalyug'. "Yogi is the flag bearer of Sanatan who is spreading Hinduism in the world and due to his efforts the youth have started knowing more about Sanatan Dharma. Sujatha Vinjamuri and Neelam Chaudhary said the Yogi Government has made proper use of money for the development of UP and has completed the works on time. "The organisation and management of the last Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj was also appreciated", they said, expressing confidence in the leadership of CM Yogi", they said adding that Yogi will make better arrangements for the religious tourists in this year's Mahakumbh. They said their group will give a 35-minute presentation on the theme of Cosmic Shiva. "We felt as if Lord Shiva himself has called us, so our group is doing the programme free of cost", they said. Sujatha Vinjamuri, a resident of St Louis in America, has been teaching Kuchipudi dance through an academy in America for many years and has so far trained more than 5,000 people in Kuchipudi dance.

'Morality & honesty have great importance in life'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The closing ceremony of the vigilance awareness programme was held at the community center of IFFCO Ghyanganagar Phulpur. The chief guest of the programme was Dr Ram Pyare, Member, UPPSC, Prayagraj and the special guest was Gyanwati Tiwari, SP, Police Vigilance, Prayagraj. Chief guest Dr Ram Pyare while highlighting this year's theme of prosperity of the nation through the culture of integrity said values of the house have great importance, if the values are good then the person moves forward on the path of integrity, honesty and morality. Special guest Gyanwati Tiwari said in case of any information related to corruption then it should be shared on the vigilance helpline number so that prompt action can be taken. He described the participation of women and children in vigilance competitions as very important. Senior Executive Director (Unit Head) Sanjay Kudesia said we get to learn a lot from the vigilance



programme. He congratulated the vigilance team for good programme. Chief Vigilance Officer Ajay Kumar Mishra said that morality and honesty have great importance in life because corruption makes the society hollow in every way. He outlined the various programmes and competitions held under the vigilance awareness campaign. The programme was conducted by Hemlata Sijoria Arya and the vote of thanks was proposed by Senior GM and president of Vigilance Awareness Campaign Sanjay Vaish. GMs Sanjay Bhandari, AP Rajendran, JGMs Dr Anita Mishra, Arun Kumar, Ratnes Kumar, AK Gupta, PK Verma, HoD Human Resources Shambhu Shekhar, IFFCO Officers' Association president Anurag Tiwari, IFFCO Employees Sangh president Pankaj Pandey and a large number of people were present in the programme. The winners of various competitions held under the vigilance awareness campaign were awarded.

Classical singer Tejaswani mesmerises audience

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Varanasi (PNS): Leading classical singer Tejaswani Varnikar mesmerised the audience presenting melodious bhajans on the auspicious occasion of Prabodhini Ekadashi at Sherwali Kothi in Thatheri Bazaar here on Tuesday evening. On the occasion of the Vivah Mahotsav organised by Shri Radha Madhav Lal Seva Trust, a divine tableau of Shri Radha Madhav was decorated on a silver throne decorated with flowers and the rituals of Tulsi Vivah were completed. As per the tradition of the Kothi, president Shachi Kumar Sah performed the ritual of Tulsi Shaligram Vivah. On this occasion the

Kothi was decorated attractively. In the evening, Tejaswani Varnikar began her programme with Ganapati Vandana and then presented a composition of Madhya and Drut Taak composed in Raga Sohini. After that, she enthralled everyone by singing Surdas' composition 'Hey Govind Rakho Sharan, Ram Ka Gungana Kariye, Saint Vithal's Marathi bhajan 'Majhe Mader Pandhari'. When she sang Meera's famous bhajan 'Paayo ji maine Ram Ratan dhan paayo, the listeners were overwhelmed. She concluded the festival by presenting 'Venkatchal Nilayam' Baikunth Pravasam' in Raga Bhairavi.

Woman dies as bus rams into stationary trailer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A woman died when a bus carrying marriage party rams into a stationary trailer from behind in Chaudagra of Fatehpur district on Wednesday morning. After the incident, drivers of the trailer and the bus escaped from the spot. The bus was going to Noida from Mundera. On getting information police rushed to the spot and got all the injured to a hospital. According to reports, the bus rammed into the trailer near Govindpur turn under Kalyanpur police station area on the highway. In the incident, a woman was killed while over a dozen people were injured. They were admitted to the community health centre (CHC) Gopalganj and CHC Bindki. From there, seriously injured people were referred to

the Sadar Hospital. Eyewitness Hasim, a tyre repairing shopowner, said when the trailer was about to stop at a dhaba, the speeding bus rammed into it from behind as there was another truck on the side of overtaking. As the bus driver did not get side to overtake the trailer, it rammed into the latter, he said. Police sent all the injured to hospital by an ambulance. It was informed that the marriage party was going to attend the marriage of Major Manjit Singh, son of Narendra Singh of Bihar. Presently, Narendra Singh lives in Bishrappuri, Prayagraj. The bus was going to Sector 25 of Noida. The tilak ceremony was scheduled to be held on Wednesday while the marriage and reception party were to be held on November 14. Total 23 people were present in the bus. ELECTROCUTED: A retired armyman was electrocuted in Indira Nagar under Sadar Kotwali police area of Unnao on Wednesday. Sushil Kumar (45) employed as security guard in a bank, while throwing the water pipe from rooftop, suddenly came in contact with the electric current after it fell on a power line passing from there. Labourers engaged in construction work rescued him and informed the kin. Brother-in-law Bablu immediately took him to the emergency of the district hospital where he was declared dead by doctors. Police sent the body for autopsy after investigation. Meanwhile a man committed suicide by hanging himself in Sanjay Nagar Basti under Govind Nagar police station area. Police sent the body for autopsy.

Window trailing inspection of Banaras-Prayagraj Rambagh section done

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In view of the estimated crowd of devotees in the upcoming Mahakumbh Mela-2025 to be held at Prayagraj Sangam, Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) of Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) Vineet Kumar Srivastava, along with the divisional officers, conducted a window trailing inspection of Banaras-Prayagraj Rambagh rail section on Wednesday and assessed the safety and operational speed of this rail section. During the inspection, a thorough inspection of Jhusi and Prayagraj Rambagh stations was also done to provide management of Kumbh special trains and proper passenger facilities for the devotees coming to the upcoming Mahakumbh Mela to be held at Prayagraj Sangam. In the same sequence, during the inspection of Prayagraj Rambagh station, the divisional railway manager thor-



DRM VK Srivastava inspecting Mahakumbh preparations at Prayagraj Rambagh station on Wednesday.

oughly inspected the new passenger reservation centre, unreserved ticket counters, temporary food and water vending stalls, waiting rooms, additional entry and exit routes, permanent and temporary platforms, passenger sheds, RCC benches, foot over bridge, temporary waiting rooms, CCTV surveillance, boundary wall and control room for proper crowd management and passenger facility development works built for the convenience of fair passengers and gave necessary instructions to the concerned. Earlier, during the inspection of Jhusi station, the divisional railway manager thoroughly inspected the passenger

Knp Metro organises spl awareness session

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Metro organised a special awareness session at Motijheel station in collaboration with Kanpur Darshan, in observance of World Public Transport Day. The event provided children, teachers, and social workers from Gyan Bharti School and the SS Foundation NGO with an in-depth overview of Kanpur Metro as a modern mass rapid transit system. Participants engaged with officials, asking questions about the upcoming extension to Kanpur Central, future developments, fare structures and more. According to officials, the fare for the new route from IIT to Kanpur Central, based on the current fare for the Priority Corridor (IIT-Motijheel), will be ₹40. Additionally, Metro GoSmart NCMC cardholders will enjoy a 10 per cent discount on fares. The session began at 11:00 am with Saraswati Vandana. Metro officials opened the discussion by highlighting the role of the

Metro in enhancing public transportation in the city. They emphasised that the introduction of the Metro aims to reduce pollution, alleviate traffic congestion and save time by minimising delays caused by long traffic jams. Officials also pointed out that the design of Kanpur Metro stations and trains prioritises passenger convenience. Key accessibility features, such as ramps, wheelchairs, dedicated ticket counters, Braille signage, tactile paths, reserved seating, automatic voice announcements, and passenger display systems, have been incorporated to support differently-abled passengers. Additionally, a special "long stop duration" button is available near the designated wheelchair spaces inside trains, allowing differently-abled passengers ample time to board and alight comfortably.

Officials stated that compared to other modes of public transport, the Metro is the environment's best ally due to its zero-carbon emissions. To mitigate the impact of dust from construction sites, Kanpur Metro regularly uses water tankers and anti-smog guns for sprinkling water. In addition, pits have been created in the median below the metro viaduct to conserve water. The development of a green belt along the median is not only enhancing the city's greenery but also improving its aesthetic appeal. Kanpur Metro has made significant strides in environmental sustainability, including the installation of a 1 MW solar plant at the Metro Depot, the use of 100 per cent LED lighting, energy savings of up to 45 per cent through regenerative braking and an HVAC-operated air conditioning system, all contributing to its environmental protection efforts. In addition to its environmental benefits, the Kanpur Metro route connects key educational institutions, hospitals, workplaces and markets across the city. Passengers can also take advantage of affordable booking options for events such as birthdays, anniversaries and kitty parties inside the Metro. To promote community engagement, cultural and literary events as well as awareness programmes on social issues are regularly held at Metro stations. Furthermore, Kanpur Metro is the first in the state to introduce the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC), offering passengers a convenient and unified payment solution. The participants expressed appreciation for the rapid progress of the Metro's civil construction work. During the session they provided feedback and asked questions about the facilities and operations of the Metro. After the session concluded, the participants had the opportunity to enjoy a Metro joy ride from Motijheel to IIT.

PM Modi lays foundation stone for AIIMS Darbhanga, showers praise on Nitish

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
DARBHANGA (BIHAR)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday showered accolades on Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, praising the alliance partner for bringing in good governance in a state which was previously reeling under "jungle raj".

Modi made a veiled attack on the Congress-RJD combine—without mentioning it by name—at a function in Darbhanga, a town in north Bihar, where he laid the foundation stone for an AIIMS and inaugurated projects worth more than Rs 12,000 crore.

In the course of his address, which lasted around 40 minutes, the Prime Minister referred to Kumar, whose JD(U) played a crucial role in enabling the NDA's return to power in the parliamentary elections earlier this year, as

"Ilokpriya mukhyamantri" (popular chief minister). Modi said, "Nitish babu has set up a model of sushasan (good governance)." He added, "No praise is too high for him (jitni saraahna ki jae kam hai) for his contribution in pulling Bihar out of the era of jungle raj."

Now, under the NDA's double engine government, the state is making rapid, all-round progress."

He also lambasted the previous regimes in the state, ruled by the Congress-RJD combine for 15 years before the NDA assumed power in 2005, for hoodwinking the people with "false (jhooth) promises".

Earlier, Kumar had thanked the Prime Minister for AIIMS, Darbhanga, even as he recalled having first made request for the super specialty hospital in the north Bihar town with late BJP leader Arun Jaitley.



The Prime Minister began his speech with a reference to the assembly polls underway in Jharkhand, which was carved out of Bihar two-and-a-half decades ago, and hoped that

and five other such facilities elsewhere in the country".

"Today, we have more than two dozen AIIMS across the country. Healthcare is being made available to people of weaker sections through 1.5 lakh 'Aaryogya mandirs". Besides, more than four crore people have benefited from the Ayushman Bharat scheme", the Prime Minister said.

Modi also highlighted his government's efforts to increase the number of doctors by allowing pursuit of courses in medicine in Hindi and other vernacular languages besides "adding 75,000 new seats" in medical colleges across the country.

Known for his penchant for connecting with the people by peppering his speeches with local flavour, the Prime Minister referred to inclusion of Maithili, spoken in large parts of north Bihar, in eight

schedule of the Constitution. He also spoke of other steps taken by the Centre to promote Bihar's cultural heritage like giving classical language status to Pali.

Modi also underscored that his government's policies would give a boost to export of freshwater fish and foxnuts (makhana), which are produced in abundance in Mithila region.

He also paid tributes to folk singer Sharda Sinha, who hailed from Supaul district in Mithila and passed away last week.

The Prime Minister also recalled the contributions of late Kameshwar Singh, a renowned philanthropist who was the last ruler of the princely state of Darbhanga, and remarked "even in my parliamentary constituency (Varanasi) people keep talking of his generosity".

Modi said projects like AIIMS Darbhanga will enable the people of not just Bihar but neighbouring areas in West Bengal and Nepal to avail quality medical service "instead of making a beeline to Mumbai and Delhi".

The Prime Minister also touched upon the problem of floods that ravage the Kosi-Mithila region every year, saying his government was making "honest" (imaandaar) efforts to solve the problem by holding necessary discussions with Nepal, besides drawing a detailed plan involving Rs 11,000 crore to tackle the calamity.

Others who were present at the function in Darbhanga included Governor Rajendra Arlekar, Union ministers Chirag Paswan and Nityanand Rai and Deputy Chief Ministers Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha.

India supports early ceasefire in Gaza: Jaishankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

India supports an early ceasefire in Gaza and it has consistently stood for resolution of the Palestinian issue through a two-state solution, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said here on Wednesday.

In his opening remarks at a meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Jaishankar said the situation in West Asia is a matter of "deep concern", particularly the conflict in Gaza. The external affairs minister described Saudi Arabia as an important force for stability in the region.

Jaishankar and Al Saud co-chaired the second meeting of the Committee on Political, Security, Social and Cultural Cooperation (PSSC) held under the framework of the Strategic Partnership Council (SPC).

In his remarks, Jaishankar said Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and India's Viksit Bharat 2047 hold complementarities



for the industries of the two sides to build new partnerships. "Trade and investment are important pillars of our partnership, and we are strengthening our collaboration in new areas including technology, energy, renewable energy including green hydrogen, connectivity, health and education," he said.

Al Saud is on a two-day visit to India. On the situation in Gaza, Jaishankar said any response

We support an early ceasefire," Jaishankar said. "India has consistently stood for resolution of the Palestinian issue through a two-State solution. We have also contributed to the building of Palestinian institutions and capacities," he added.

Delving into India-Saudi Arabia ties, the external affairs minister said both sides maintained a good tempo of high level engagements and coordination across multilateral fora.

"Our defence partnership has witnessed several 'firsts' over the past few years including the first ever land forces joint exercise 2024; and two editions of our joint naval exercises," he said.

"We had regular exchanges on training and capacity building. And our cooperation has now expanded in the field of defence industry and exports as well," he said.

Jaishankar also noted steady growth of security cooperation between the two sides. "We are collaborating in counter-terrorism, combat-

ing extremism, terror financing, and drug trafficking," he said.

"We welcome efforts to promote culture, tourism and youth exchanges. And we see considerable potential for cooperation in the field of media and entertainment," he said.

In the meeting, the two sides also deliberated on issues relating to the G20, the BRICS, the IMEEC (India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor) and other regional and global issues.

In his opening remarks, Jaishankar said India and Saudi Arabia have a similar interest in preserving the stability of the region and in driving the economies towards greater prosperity.

"We have maintained a good tempo of high level engagements and coordination across the multilateral fora. The Indian community in Saudi Arabia is 2.6 million strong, and I take the opportunity to thank you for their welfare and comfort," he said.

Defence Space Agency conducts maiden three day exercise Antariksha Abhyas successfully

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Defence Space Agency has successfully conducted maiden three-day Exercise 'Antariksha Abhyas' to enhance strategic readiness in space warfare, defence ministry said here on Wednesday.

Giving details, officials said Defence Space Agency of Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff successfully conducted the Space Table Top Exercise Antariksha Abhyas-2024 from November 11 - 13, a significant milestone aimed at bolstering the strategic readiness of the Indian Armed Forces in the domain of space warfare.

This pioneering event marked a crucial step in strengthening India's space based operational capabilities, enhancing tri-services integration for space security.

Key components of the exercise included focused discussions on emerging space technologies, space situational awareness and India's space programmes.



The discussions highlighted the importance of monitoring and protecting critical assets and maintaining situational awareness in the increasingly contested space environment. Throughout the three-day event, participants engaged in scenario based exercises, facilitated by subject experts from various Ministries and Departments of the Government of India, besides military, scientific and academia.

The experts provided valuable insights into the present and future landscape of military space capabilities and technologies, elucidating specific challenges faced in defence space operations and also the evolving nature of space safety, security, and international space laws.

Antariksha Abhyas 2024 successfully met its objectives of improving interoperability, fostering mutual understanding and enhancing cohesion between the tri-services and Defence Space Agency.

All-women CISF battalion will protect airports, metros, provide VIP security: Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said the soon to be raised all-woman battalion of the CISF will shoulder the responsibility of protecting the nation's critical infrastructure, like airports and metro rails, and provide security to VIPs as commandos.

A first-ever all-woman battalion of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) comprising more than 1,000 personnel was sanctioned by the Union government on Monday keeping in mind the burgeoning duties of the force.



"In a firm step towards realizing Modi Ji's vision of enhancing women's participation in every field of nation-building, the Modi government has approved the establishment of the first all-women battalion of the CISF.

"To be raised as an elite troop, the Mahila Battalion will shoulder

the responsibility of protecting the nation's critical infrastructure, like airports and metro rails, and providing VIP security as commandos," Shah said in a social media post.

The home minister said the decision will certainly fulfil the aspirations of more women to participate in the crucial task of protecting the nation. Women personnel constitute more than seven per cent of the CISF whose present strength is about 1.80 lakh.

One of the central armed police forces in India, the CISF was set up in 1969 and is tasked with the security of vital government and industrial buildings.

Health Pavilion at IITF to centre around 'One Health' theme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry's Health Pavilion at the 43rd India International Trade Fair (IITF) here beginning November 14 will be centred around the theme of 'One Health', a comprehensive approach emphasising the interconnectedness of human, animal, plant and ecosystem health.

By recognising these interdependencies, 'One Health' seeks to mobilise various sectors, disciplines and communities to promote well-being and effectively address health and environmental challenges, the health ministry said in a statement. Dr V K



Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, will inaugurate the Health Pavilion on November 14 at Bharat Mandapam.

Through 39 informative stalls, the pavilion will present the ministry's major accomplishments in healthcare, with highlights on programmes

and initiatives that span every stage of life.

From birth-focused initiatives like the newly launched U-WIN App, which facilitates free vaccination for pregnant women and children, to the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya

Jyotana (AB-PMJAY), which now includes senior citizens over 70 years with an additional Rs 5 lakh top-up cover, the pavilion will illustrate India's efforts to provide accessible and quality healthcare for all.

Visitors will have the opportunity to participate in screenings and counselling sessions for HIV, diabetes, hypertension and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The pavilion will also feature innovative installations like the BHISHM Cube, indigenous mobile hospital showcasing its design and utility in real-world settings, the ministry statement said.

The pavilion is designed not only to be educational but

Pan-India coastal defence exercise 'Sea Vigil' to be held on November 20-21: Navy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

A pan-India coastal defence exercise aimed at assessing the current preparedness of all maritime security agencies, identifying their strengths and weaknesses and enhancing the nation's overall maritime defence framework is set to be conducted on November 20-21, the Navy said on Wednesday.

Originally conceptualised in 2018, 'Exercise Sea Vigil' was designed to validate and enhance measures adopted to bolster coastal defence post the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

"This year, participation by other Services (the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force), and planned deployment of a large number of ships and aircraft have enhanced the tempo of the exercise," according to a statement issued by the Indian Navy.

The Navy leads this exercise whose fourth edition, to be held on November 20-21, will span an "unprecedented scale", both in terms of geographical reach and the magnitude of participation, with the involvement of six ministries and 21



organisations and agencies, it said.

While coastal security exercises are conducted by individual coastal states and maritime security agencies regularly, 'Exercise Sea Vigil' coordinated by the Indian Navy stands out as a national-level initiative that provides a holistic appraisal of India's maritime defence and security capabilities.

"The exercise offers a significant opportunity to assess the current preparedness of all maritime security agencies, identify their strengths and weaknesses and enhance the nation's overall maritime defence framework," the Navy said.

The Coastal Defence and Security Readiness Evaluation

(CDSRE) phase of the exercise is being conducted by naval officer-in-charges of all coastal states and UTs (including Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands) since the end of October, where in a thorough audit of complete coastal defence and security infrastructure is being carried out, it added.

This year, National Security Council Secretariat officials will also be part of Indian Navy-led CDSRE teams "for the first time", along with personnel from state marine police, coast guard, customs, and fisheries, among others, the statement said.

The exercise will focus on strengthening the security of coastal assets, like ports, oil rigs, single-point moorings, cable

US delegation visits Sulabh School in city



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior representatives from the US government and aircraft major Boeing visited Sulabh campus in the national Capital on Tuesday.

This visit underscored the impactful collaboration between Sulabh and Boeing in empowering children, with a strong emphasis on educational advancement and community development.

Among the delegation were Nancy Jackson, Deputy Assistant Secretary, US Government, Salil Gupte, President, Boeing India & South Asia, Philip M Cummings, Deputy Minister Counselor - Economic Section, US Embassy of India, Praveena Yagnambhat, Chief of Staff & BGE Lead Boeing India and South Asia.

Nancy praised Sulabh's initia-

tives supported by Boeing and highlighted the US government's commitment to improving education for underserved children, especially girls.

Gupte addressed the students and encouraged them to contribute to India's future. Praveena Yagnambhat fondly remembered late Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak, Sulabh's founder, and acknowledged his contributions to improving lives through sanitation.

She also shared details on Boeing's 'Sukanya' program, which is aimed at getting young children interested in STEM.

"The partnership between Boeing and Sulabh is anchored in our mutual dedication to promoting women's empowerment, ensuring dignity and health, and making quality education accessible to all," remarked Kumar Dilip, Sulabh President.

Three-day national conference VIVIBHA 2024 to be held from November 15

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

A three-day national conference of research scholars with the objective of fostering research culture among the youth by integrating India's cultural heritage with modern methodologies will be held from November 15.

The conference "Vision for Viksit Bharat - VIVIBHA 2024" organised by RSS affiliate Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal at SGT University, Gurugram, will be inaugurated by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat.

"As part of VIVIBHA 2024, the karyakartas of Bharatiya Shiksha Mandal, reached out to more than one million students and researchers, over one lakh teachers and more than 10,000 educational institutions.

"The submitted research papers were evaluated by panel of subject experts from across the country and the selected researchers will have the opportunity to present their work at the conference," Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal national president Sachchidanand Joshi said at a press conference here.

"The Bharat-centric research initiatives will enhance the research quality and foster a spirit of learning, writing skills and a research aptitude among the youth. Vivibha will motivate the young researchers to conduct studies focused on rural development and preservation of Indian Knowledge System, which is essential of realising the dream of Viksit Bharat," he added.

As part of VIVIBHA, an exhibition is also being set up using artificial intelligence, focusing on the theme of "Research to Realisation" and Indian Knowledge System.

"The exhibition will showcase India's contributions in knowledge and science, spanning from the pioneering insights of ancient sages to groundbreaking innovations of modern scientists of India," said Joshi.

"This exhibition will offer insights into the future of education and provide young students and researchers an immersive experience of indigenous teaching methods, key reforms and technological advancements, inspiring them to contribute to a developed, superior and self-reliant India," he added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

High stakes battle

Jharkhand election is a crucial test for the ruling coalition as well as for the BJP, which seeks to reclaim its hold

The Jharkhand Assembly elections commenced with the first phase of voting on November 13, with 43 seats across 15 districts up for grabs. This election marks a pivotal moment in the state's political landscape, where two key coalitions—the BJP and the INDIA bloc led by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and Congress—are locked in a fierce battle for control of the Assembly. With high-profile candidates, pressing issues and a focus on tribal constituencies, the stakes are incredibly high for both camps. Jharkhand, carved out of Bihar in 2000, has been a battleground for various political parties, with the BJP historically dominating the state. However, in the last Assembly elections in 2019, the BJP lost power, managing to secure only 25 seats out of the total 81. The JMM emerged as the largest party, winning 30 seats and subsequently forming a coalition government with the Congress, which won 16 seats and the RJD, which held one. This alliance brought Hemant Soren of the JMM into the Chief Minister's seat,



where he has served for the last five years. Hemant Soren's tenure, however, has faced turbulence, including a brief removal from office after his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in a corruption case. Despite these setbacks, Soren has returned to the political stage with a renewed campaign to lead the INDIA bloc's bid for re-election.

The election campaign has highlighted multiple contentious issues. One of the most polarising topics has been "Bangladeshi infiltration." Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is spearheading the BJP's campaign in Jharkhand, has accused the Hemant Soren-led administration of facilitating illegal migration

from Bangladesh for political benefits. Soren, in response, has accused the BJP of sowing communal discord in the state, with support from Congress's national leadership. His counter-campaign has focused on emphasising the BJP's alleged divisive politics and positioning the JMM-led INDIA bloc as a safeguard for Jharkhand's communal harmony and tribal rights. The first phase features several high-stakes contests with major political figures. Among these is the Seraikella seat, where former Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren, who recently left the JMM after four decades to join the BJP, will contest. In Jamshedpur East, Congress's Ajoy Kumar faces off against BJP's Purnima Das Sahu. In Jamshedpur West, Congress Health Minister Banna Gupta is up against JD(U) leader Saryu Roy, who gained fame after defeating Raghubar Das in 2019 when Das was the sitting Chief Minister. For the BJP, regaining control in Jharkhand is crucial in their larger national strategy to consolidate power in eastern India, especially given their historical dominance in the state. The INDIA bloc, however, views retaining Jharkhand as a cornerstone for strengthening their coalition at a national level. Ultimately, it is the voter sentiment on the ground and the influence of tribal constituencies which are likely to play decisive roles in Jharkhand elections.

PICTALK



Young men play cricket as dark clouds hover in the sky at the Marina Beach, in Chennai

India's tax overhaul: Why simplification is the key



SUBHASH CHANDRA AGRAWAL

There is an urgent need for structural reform, streamlining tax rates and enhanced digital transaction incentives to bring clarity, efficiency and fairness to tax regime

The Indian tax system is notoriously complex and outdated, rooted in the six-decade-old Income Tax Act of 1961, which has undergone numerous amendments. These frequent, piecemeal adjustments have created a convoluted tax structure, leaving both taxpayers and administrators struggling with a lack of clarity. Similarly, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) system, introduced in 2017 as a landmark reform to streamline indirect taxes, has also accumulated a variety of confusing provisions and multiple tax rates, making compliance challenging and costly for businesses. This layering of amendments and patchwork reforms in both direct and indirect tax regimes highlights the need for a comprehensive overhaul that simplifies the tax structure.

A unified, streamlined tax regime should be introduced, minimising the countless exemptions that are prone to misuse. Implementing the recommendations of the Raja Chelliah Committee to cap the highest income tax rate at 30 per cent in alignment with global norms had previously succeeded in reducing black money transactions. However, with the reintroduction of additional surcharges and cess, this advantage has largely been negated. Restoring the 30 per cent cap on the highest tax slab would encourage more individuals to report their income accurately, avoiding tax evasion. An alternative solution could be to establish a permanent Voluntary Disclosure Scheme (VDS). Such a system would bring informal transactions, especially in high-value sectors like real estate, into the official economy if accompanied by a reduction in property registration fees to around 3 per cent. To foster transparency and discourage tax evasion, names of taxpayers disclosing income under this scheme could be made public on a government website. Rationalising income tax exemptions would also help simplify the tax landscape. The baseline exemption limit should be set at Rs 5 lakh, removing exemptions for charitable donations, political contributions and even agricul-



tural income, which are often exploited by high-net-worth individuals and celebrities to channel unaccounted income under the guise of agricultural profits. Farmers typically do not earn over Rs 5 lakh annually, so a limit based on this threshold could curtail abuse. Income between Rs5-10 lakh could be taxed at 10 per cent and income between Rs10-15 lakh at 20 per cent, with income above Rs 15 lakh subject to the 30 per cent rate. Additionally, adopting the recommendation of the LK Jha Committee to shift the financial year from April-March to the calendar year would align India's practices with international standards, further streamlining the tax system.

One glaring inefficiency in the tax system is the reliance on cash transactions, particularly for small amounts. All transactions above Rs10,000 should be conducted through banks. To encourage this, transaction fees on credit card payments should be reduced to 0.5 per cent-exempt from GST- and absorbed by the central government, which would also discontinue incentives for credit card purchases. This reduced fee would significantly increase credit card usage and thus bring more transactions into the formal economy. Currently, the high 2 per cent transaction fee often deters traders from using cards, especially in sectors with low profit margins, leading to extra charges for customers. Increased credit card usage would generate substantial tax revenue and boost the income



A SIMPLIFIED GST STRUCTURE WITH JUST THREE TAX SLABS-6 PER CENT, 12 PER CENT AND 30 PER CENT -WOULD BE FAR MORE MANAGEABLE THAN THE CURRENT SYSTEM WITH MULTIPLE RATES. INDIA REMAINS ONE OF THE FEW COUNTRIES WITH SUCH A FRAGMENTED GST SYSTEM, WHICH IS OFTEN BEWILDERING FOR BUSINESSES

of banks issuing cards, despite the lower transaction fee. To facilitate smooth payments, every GST-registered dealer should maintain at least two card-swiping machines and those refusing to accept cards should face strict penalties.

Another significant concern is the Input Tax Credit (ITC) mechanism in the GST regime, which has become a hotbed for tax evasion, especially in manufacturing. Unsold GST invoices are often purchased by manufacturers seeking ITC, who then receive cash back from sellers. This practice has exacerbated the currency-in-circulation issue that demonetization sought to address. To prevent misuse, an annual forensic audit could be mandated for all ITC claims. An even better solution might be to eliminate the 18 per cent GST slab and restrict ITC eligibility to specific sectors like tradable goods, which would streamline GST compliance for manufacturers and reduce tax evasion.

A simplified GST structure with just three tax slabs-6 per cent, 12 per cent and 30 per cent-would be far more manageable than the current system with multiple rates. India remains one of the few countries with such a fragmented GST system, which is often bewildering for businesses. Over time, the 6 per cent and 12 per cent slabs could be consolidated into a single 10 per cent rate. Essential raw materials such as agricultural products, fish and cotton yarn, which require further processing, could remain

exempt. High-value items like cars, appliances, and electronics should fall under the 30 per cent GST bracket, while parts for these items could be taxed at 12 per cent. The existing system, which categorises similar items under different rates, such as clutch plates at 18 per cent and clutch bearings at 28 per cent, causes unnecessary confusion. Similarly, edible items sold by confectioners are subject to different rates, with sweets, biscuits and snacks varying between 5 per cent and 28 per cent.

Jewelry is another area that could benefit from rationalisation. The GST on gold jewelry could be split into two parts-one for the metal content and the other for making charges. Cess on luxury items could be replaced with additional GST slabs, ideally bringing petroleum products under the GST regime to standardise fuel prices nationwide. Further reforms should address inconsistencies in applying GST to government transactions, postal services, and foreign mail tariffs. It is counterintuitive for government payments to incur GST, as this creates unnecessary accounting complexities, merely transferring funds between government departments. Similarly, postal rates, both domestic and international, require a more logical pricing structure with consistent increments.

(The writer is Guinness World Record holder and RTI Consultant; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

YUNUS FACES CHALLENGES

Madam — Bangladesh's interim government led by Muhammad Yunus, which has shown very few signs of effectively tackling major problems confronting the country, intends to approach Interpol to arrest and bring back former Premier Sheikh Hasina and other members of her administration. The people in Bangladesh remain concerned about the high cost of living, law and order and the return of Islamist forces suppressed under Hasina. The world community has its concerns about violence against minority communities, especially Hindus, who make up 8 per cent of the country's population. The Yunus-led setup needs to rethink its priorities if it wants a healthy electoral democracy for Bangladesh, especially at a time when members of the caretaker administration appear to be working at cross purposes.

The Yunus government is also seeking to impose a ban on the Awami League. An election without the Awami League will be a sham; it will be the same kind of controlled democracy Hasina imposed on Bangladesh to prevent her rivals from participating in electoral politics. Yunus, an unelected caretaker, should provide the healing touch of reconciliation rather than letting radical colleagues, some with dubious antecedents, dictate the politics of revenge. At the same time, Yunus should not let political chaos return to Bangladesh, harming relations with neighbours and derailing the positive economic path the country had been pursuing.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Washington

ARAB LEADERS UNITE

Madam — Arab and Muslim leaders gathered in Saudi Arabia for a summit to address Israel's conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon. The summit, organised by the Saudi Foreign Ministry, comes a year after a similar meeting condemned Israel's actions in Gaza. Leaders are expected to discuss ongoing violence and regional developments, as well as call for an end

Health risks of tattooing



The growing trend of tattooing, which has become a widespread fashion among people of all ages, including celebrities and common individuals. However, this practice often continues without consideration of its harmful health impacts. The increase in tat-

tooning has been linked to the spread of serious diseases. For instance, in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, 60 women were diagnosed with an AIDS-like disease due to the repeated use of a single, HIV-infected needle. Such unsafe practices pose a significant threat, leading to the spread of diseases like HIV and hepatitis. Additionally, reports warn of a potential risk of skin cancer from tattoo inks containing harmful chemicals such as polyethylene glycol. These findings emphasise the urgent need for awareness and caution. It is crucial for individuals to ensure that tattoo parlours use sterilised needles and safe, approved inks. Consulting a doctor before getting a tattoo can also help mitigate health risks. Public health authorities should conduct awareness campaigns to educate people about these dangers.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

to the Gaza conflict and Israeli military actions. Exactly a year ago, after a similar formality, the Islamic countries went home, considering their duty done. While the Israeli army has expanded the range of its bombing, it is now raining death bombs on Lebanon and Yemen as well. The figures give a count of 50 thousand deaths, but this figure could go up to lakhs as tens of thousands of people were badly wounded and injured. They are not getting proper and adequate medical help either. Obviously, they are also sure to die. Israel is claiming that Trump has become president again, so Israel will now take over the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Will the Arab countries take some concrete steps to stop the Israeli oppression cycle, or will they keep praying with folded hands in front of it? It is said that a person who is beaten does not listen to words. To defeat Israel, the Arab countries will have to increase their military strength and combat equipment. Israeli atrocities cannot be avoided by just offering prayers five times a day. For that, the countries of this group will have to

increase military equipment with immediate effect.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpu

RENEW CRICKET TIES

Madam — It will be nice if the BCCI reconsiders its decision of not sending the Indian cricket team to Pakistan to participate in the Champions Trophy to be held there next year.

Unlike politics, sports enable people to channel emotional impulses through victory and defeat, which may help explain why some key India-Pakistan cricket games have helped both nations move closer diplomatically in tense geopolitical environments. Through phased timelines and subnational trust-based initiatives, India and Pakistan can certainly resume cricketing ties and normalise their political relations. The Champions Trophy 2025 provides a great opportunity to realise the same.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Diverse, climate-responsive design is key to net-zero goals

As cities push toward net-zero targets, it is crucial to consider how climate-responsive design can drive a sustainable future

Diversity is the rule of nature. Unfortunately, globalisation has made uniformity a common rule of thumb. This uniform culture not only erodes the cultural diversity we used to observe in every corner of the world but also harms the environment. It is imperative to look closely at how building architecture contributes to the stability of the environment.

The universalisation of building architecture poses a significant challenge to achieving net-zero targets. Though widely adopted for efficiency and branding purposes, this "one-size-fits-all" approach may ultimately hinder the push for sustainable, regionally adaptable and carbon-neutral construction. Different regions possess unique climatic and environmental conditions, from the humidity of tropical areas to the aridity of deserts and the chill of temperate zones. The universal approach to architecture fails to acknowledge these variations, leading to buildings that are fundamentally out of sync with their surroundings. For example, glass buildings are highly



energy-intensive in hot climates, requiring powerful air conditioning to maintain comfort levels. Traditional architecture provides a blueprint for climate-responsive design. Indigenous buildings reflect local knowledge of materials and climate, demonstrating how structures can achieve comfort with minimal energy input. For example, the traditional architecture of Kerala, the nalukettu style (four-sided structure with a central open courtyard), an ettukettu (eight-sided) or even a pathinarukettu (sixteen-sided) layout brings in natural light and ventilation, creating a cooling effect within the home. The steep, sloping roofs of clay tiles that usual-

ly adorn the traditional architecture allow rainwater to run off efficiently during Kerala's monsoon season. This roof style not only serves to prevent waterlogging but also helps keep the interiors cool.

Similarly, the thatched houses made from palm leaves, straw, or reeds provide excellent thermal insulation, making the interiors naturally cool. These traditional designs, often overlooked or deemed "outdated," hold valuable lessons for sustainable construction. These structures rely heavily on artificial heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems by ignoring local environmental factors, resulting in increased energy consumption and carbon emissions. Incorporating regional adaptations into building codes can encourage architects and developers to consider climate-responsive designs. Municipalities and urban planners play a critical role by mandating energy-efficient designs aligned with the local environment. Additionally, incentive structures—such as tax breaks or subsidies for buildings that achieve high

environmental ratings using regional materials an—could drive more developers toward climate-responsive practices. Achieving net zero requires a fundamental shift in how we conceive, design, and construct buildings. Global architectural firms and developers must recognise that regional adaptation is not a limitation but an opportunity for innovation.

A glass-and-steel tower may look sleek, but its environmental footprint should be minimised by integrating green roofs, indigenous materials, and passive climate strategies. Ultimately, the transition to net zero requires a new paradigm where buildings are no longer static, universal symbols of modernity but dynamic, responsive structures that work with—rather than against—their environment. Embracing diversity in architecture is not just about aesthetics or cultural representation; it is an essential strategy for sustainable living in a warming world. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN



FIRST COLUMN

MAKE A HABIT OF PRAYING

Praying is the easiest and best way to take shelter from God

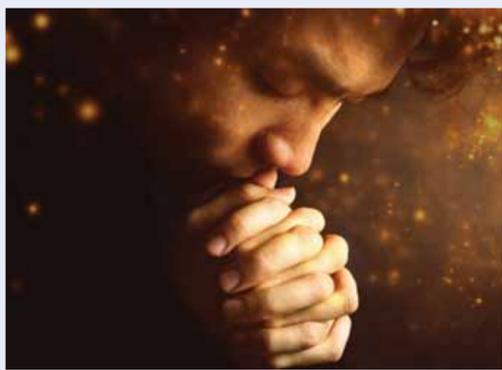


AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We, souls, are intrinsically small, quite ignorant, unsafe and mostly helpless. God is omnipotent, omniscient and controller. God is quite prepared to guide and help, but we have to pray for His guidance and help. God won't do it on His own, because that will encroach upon our free will. So, what is the wise thing to do? Just pray. It is as simple as that. Not praying is not really an option. Otherwise, we will begin to speculate and, yes, worry. Why does one not pray? There are two main reasons.

One is ignorance about its benefits. The other is a feeling that one doesn't need God's help; I can manage. We don't till we get in trouble. We can pray anytime; God doesn't mind. Strangely, we request favours from so many, but not from God, who is the source of everything. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 10.41) Praying is a positive act. This is linked with our desires, which define us. Did you not know that all worship is praying only? All schools worldwide start with prayers. Prayers are of three types. One is for what we feel we need. (9.22) The second is for the protection of what we have like health. (9.22) The third and most important is to protect us when there are good times.

Lord Krishna has commended those who can tolerate 'sukha' just as one tolerates 'duhkha' (2.14, 2.38 and 12.13) Because all big mistakes are generally made in happy times only when one feels that one cannot do any wrong. This is when lust raises its ugly head the most. The mind becomes super active prodded by senses. (15.7) God can



help as only He can. But before doing that ego has to be curbed. We have to accept that someone can be superior to us and to such an extent that we must take His shelter. This is how we get started. You begin praying and start becoming deserving of favours by God, because praying is a spiritual act, as it links us with God. Does being connected with the rich and powerful not bring some benefits? Then, God owns all that we see.

Yes, it is all His; we get it to use for a limited period only. Then, we are relocated. Now I will list what all we can pray for. This is not an exhaustive list, but it will be a good beginning. The first must be for guidance because direction is all important. Who is better placed than God, who is omniscient and knows past, present and future also. The second on my list is help from God. Who again is better placed than God – the omnipotent?

Don't we get in trouble helplessly? God can help. (18.58) The third must be for 'shakti' (strength) of five kinds, which are inner strength (Atma Bala), intellectual strength, mental strength, physical strength and strength to be able to tolerate. We need all of them, especially the tolerance part because we must tolerate what cannot be avoided. (2.10) Aren't we living in 'duhkhalaya' (place of miseries) (8.15) Material wealth is on everyone's list. This is possible if we remain in contact with God. (18.78) Not only wealth but success is there to be had if we pray and pray sincerely for all our 'dharma' (according to 'dharma') activities. (18.78)

The conclusion is that praying is the easiest and best way to take shelter from God. And as we receive what we crave for, and we can thank gratefully. What this will do is make us deserving of more rewards from God. Life will be nicely set. Keep praying.

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

Are e-commerce giants violating FDI norms?



UTTAM GUPTA

As policymakers consider future regulatory steps, the ongoing ED investigation may serve as a pivotal moment in clarifying the regulatory framework for e-commerce operations in India



Reportedly, on October 7, 2024, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) raided the offices of half a dozen sellers operating on the e-commerce platforms of Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart for alleged violations of Foreign Investment norms and Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The intent behind the searches was to gather evidence on complaints that these sellers have been importing products from China but routing them through other locations to avoid paying higher import duties and longer time in getting the consignment cleared at the ports (that would be the case if the products were imported directly from China involving higher import tariff and more security-related checks). The agency also wanted to verify if the firms had indulged in 'under-invoicing', a practice that involves understatement of the true value of goods to save on payment of import duty. Establishing such violations will be less of a headache for the enforcement authorities although proving them in the court will remain a challenge apart from the process being long drawn. However, the big headache relates to proving violations of the norms relating to foreign direct investment (FDI). E-commerce, put simply, is the practice of buying and selling goods or services using the Internet. Amazon and Flipkart essentially operate the "market-place" model of e-commerce – a special dispensation carved out by the Narendra Modi Government under which 100 per cent FDI is permitted.

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade or DPIIT in the Ministry of Commerce and Industries issued a Press Note (PN) in 2016 detailing the guidelines in this regard. The "market-place" is a platform where vendors sell their products to consumers even as its owner (say, Amazon) merely acts as a facilitator. The marketplace owner books orders, raises invoices, arranges deliveries, accepts payments, handles rejections, warehousing and so on. But, he can't own and control the inventory of goods and undertake "direct selling" to the consumer. But, this is happening.

The charge has been levelled by none other than the Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal. At the launch of the Pable India Foundation's report 'Net Impact



AMAZON IS SELLING PRODUCTS ON ITS E-COMMERCE PLATFORM AT UNREALISTICALLY LOW PRICES WHICH RESULTS IN HEAVY LOSSES ESTIMATED TO BE ABOUT A BILLION DOLLARS ANNUALLY

of E-Commerce on Employment and Consumer Welfare in India' on August 21, 2024, Goyal took a shot at Amazon, for selling products directly to consumers and indulging in "predatory pricing". That could lead to massive growth of e-commerce capturing half of the Indian retail market ten years from now. This would adversely impact an estimated 100 million small retailers across the country. Predatory pricing involves setting prices for a product at an unrealistically low level to undercut the competition and gain market share.

Generally practised by a new player, predatory pricing violates antitrust laws even as it seeks to create a monopoly. Goyal opines that Amazon is selling products on its e-commerce platform at unrealistically low prices which results in heavy losses estimated to be about a billion dollars annually. To fund these losses, it brings the money from its parent but camouflages it as FDI. Pertinently, he levelled these charges in 2020 also.

Apart from the top brass in the political establishment being fully seized of the matter, it has engaged the attention of the judiciary up to the level of the country's top court. In 2019, Delhi Vyapar Mahasangh (DVM) complained to the Competition Commission of India (CCI) alleging anti-competitive behaviour by Amazon Seller Services (ASS) and Flipkart Internet Private Limited (FIPL).

It argued that ASS and FIPL had entered into exclusive sales agreements with smartphone makers to sell certain phones through a small number of preferred sellers and offering to pay for part of the discount that such sellers would offer during key sales periods such as Flipkart's big billion day and Amazon's Prime Day.

Prima facie, the CCI agreed with DVM's contention and ordered a probe by the Director General (DG) – Investigation. ASS and

FIPL went up to the Supreme Court (SC) to get the order quashed. In August 2021, dismissing their appeal, the SC ordered "the CCI – DG will complete the probe. In its recent findings, the CCI-DG has charged ASS and FIPL with indulging in 'predatory pricing' and violation of antitrust laws. Has Amazon/Flipkart violated FDI norms also?"

To answer this let us look at the fine print. While allowing 100 per cent FDI in a market-place model of e-commerce, the PN (2016) had prescribed two main riders viz., (i) the firm can't permit more than 25 per cent of total sales on its platform from one vendor or its group companies". (ii) it can't directly or indirectly influence the sale price. The first condition didn't specify that a firm connected with the owner of "market-place" (say its subsidiary or its joint venture or JV with an Indian company) couldn't be a vendor.

Thus, contrary to the real intent of the policy which disallowed the e-commerce platform owners from direct selling to individual consumers, the fine print permitted them to do so. Putting a cap of 25 per cent on each such entity led to a bizarre scenario whereby four JVs or subsidiaries of Amazon could control all of the sales on its platform.

And, having permitted it as a direct seller, you can't prevent him from deciding/influencing the price. Thus, the second condition becomes redundant.

Meanwhile, the extant policy permits FDI in business-to-business or B2B segments in physical/offline format. This has enabled Amazon and Flipkart to set up offline stores. From these stores, they sell products to sellers (many of such entities are the darlings of the duo or JVs set up in collaboration with them), who in turn, sell those products on their marketplace platform.

So, it was a well-crafted policy framework intended to enable e-

commerce majors to do all that is necessary to control inventory and undertake direct selling to consumers on their own marketplace platform. Meanwhile, in a note issued on December 26, 2018, the DPIIT clarified that "the owner of the marketplace or its subsidiary or its JV with Indian company can't have ownership of the seller." Further, "a seller on the platform can't source more than 25 per cent of its inventory from a firm connected with the latter. The above clarification has prompted e-commerce majors to rework strategies in a manner such that their links with the 'preferred' sellers are not clearly visible.

Meanwhile, the enforcement agencies are in full action mode raiding the latter's premises, looking at the documents with the intent to identify and expose such links. But, this won't lead them anywhere. The government should face the facts head-on. If, its original intent was to ensure that the marketplace can't have any connection whatsoever with the seller whether by way of ownership or sourcing of the latter's inventory, that should have been mentioned in the guidelines issued in 2016. Anything done subsequently even if it comes by way of a clarification will be considered a retrospective change of policy and send a wrong signal.

Instead of going back, the government should clearly say '100 per cent FDI is permitted in direct selling to consumers alongside running a marketplace model'. It should also allow 100 per cent FDI in retail in all forms, single-brand or multi-brand retail (MBR), online or offline sans any riders. All these distinctions should go. This will enable millions of Indian retailers to have 'unrestrained' access to foreign capital thereby ensuring a level playing field.

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

Taiwan and India: A partnership in climate action and sustainable development

This partnership is poised to make meaningful contributions to net-zero transitions, green finance and climate adaptation, paving the way for a resilient future

As climate change reshapes our world, Taiwan and India, like many other nations, find themselves grappling with the profound challenges it brings. As major economies in the Indo-Pacific, Taiwan and India not only bear responsibility for their environmental welfare but also share a commitment to addressing the global climate crisis. Our cooperation on climate change holds immense potential, as Taiwan and India pursue a shared vision of green growth, innovation and sustainable development. In recent years, Taiwan has faced severe impacts from climate change, including the worst drought in a century, unprecedented rainfall and powerful typhoons. Under the leader-



BAUSHUAN GER

ship of President Lai Ching-te, Taiwan has outlined a comprehensive strategy for achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. This vision includes advancing a second energy transition, accelerating the development of geothermal, hydrogen, biomass, solar and ocean energy, fostering a dual digital and green transformation of industries, and promoting sustainable lifestyles. Taiwan's

net-zero journey prioritises fairness, ensuring that every individual benefits from this transformative process. In June, Taiwan established the National Climate Change Committee under the Office of the President. This high-level initiative strengthens policy transparency and public engagement, aligning Taiwan's efforts with global climate goals.

With a focus on seven key areas—including pathways to net-zero, diverse carbon reduction technologies, green finance and sustainable living—the committee provides a solid foundation for both domestic and international climate action. Taiwan's commitment to climate governance offers an opportunity for new collaborations with

India on issues of mutual interest. India has demonstrated its ambition to become a global leader in clean energy, possessing rich resources for renewable energy development.

Taiwan, a world leader in green technology, climate adaptation and low-carbon innovation, complements India's strengths, allowing both countries to accelerate their sustainable development goals. Taiwan has integrated its 2050 net-zero target into the Climate Change Response Act and will implement a carbon fee system starting in 2025.

This initial carbon fee of approximately USD 10 per ton of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) will gradually increase, aligning with inter-



national standards of USD 40 to USD 60 per tCO₂e by 2030. Additionally, Taiwan plans to introduce an emissions trading system within the next four years, enhancing its role in the global carbon market. This framework presents a robust platform for cooperation in carbon markets, policy exchanges, and technology sharing. Taiwan is launching three major funds to

boost the growth of green industries, including the NT\$10 billion Green Growth Fund to support emerging net-zero industries domestically. Additionally, long-term investments in energy-saving, circular economy, and net-zero sectors will be supported by the Green Finance Innovation Fund, backed by the insurance and finance sectors.

The Taiwan Net-Zero Fund will collaborate with high-emission industries, venture capital, and financial institutions to invest in advanced carbon reduction technologies. These initiatives align with Article 9 of the Paris Agreement, which calls for mobilising climate finance from various sources to support global climate actions.

Taiwan's efforts will attract greater green investment, strengthen international competitiveness and deepen its climate partnership with India. In the realm of climate adaptation, Taiwan released its latest National Climate Change Science Report in May.

This report provides essential scientific data to assist local governments in planning effective short- and medium-term adaptation measures, enhancing urban resilience.

It underscores the need for early-warning systems and disaster prevention mechanisms that integrate prediction, response and recovery. Taiwan's adaptation initiatives align with Article 7 of the Paris Agreement and we see

great potential for Taiwan and India to collaborate on early-warning technologies, disaster prevention and resilience-building, strengthening both nations' ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Taiwan and India share a clear goal in climate action. Bilateral cooperation will promote green growth and jointly confront the global climate crisis. As Taiwan advances carbon pricing and green technologies, we look forward to deepening cooperation with India in renewable energy, net-zero transition, and technological innovation, contributing together to global climate governance.

(The writer is Taiwan's Representative to India; views are personal)

Power crisis leaves Omar out in the cold

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Omar Abdullah, the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, is feeling the heat as the power generation capacity in the state has come down to approximately 300 MW against the installed capacity of 1140 MW due to depleting water levels in rivers following deficient rainfall in the region.

Last week the Union Power Minister Manohar Lal Khattar sanctioned 300 MW of additional power to J and K to reduce the electricity cuts even as the peak winter season is fast approaching in Kashmir valley.

The residents in the valley are nurturing high hopes that Abdullah, who is looking after the charge of the power department, will resolve the issue of the power crisis during his term in office. Speaking at a conference of power ministers of states and Union territories in New Delhi on Tuesday, Omar Abdullah had said the Indus Water Treaty was restricting J and K's ability to harness its



huge hydropower potential, primarily due to storage constraints. "As a fallout of the treaty barriers, J and K pays a heavy price in the peak winter months when power generation hits a low, creating hardships for its people," Abdullah had said at the

conference. He had highlighted the limiting clauses in the treaty that restricted J and K from realising its full hydro power potential by only permitting run-of-the-river projects and said, "Hydro power is J and K's only viable energy source. The region is compelled to

rely on power imports from other states, which adversely impacts its economy".

A day later, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president and former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti Wednesday said that the Abdullah-led government and other regional political parties should ask the Union government to return two power projects to J and K.

During his previous term in office, Abdullah had himself proposed to buy back NHPC-run power projects to resolve the issue of power crisis.

Questioning Omar Abdullah's stand on the issue, Mufti said, "Instead of questioning the Indus water treaty, we should ask the Indian government to return two power projects to solve the problem of power. If it does not happen, compensation should be given. This matter should be resolved between the Indian government and the J&K government. By questioning this we are starting a new battle, we are creating a new fight."

Impressive voter turnout in...

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For the first time, this polling station was set up in the Buddha Pahad area for the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, allowing residents to vote in their own village. In the Manoharpur and Jagannathpur Assembly constituency of West Singhbhum district, voters chose to cast their vote in spite of boycott posters and threat calls by extremists. At polling stations in Sonapi in Jagannathpur AC and Rabangada in Manoharpur AC, security forces thwarted attempts to prevent voters from voting through boycott posters and blockades on the way.

While the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led coalition is seeking to retain power riding on its welfare schemes, including Maiyan Samman Yojna, the Bharatiya Janata

Party (BJP) has been campaigning with its aggressive Hindutva agenda, infiltration and alleged corruption by the current dispensation. Key battles include former Chief Minister Champai Soren, who is contesting on a BJP ticket in Seraikela, facing JMM's Ganesh Mahli. Geeta Kora, wife of former CM Madhu Koda, is contesting against Congress' Sona Ram Sinku in Jagannathpur. Veteran Congress leader Rameshwar Oraon is up against AJSU's Shanti Bhagat in Lohardaga, while Janata Dal (United)'s Saryu Roy is facing Congress' Banna Gupta in Jamshepur (West).

Meanwhile, the high profile Wayanad seat bypolls recorded 64.27 per cent voter turnout. In the previous election, the percentage was 72.92 per cent.

Sporadic incidents of

violence, including a crude bomb attack in Bhatpara near Naihati Assembly constituency that killed a local TMC worker, marred the West Bengal bypolls, while the voter turnout across six constituencies stood at 69.29 till 5pm. The killing of local TMC worker Ashok Shaw sparked political

accusations of voter intimidation during the ongoing bypolls, prompting the Chief Electoral Officer's (CEO) office to seek a report on the incident. The incident drew immediate political reactions, with BJP leader Arjun Singh accusing the TMC of using intimidation tactics to instil fear among voters in Naihati and other constituencies. In Rajasthan, Ramgarh witnessed the highest turnout of 71.45 per cent. An estimated 72.96 per cent of the 9.1 lakh electorate

exercised their franchise in the bypolls to the five Assam Assembly constituencies in Assam amid minor incidents of violence. Samaguri, which witnessed several incidents of pre-poll violence, recorded the highest polling percentage of 78.10.

An estimated 76.9 per cent voters turned out in three Assembly segments of Karnataka where bypolls were held. Voter turnouts of 75.27% and 72.37%, respectively, were recorded in the bypolls to Vijaypur and Budhni Assembly constituencies in Madhya Pradesh.

A voter turnout of 46.43 per cent was recorded in the bypoll to the Raipur City South Assembly constituency in Chhattisgarh. The Vav Assembly seat in Gujarat's Banaskantha district recorded a provisional voter turnout of 68.01 per cent in the by-election.

Government doctor stabbed in...

From page 1

Palaniswami, the leader of the Opposition, sought tough action against the culprit. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) state unit chief K Annamalai blamed CM Stalin and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) regime over the incident.

Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin, along with Subramanian, inspected the hospital and assured stringent legal action. They met the oncologist, being treated at the ICU. Later, AIADMK leaders D Jayakumar and C Vijayabaskar also met the doctor under treatment.

The hospital official said the assailant had been identified as Vignesh, a resident of a suburban neighbourhood and his mother Kanchana was the patient. Balaji Jagannathan, is a renowned oncologist and is serving as an associate professor in the medical oncology department in the hospital. Police Commissioner A Arun

inspected the hospital and reviewed the security arrangements. He said a police outpost would be set up on the premises.

Udhayanidhi said the assailant had been visiting the hospital for six months for treatment of his mother and there was no suspicion about him. The Deputy CM said: "For half an hour he (Vignesh) had discussed with the doctor. Based on what he was told in a private hospital, he had taken this decision out of anger. Stern legal action will be taken against him and steps will be taken to prevent recurrence."

The official, an emergency medicine anesthesiologist, told reporters: "He closed the OP room (from inside) and stabbed the doctor in his neck, behind his ear, chest, forehead, on his back, head and stomach. There was huge blood loss. He is a heart patient and has undergone surgery for his heart ailment."

Claiming that he wanted to talk about his mother, Vignesh entered the OP room and since

the door was closed it could not be opened immediately and later with the help of security personnel, staff and others, the doctor was brought out.

The oncologist, who had also undergone pacemaker implantation, was resuscitated and immediately operated upon by a multidisciplinary team of surgeons. The victim bled excessively and his medication for his heart ailment is the likely reason for more blood loss. Two units of blood were transfused and all wounds were sutured. "We have to wait and see for another six to eight hours for his recovery; the oncologist is under anaesthesia," the official added.

The official said the assailant claimed that his mother was provided chemotherapy six times in the hospital. After shifting to a private hospital, they were told that her lungs were affected. The official said exactly what transpired between the victim and the assailant is not clear.

Trade fair's unfair traffic scene

From page 1

The traffic advisory said, "People are requested to avail public transport to reach Pragati Maidan. Those coming by Delhi Metro may alight at Supreme Court Metro Station and take entry to fair grounds through Gate No. 10 or use shuttle service for entry through Gate 6 and 4. People may also get down at Mandi House Metro Station and walk. Those using DTC buses for travelling from Delhi or NCR can alight at designated bus stops on Mathura Road and Bhairon Marg."

It mentioned that commuters should avoid Bhairon Marg, Purana Quila Road, Shershah Road and Mathura Road from W-Point to Mathura Road - Subramaniam Bharti Marg Crossing.

Andhra police summons Ram Gopal Varma for questioning



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Andhra Pradesh police on Wednesday summoned film director Ram Gopal Varma for questioning in connection with posting of morphed photographs of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan online. A Prakasam district police team visited Varma's residence in Hyderabad and served the notice personally to the director around 10 am to appear before the investigation officer at Maddipadu police station on November 19. "We served the notices to him to appear before the investigation officer," said AR Damodar, Prakasam District Superintendent of Police. After receiving the notice, Varma informed police that he would attend the probe. Police registered a case against the director for allegedly posting morphed photographs on social media on the basis of a complaint received from one Ramalingam (45) from Maddipadu.

Kharge counters BJP's poll slogans with a pitch for unity



TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Countering the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for its alleged attempts to break the country through its divisive slogans such as 'Ek hain to safe hain' or 'batenge to katenge', Mallikarjun Kharge, president of the Congress party, on Wednesday asked the people to gathered at his rallies to chant 'Hum Sab Ek Hain' and the crowds responded enthusiastically. Addressing election rallies at Latur and Solapur, Kharge minced no words when he castigated senior BJP leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath, for their desperate attempts to polarize the voters in the poll-bound state on the religious lines. "We are all strongly united. But it is the BJP that is

trying to divide us with slogans of 'Ek hain to safe hain' or 'batenge to katenge'. The party is attempting to sow discord among the people... But the people of Maharashtra will foil such moves by voting out the MahaYuti government," Kharge said.

Kharge went on to ask the people gathered at the two rallies to raise chants of 'Hum Sab Ek Hain' and the crowds responded to him enthusiastically. Slamming Modi for criticism of Rahul Gandhi and other Congress leaders who have been displaying copies of the Constitution at their rallies, Kharge said: "The Congress leaders laid down their lives to keep the country and all communities united. On the contrary, the BJP and RSS had no contribution to make in the freedom movement and

unity of the country. If anything, the BJP leaders like Yogi Adityanath have come up with divisive slogans like 'Batenge to Katenge' and 'Ek Hai to Safe Hai'."

Kharge reiterated that the BJP-RSS were actively working to destroy the Constitution through falsehoods and were making fake claims of its achievements in Maharashtra "The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) leaders have consistently been exposing the false claims of achievement during the past few years," he said. Dubbing MahaYuti as a government of thieves, Kharge said: "The Assembly election are an opportunity to teach traitors a lesson. I appeal to you to throw out this '50 khoke, anti-welfare' (moneybags) government from power in the state".

Age of marriage discussion to resume

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Under the 2006 Act, a person married below the minimum age may apply for annulment within two years of attaining majority (that is before 20 years of age). The Bill sought to increase this to five years (that is 23 years of age).

At its November 21 meeting, the panel will discuss the New Education Policy (NEP) and will hear the secretary of the Department of School Education and Literacy, the Ministry of Education, and representatives of school teacher federations and civil society organisations on NEP's impact on school education.

The secretary will also inform the panel about various schemes like the Samagra Siksha Abhiyan and the functioning of autonomous bodies such as the NCERT, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS), and the performance of various schemes implemented by the department.

The National Education Policy of India-2020 replaced the previous National Policy on Education, 1986. Among the key features, it keeps mother tongue as the medium of instruction till Grade five while recommending its continuance till Grade eight and beyond.

Nangloi, Alipur shooter arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ MUMBAI

The Delhi Police on Wednesday arrested a shooter involved in the firing incidents at Nangloi and Alipur after a brief exchange of firing.

According to the police, the accused has been identified as Ramniwas alias Mogli, a resident of Village Khera Khurd, who was involved in the firing incidents at Shree Lakshmi Plywood in Nangloi and the office of Goel Properties in Alipur on November 4.

A senior police officer said, "Special Cell was assigned to work out the case. Based on CCTV footage and human intelligence, one of the shooter was identified as Ramniwas." The police received a tipoff

regarding the accused on Thursday that he would be coming near Khera canal in the area of Shahbad Dairy police station in Outer North district during the early morning hours. "A raid was accordingly conducted, and staff was deployed on the road near the canal. The accused was seen approaching on a motorcycle, as identified by the informer," he said. The officer added that the police attempted to stop him by blocking the road, but the accused lost control of his bike and slipped from the bike and fired at the police party. "In self defense, the police fired back, and one of the bullet hit the left leg of accused thereby injuring the accused. He was overpowered and was taken to hospital," another police official added.

Season's signature smog has arrived

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This navigation system helps aircraft land safely in conditions of low visibility, but without it, flight operations can be severely disrupted. Several cities in north India, including the national capital, recorded visibility below 1000 metres and 500 metres. Similar smog was reported across northwest India with zero visibility reported at Amritsar and Hindon airports. Other airports which recorded low visibility were Patna (800 metres), Varanasi (800 metres), Agra (800 metres), Chandigarh (400 metres), Gorakhpur (200 metres), Deogarh (150 metres), Palam (100 metres), Hindon (100 metres), and Amritsar (50 metres).

Addressing a press conference, Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Virendra Sachdeva said that both private and government schools should be shut down for the safety of children, given the alarming level of air pollution in the national capital and its adjoining regions. Meanwhile, the IMD said mostly smog prevailed across Delhi over the past two weeks. It added it was smog and not smog in the early hours of the day.

An average Air Quality Index (AQI) of 361 (very poor) was recorded at 8 am which later settled at 418, compared to 334 (very poor) at 4pm on Tuesday. Only Ayanagar out of the 36 monitoring stations recorded a severe average AQI of 417 at 8am. Lodhi Road (268) and Aurobindo Marg

(275) recorded "poor" air quality. Overall, this was the 15th consecutive day of "very poor" air quality. Delhi overtook Pakistan's Lahore as the world's most polluted city in Swiss group IQAir's live rankings, with an air quality index (AQI) score of more than 1,000, considered "hazardous", but India's pollution authority said the AQI was around 350.

Currently, Delhi is experiencing dangerously high AQI levels, often classified as 'very poor' or 'severe'. This uptick in pollution is largely due to several factors, such as vehicle emissions, industrial waste, and the burning of seasonal crops in nearby states. With winter's arrival, the problem worsens due to temperature inversions that

trap pollutants near the ground, creating dense smog. Delhi has now marked 15 consecutive days with air quality in the "very poor" category, which began on October 30 when the AQI hit 307. People are advised to stay updated on AQI readings daily so they can make informed choices about outdoor activities. In Delhi, vehicular emissions remain a top contributor to pollution, with an estimated share of 10% over the next two days.

Delhi recorded the fourth-worst air quality in the country, trailing behind Hajipur, Chandigarh, and Patna. Prominent pollutants in Delhi were particulate matter PM10, consisting of particles 10 micrometres or less in diameter.

SC demolishes 'bulldozer justice'

From page 1

"No demolition should be carried out without a prior show cause notice returnable either in accordance with the time provided by the local Municipal laws or within 15 days time from the date of service of such notice, whichever is later," the Bench directed. The SC also observed that constitutional ethos and values would not permit any such abuse of power and such misadventures cannot be tolerated by the court of law.

"The executive cannot become a judge and decide that a person accused is guilty and, therefore, punish him by demolishing his residential/commercial property/properties. Such an

act of the executive would be transgressing its limits," the Bench said. In order to allay the fears in the minds of citizens with regard to arbitrary exercise of power by the officials of the State, the top court finds it necessary to issue certain directions in exercise of power under Article 142 of the Constitution, it said. Article 142 empowers the apex court to pass any decree or order necessary for doing complete justice in any case or matter pending before it.

Even after orders of demolition are passed, the Bench said, the affected party needs to be given some time so as to challenge the order before an appropriate forum. And even in cases of persons who do not wish to contest

the demolition order, sufficient time needs to be given to them to vacate and arrange their affairs, the SC said, adding that "heavens would not fall on the authorities if they hold their hands for some period." The SC directed that notice shall be served upon the owner/occupier by a registered post. Additionally, the notice shall also be affixed conspicuously on the outer portion of the structure in question. "The time of 15 days, stated herein above, shall start from the date of receipt of the said notice," it said.

To prevent any allegation of backdating, the Bench directed that as soon as the show cause notice is duly served, intimation shall be

sent to the office of the concerned collector or district magistrate digitally by email.

"The collector/DM shall designate a nodal officer and also assign an email address and communicate the same to all the municipal and other authorities in charge of building regulations and demolition within one month from today," it said. The notice shall contain details regarding the nature of unauthorised construction, specific violation and the grounds of demolition, it directed.

The designated authority, the court added, shall give the person concerned an opportunity of personal hearing and pass a final order. It said the final order should contain the contentions of the

'notice', and if the designated authority disagrees with the same, the reasons for it. The Bench said the final order shall also contain why the extreme step of demolition is the only option available and other options like compounding and demolishing only part of the property are not available. The Bench also said the proceedings of demolition shall be videographed. "Needless to state that the authorities hereinafter shall strictly comply with the aforesaid directions issued by us. It will also be informed that violation of any of the directions would lead to initiation of contempt proceedings in addition to the prosecution," the Bench said.

No more false advertising, CCPA tells...

From page 1

Misleading representations about the quality or standard of their services are strictly prohibited. Coaching institutes must accurately represent their infrastructure, resources, and facilities. In a notable move, the guidelines reportedly will prevent coaching centres from using students' names, photos, or testimonials in advertisements without their written consent-and importantly, this consent must be obtained only after the student's success. This provision is intended to reduce the pressure student's face when enrolling, as they are often pushed into signing such agreements upfront.

Coaching centres will need to disclose important information, such as the name, rank, and course details alongside the student's photo in an advertisement. Guidelines also stipulate whether the course was paid for by the student that too must be clearly stated. Additionally, any disclaimers will need to be prominently displayed, with the same font size as other important details, ensuring that consumers are not misled by fine print.

The guidelines will reportedly target the common tactic used by any person engaged in coaching i.e. creating a false sense of urgency or scarcity, such as implying limited seats or

exaggerated demand, to pressure students into making immediate decisions.

Every coaching centre will be required to partner with the National Consumer Helpline, making it easier for students to raise concerns or complaints regarding misleading advertisements and unfair trade practices. Any violation of these guidelines will be treated as a contravention of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. The Central Authority has the power to take stringent actions against offenders, including imposing penalties, ensuring accountability, and preventing further occurrences of such deceptive practices.

Judge delays ruling on Trump's conviction in hush money case

AP ■ NEW YORK

A judge on Tuesday postponed a decision on whether to undo President-elect Donald Trump's conviction in his hush money case as prosecutors consider how to proceed in light of last week's election and his lawyers argue for dismissal so he can run the country.

The postponement comes at a dramatic and dynamic point in the case, which focused on how Trump accounted for payments to a porn actor before the 2016 election and produced a first-ever conviction of a former commander-in-chief. Sentencing had been set for Nov 26. But prosecutors now say they're reassessing, and

they appear open to the possibility that the proceedings can't go as planned.

"These are unprecedented circumstances," prosecutor Matthew Colangelo wrote in an email to the court. He said prosecutors need to consider how to balance the "competing interests" of the jury's verdict and the presidency.

Trump lawyer Emil Bove, meanwhile, argued the case must be thrown out altogether "to avoid unconstitutional impediments to President Trump's ability to govern". The messages were part of an email chain released Tuesday, when New York Judge Juan M Merchan had been set to rule on Trump lawyers' earlier request to toss his conviction

for a different reason — because of a US Supreme Court ruling this summer on presidential immunity.

Instead, Merchan told Trump's lawyers he'd halt proceedings and delay the ruling until at least Nov 19 so that prosecutors can suggest a way forward. Both sides agreed to the one-week postponement.

Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Cheung heralded the delay. He said in a statement that the president-elect's win makes it "abundantly clear that Americans want an immediate end to the weaponisation of our justice system, including this case, which should have never been filed".

Prosecutors declined to com-

ment.

A jury convicted Trump in May of falsifying business records related to a \$130,000 payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels in 2016. The payout was to buy her silence about claims that she had sex with Trump. Trump says they didn't have sex, denies any wrongdoing and maintains the prosecution was a political tactic meant to harm his latest campaign. Trump is a Republican.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, whose office brought the case, is a Democrat, as is Merchan. Just over a month after the verdict, the Supreme Court ruled that ex-presidents can't be prosecuted for actions they took in the course of running the

country, and prosecutors can't cite those actions even to bolster a case centered on purely personal conduct.

Trump's lawyers cited that ruling to argue that the hush money jury got some evidence it shouldn't have, such as Trump's presidential financial disclosure form and testimony from some White House aides. Prosecutors disagreed and said the evidence in question was only "a sliver" of their case.

Trump's criminal conviction was a first for any ex-president. It left the 78-year-old facing the possibility of a fine, probation or up to four years in prison. The case centered on how Trump accounted for reimbursing a personal attorney for the Daniels payment.

The then-lawyer, Michael Cohen, fronted the money. He later recouped it through a series of payments that Trump's company logged as legal expenses. Trump, by then in the White House, signed most of the checks himself.

Prosecutors said the designation was meant to cloak the true purpose of the payments and help cover up a broader effort to keep voters from hearing unflattering claims about Trump during his first campaign.

Trump said that Cohen was legitimately paid for legal services, and that Daniels' story was suppressed to avoid embarrassing Trump's family, not to influence the electorate. Trump was a private citizen,

campaigning for president, when Cohen paid Daniels in October 2016. He was president when Cohen was reimbursed, and Cohen testified that they discussed the repayment arrangement in the Oval Office.

Trump has been fighting for months to overturn the verdict. While urging Merchan to nix the conviction, the president-elect also has been trying to move the case to federal court. Before the election, a federal judge repeatedly said no to the move, but Trump has appealed. Trump faces three other unrelated indictments in various jurisdictions.

But Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith has been evaluating how to wind down

both the 2020 election interference case and the separate classified documents case against Trump before he takes office, a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to discuss the matter publicly. Longstanding Justice Department policy says sitting presidents cannot be prosecuted.

Meanwhile, a Georgia election interference case against Trump is largely on hold while he and other defendants appeal a judge's ruling allowing Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis to continue prosecuting it.

Russia launches first missile attack on Kyiv in months as N Korean troops fight in Kursk

AP ■ KYIV

Russia attacked the Ukrainian capital Kyiv with a sophisticated combination of missiles and drones for the first time in 73 days on Wednesday, authorities reported, as the Pentagon said most of the North Korean troops sent to help Moscow's war effort are fighting to drive Ukraine's army off Russian soil in the Kursk border region.

Air raid warnings blared for hours as Russia targeted eight regions of Ukraine, firing six ballistic and cruise missiles and 90 drones, the Ukrainian air force said.

Air defences downed four missiles and 37 drones, and another 47 drones were stopped by electronic jamming, the statement said. The damage was being assessed.

The air assault came as most of the more than 10,000 North Korean troops sent by Pyongyang to help Moscow in the war are engaged in combat in Russia's Kursk border region, according to the Pentagon. A Ukrainian army incursion into Kursk three months ago has



succeeded in holding a broad area of land and has embarrassed the Kremlin.

Russia's military has trained the North Korean soldiers in artillery, drone skills and basic infantry operations, including trench clearing, Pentagon deputy spokesperson Vedant

Patel told a briefing Tuesday. The cooperation faces challenges, according to the Pentagon, including how to achieve military interoperability and overcoming the language barrier.

Kyiv officials say Russia has deployed around 50,000 troops

to Kursk in a bid to dislodge the Ukrainians.

Russia has in recent months been assembling forces for a counteroffensive in Kursk, according to the Institute for the Study of War think tank, though the timescale of the operation is not known.

Russia's plans in Kursk and Ukraine's efforts to hold back a Russian onslaught in the eastern Donetsk region coincide with political uncertainty over how a US administration under Donald Trump will change Washington's policy on the war. US military aid is vital for Ukraine, but Trump has signalled he doesn't want to keep giving tens of billions of dollars to Kyiv.

President Joe Biden intends to bolster US military support to Ukraine in the final months of his administration, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday. The US will "continue to shore up everything we're doing for Ukraine to make sure that it can effectively defend itself against this Russian aggression," Blinken told reporters at NATO headquarters, before planned meetings with allied envoys and Ukrainian officials.

Blinken warned that North Korea's decision to send its troops into combat operations alongside Russian forces "demands and will get a firm response." He didn't elaborate.

Amsterdam warns of new calls for unrest

AP ■ AMSTERDAM

A senior police officer warned Tuesday of calls for more rioting in Amsterdam, after dozens of people armed with sticks and firecrackers set a tram on fire Monday night and the city faces tensions following violence last week targeting fans of an Israeli soccer club.

Olivier Dutilh, of the Amsterdam police force, told a court hearing that "we have signals that there are calls for similar" unrest in the west of the city. Streets in the area were relatively calm as evening fell, and the security presence was low-profile.

The Amsterdam mayor, chief of police and top public prosecutor published a report Monday outlining what happened last week, including new details about actions by Maccabi Tel Aviv fans ahead of the Maccabi Tel Aviv-Ajax soccer match.

Local authorities had decided against banning the game, but beefed up security. Pro-Palestinian demonstrators were banned by local authorities

from gathering outside the stadium.

The day before the game, authorities reported incidents and saw social media posts threatening Maccabi fans. Around midnight, Israeli fans ripped a Palestinian flag off a downtown building and several of them took off their belts and attacked a cab, the document said. Cab drivers sought to mobilize online in response, and centered on a casino where some 400 Israeli fans were gathered. Police mobilized to avoid a major confrontation.

The morning of the game, authorities were "specifically worried about the Maccabi fans and the reaction of cab drivers," the document said. Amsterdam Mayor Femke Halsema pleaded with the Israeli ambassador for officials in Israel to make clear "that this is about a sporting event and should not be mixed with politics."

In the afternoon, social media posts hardened and antisemitic terms were used. After the 5-0 win of Ajax over Maccabi, parts of a large group of

Maccabi supporters "are running around with sticks destroying things," the document said. There were also "rioters, moving in small groups, by foot, scooter or car, quickly attacking Maccabi fans before disappearing," the City Hall timeline said.

The police commander said that those incidents had "an antisemitic character - there is talk about a few hunt and people are asked about their nationality." Rumors then surfaced about missing people and hostage-taking, which proved unfounded.

Police said the fire Monday was quickly extinguished and riot officers cleared the square. Images online showed people damaging property and setting off firecrackers. A police vehicle was later burned out in a nearby street and police said they suspect arson.

Police said it wasn't clear who started the unrest and whether it was related to what happened last week. Some rioters could be heard on video shared on social media using slurs against Jewish people.

Stage set for parliamentary polls in Sri Lanka today

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka is set to hold on Thursday its snap parliamentary election — first after the 2022 economic crisis — amid deployment of nearly 90,000 security personnel across the country.

Voting will take place at over 13,314 polling stations across the country, from 7 am to 4 pm local time with over 17 million voters from the island's 21 million population eligible to vote for the 225 member parliament for a five-year term.

Nearly 90,000 security personnel from the police and the military would be deployed to provide security at the election venues. There will also be mobile police patrols, police spokesman Nihal Thaldudu said.

Director General of the Elections Commission Saman Sri Ratnayaka on Tuesday said that all ballot boxes and other equipment needed at the polling stations would be dispatched on Wednesday.

"The polling station officials will carry out rehearsals from 7 am on Wednesday," Ratnayaka said. Thursday's vote would be the

first major test of the popularity of the ruling party, National People's Power, led by President Anura Kumara Disanayake.

Having failed to secure 50 per cent of the vote at the September 21 presidential election, Disanayake is pleading for a stronger parliament with well over a simple majority of 113 seats in order to implement his anti-corruption accountability reformist programme.

This will be the first parliamentary election since Sri Lanka plunged into an economic crisis when the island nation declared sovereign default in mid-April of 2022, its first since gaining independence from Britain in 1948. Almost civil-war-like conditions and months of public protests led to the fleeing of the then president Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Since assuming office, Disanayake has stayed on course with his predecessor Ranil Wickremesinghe's International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout programme.

The country is still in the process of recovering from its worst economic crisis in history as the Disanayake government faces the challenge of meeting the IMF targets on

revenue in the third review of the USD 2.9 billion programme.

On Thursday, the western province district of Gampaha would elect the highest number of Members of Parliament — 19 with the capital district of Colombo from the same province electing 18 MPs.

The eastern province district of Trincomalee will elect the lowest number — just 4 MPs.

As many as 196 members are to be elected from the 22 districts based on the proportional representation system while 29 would be elected from the cumulative votes polled national list to provide a 225-member Parliament for a five-year term.

Political parties and independent groups file lists of candidates for each district. Seats are allocated proportionately according to the votes polled. Individual MPs get elected based on the preferential votes cast in their favour. Each voter is entitled to mark three individual preferences.

Wickremesinghe, who lost to Disanayake in last month's presidential election, is not contesting the parliamentary election for the first time since 1977.

Olaf Scholz to seek trust vote in Dec

AP ■ BERLIN

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has announced that he will ask for a vote of confidence on December 16, paving the way forward for an early parliamentary election in February.

Scholz declared his plans for a vote of confidence during a speech in parliament on Wednesday, one week after his three-party coalition government collapsed. He had initially wanted to have an early election only by late March — before the vote that is regularly scheduled for September 2025.

However, the centre-right Christian opposition pushed for a quicker vote in the parliament to speed up the next election.

In the end, party leaders across the political spectrum agreed on Wednesday on the two dates for the vote of confidence and the new election.

The developments come after the collapse of Scholz's three-party coalition last week, at a time when the leaders of Europe's biggest economy have been grappling with ways to revive Germany's anemic economic growth.

Experts predict the economy will shrink or at best stagnate this year, due to external shocks and homegrown problems including red tape and a shortage of skilled labour.

Scholz had previously announced that he would seek a vote of confidence on January 15 that could lead to an election as soon as March. The vote had otherwise been due next September.

Biden sending aid to help Ukraine keep fighting next year: Blinken

AP ■ KYIV

The Biden administration is determined in its final months to help ensure that Ukraine can keep fighting off Russia's full-scale invasion next year, sending it as much aid as possible so that it might hold Russian forces at bay and possess a strong hand in any potential peace negotiations, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday.

"President Biden has committed to making sure that every dollar we have at our disposal will be pushed out the door between now and January 20," when president-elect Donald Trump is due to be sworn in, Blinken said.

NATO countries must focus their efforts on "ensuring that Ukraine has the money, munitions and mobilised forces to fight effectively in 2025, or to be able to negotiate a peace from a position of strength," Blinken said during a visit to Brussels.

The US will "adapt and adjust" with the latest equipment it is sending, Blinken said, without providing details.

The almost three-year war has shown no signs of winding down.

Russia attacked the Ukrainian capital Kyiv with a sophisticated combination of missiles and drones for the first time in 73 days on Wednesday.

That came a day after the Pentagon said most of the North Korean troops sent to help Moscow's war



effort are fighting to drive Ukraine's army off Russian soil in the Kursk border region.

Ukraine is also straining to hold back a monthslong Russian onslaught in the eastern Donetsk region.

Political uncertainty over how a US administration under Trump will change Washington's policy on the war is a key new factor in the conflict. US military aid is vital for Ukraine, but Trump has signalled that he doesn't want to keep giving tens of billions of dollars to Kyiv.

Air raid warnings blared for hours as Russia targeted eight regions of Ukraine on Wednesday, firing six bal-

listic and cruise missiles and 90 drones, the Ukrainian air force said.

Air defences downed four missiles and 37 drones, and another 47 drones were stopped by electronic jamming, the statement said. The damage was being assessed.

The air assault came as most of the more than 10,000 North Korean troops sent by Pyongyang to help Moscow in the war are engaged in combat in Russia's Kursk border region, according to the Pentagon. A Ukrainian army incursion into Kursk three months ago has succeeded in holding a broad area of land and has embarrassed the Kremlin.

British author Samantha Harvey wins Booker Prize

PTI ■ LONDON

British author Samantha Harvey has won the 2024 Booker Prize for her ambitious and beautiful 'Orbital', which becomes the first novel set in space to win the 50,000-pound literary prize selected from a historic shortlist that was dominated by women this year.

'Orbital', the biggest-selling book on the shortlist in the UK, takes place over a single day in the life of six astronauts and cosmonauts aboard the International Space Station who observe 16 sunrises and sunsets on Earth spinning past continents and cycling past seasons.

It was named the winner at a ceremony at Old Billingsgate in the City of London on Tuesday evening after the judges described it as a compact yet beautifully expansive novel which invites readers to observe Earth's splendour whilst

reflecting on the individual and collective value of every human life.

"I originally thought, 'Why on earth would anybody want to hear from a woman at her desk in Wiltshire writing about space, imagining what it's like being in space when people have actually been there,'" said Harvey, who dedicated her award to everybody who "speaks for and not against the Earth".

"I thought of it as space pastoral — a kind of nature writing about the beauty of space," said the nearly 50-year-old author. She is the first British writer since 2020 to win the prestigious Booker.

At just 136 pages long, the winning title is the second-shortest book to win the prize and covers the briefest time frame of any book on the shortlist, taking place over just 24 hours.

"Samantha Harvey has written a novel propelled by the beauty of 16



sunrises and 16 sunsets. Everyone and no one is the subject, as six astronauts in the International Space Station circle the Earth observing the passages of weather across the fragility of borders and time zones. With her language of lyricism and acuity, Harvey makes our world strange and new for us," said artist-author Edmund de Waal, chair of the 2024 Booker judges.

"All year we have celebrated fiction that inhabits ideas rather than declaiming on issues, not finding answers but changing the question of what we wanted to explore. Our unanimity about 'Orbital' recognises its beauty and ambition. It reflects Harvey's extraordinary intensity of attention to the precious and precarious world we share," he said.

The judging panel included award-winning British Indian musician

Nitin Sawhney, novelist Sara Collins, fiction editor of 'The Guardian' newspaper Justine Jordan and Chinese American writer and professor Yiyun Li.

The female-dominated shortlist this year included American author Rachel Kushner for the spy thriller 'Creation Lake', Canadian Anne Michaels for her familial tale 'Held', Australian Charlotte Wood for her philosophical 'Stone Yard Devotional' and Yael van der Wouden, the first Dutch author to be shortlisted, for her debut novel 'The Safekeep'.

American writer Percival Everett was the only male among this year's finalists announced in London this week for his Mark Twain ode 'James'. Each of the shortlisted authors will receive GBP 2,500 and a bespoke bound edition of their book.

As the winner, Harvey can expect instant international recognition,

a dramatic increase in global sales and a career transformed overnight. The Booker Prize 2023 was won by Paul Lynch with 'Prophet Song', which saw a 1,500 per cent increase in sales in the week after its win. In the year since, sales of the English-language edition of his book have increased by more than half a million copies, with sales across all formats now totalling more than 560,000 worldwide.

The Booker Prize trophy, presented to Harvey, was originally designed by children's author and illustrator Jan Pienkowski in 1969 and was reinstated in 2022. A life-sized replica of the trophy named Iris, after Booker winner Iris Murdoch, was displayed for the first time at the Booker Prize 2024 ceremony and will be moved to Waterstones bookstore at Piccadilly in central London.

Onion prices increase to ₹ 70 per kilogram, Odisha asks NAFED to intervene

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

With onion prices reaching Rs 70 per kg in the market, the Odisha government Wednesday said it has asked the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED) to sell the vegetable at the rate of Rs 30 per kg in the state. State Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister K C Patra attributed the price rise to the market situation at Nashik in Maharashtra from where the onions are procured. He said the base price of onions remained at Rs 45



per kg in Nashik. Onions are not produced in Odisha and hence, the state is dependent on other states. Prices of onion and garlic are high outside the state

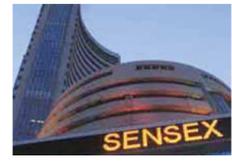
and it has contributed to the price rise here. We have asked (NAFED) to sell onions at Rs 30 per kg in Odisha," the minister told reporters. According to traders, Odisha imports onions from Nashik in Maharashtra and Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh. The Kharif crop in both regions suffered due to the rains during September. While the price of good quality old onions brought from Nashik has soared to Rs 70 per kg, those from Kurnool (new but medium quality onions) are available at Rs 40-Rs 55, depending on the quality. The price of onions in the

retail market was Rs 50 a kg a week ago, traders said. The price of garlic has also increased to Rs 400 per kg in retail market in the state. Odisha Byabsayee General Secretary Sudhakar Panda said that the prices might come down in the next four to six days with the supply of new onions in the market. To a question, the minister said the new ration cards will be provided to the people in the New Year as the e-KYC verification process will be completed in November. He said at least 16 lakh ineligible beneficiaries have been identified.

Sensex, Nifty see free fall amid soaring inflation

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled more than 1 per cent on Wednesday amid retail inflation soaring to a 14-month high of 6.21 per cent in October and unabated foreign fund outflows. Muted quarterly earnings, selling in frontline stocks - HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries - along with weak trends in the US and Asian peers also hit markets' sentiment, traders said. The BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 984.23 points or 1.25 per cent to settle at 77,690.95, extending its previous day's fall. During the day, it slumped 1,141.88 points or 1.45 per cent to 77,533.30. Registering its fifth day of decline, the NSE Nifty



tumbled 324.40 points or 1.36 per cent to 23,559.05. From the 30-share Sensex pack, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Steel, Adani Ports, JSW Steel, IndusInd Bank, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the biggest laggards. Tata Motors, NTPC, Hindustan Unilever, Asian Paints and Infosys were the gainers. The latest data showed retail inflation breached the Reserve Bank's upper

tolerance level, soaring to a 14-month high of 6.21 per cent in October, mainly on account of rising food prices. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,024.31 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled lower while Shanghai ended in the positive territory. European markets were trading higher. The US markets ended in the negative territory on Tuesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.93 per cent to USD 72.56 a barrel. The BSE benchmark tumbled 820.97 points or 1.03 per cent to settle at 78,675.18 on Tuesday. The Nifty tanked 257.85 points or 1.07 per cent to 23,883.45.

Musk's Starlink a wolf in sheep's clothing: Thinktank



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid talk of Elon Musk's Starlink seeking to offer satellite broadband internet service in India, think tank Kutniti Foundation has highlighted the US giant's deep ties with US intelligence and military agencies that could impede national interests. Calling Starlink "a wolf in sheep's clothing", the foundation said Starlink is a dual-use technology with "its biggest customer and promoter being the American government intelligence and military." While legacy mobile phone service providers use telecom towers for offering voice and internet services, satellite communication or satcom involves using a constellation of satellites for offering the same. However, there are concerns that the control of those satellites lies outside the country. "Starlink constellation of

satellites is a new form of internet service providers across the world, unbound by geographic demarcations and natural boundaries. A direct access to every citizen in the world, with no governance structure in between the user and the American one," Kutniti said in a report. On Tuesday, Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia had stated that Starlink was yet to comply with security norms, and a licence for satellite broadband services will be issued only after they meet all the requirements for services in India. An email sent to Starlink seeking comments on Kutniti report remained unanswered. Musk, whose space company SpaceX is said to be building a network of hundreds of spy satellites under a classified contract with a US intelligence agency, had clashed with the Biden administration over the use of Starlink satellite connectivity in the Ukraine war. The billionaire, who had openly supported Donald Trump over Biden's party colleague Kamala Harris in the just concluded US presidential election, had last year stated that he refused a Ukrainian request

to activate his Starlink satellite network to aid an attack on the Russian fleet. Kutniti cited reports of some of the contracts between Musk's companies and the US agencies to say, "These are just the known contracts of Starlink as part of the intel-military-industrial complex of the USA, there are a lot of confidential agreements and contracts kept behind covers." "In addition, it is well known that the owner of Starlink, Elon Musk, is close to various private intelligence companies, and is a highly politically exposed person in the USA including but not limited to Palantir Technologies USA, and the Trump Election 2024," it said. Starlink's dual-use technology provides low-cost global coverage high-speed internet service and also has potential to provide high-definition pictures and even live video. The report cited Musk-led companies "disregard for sovereignty and democracy of other nations" such as in Brazil, Ukraine and Iran. "Starlink is (very candidly) a technology of geopolitical control, pushed by intelligence and defence forces to have the dominance in space and control over land via that lever," it added.

Municipal corporations to boost revenue through property tax reforms and efficient collection mechanisms: RBI report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Municipal corporations need to enhance their sources of revenue through reforms in property tax, rationalisation of user charges, and better collection mechanisms, an RBI report has suggested. The elasticity of property tax revenues, the predominant source of tax revenue, can be improved through adopting property tax formulae which are more reflective of property valuation, it said. The 'Report on Municipal Finances' released by the Reserve Bank on Wednesday noted that the demand for high-quality public services in urban areas is growing rapidly with a rising urban population. "Yet municipal corporations (MCs) in India invested with this responsibility generate limited revenues and rely heavily on the upper tiers of the government for their funding needs, limiting their operational flexibility," it said. State-specific strategies to strengthen MC finances through local taxation reforms, better enforcement, augmenting institutional capacity and transparent financial management are



crucial for resilient municipal finances and effective urban development. Compared to advanced economies and other comparable emerging market economies, Indian MCs generate much lower revenues and consequently, spend fewer resources as a percentage of GDP. "The MCs have underdeveloped own-source revenue streams, including both tax and non-tax revenues," the RBI said. At present, the report said the MCs remain heavily reliant on Central and state governments for their

Despite significant responsibilities, the revenue streams of municipalities are limited and pale in comparison to those of State and Central governments. Property taxes are the major constituent of tax revenues. Municipal bond financing has seen some recovery in recent years. MCs are also venturing into green municipal bonds to fund environmentally beneficial projects, marking a pivotal move towards sustainable urban development. The RBI said municipal revenue receipts, which were subdued during 2020-21, grew by 22.5 per cent in 2021-22 mainly due to rise in non-tax revenues. The growth in the revenue receipts moderated to 3.7 per cent in 2022-23 (revised estimate) and was budgeted to increase by 20.1 per cent in 2023-24. "Despite significant responsibilities, MCs' revenue receipts are quite modest (0.6 per cent of GDP in 2023-24) and pale in comparison to those of Central and State governments (9.2 per cent and 14.6 per cent of GDP in 2023-24, respectively)," the report said. The surplus in 2023-24 was

budgeted at above Rs 1,000 crore in states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, and Telangana, led by Maharashtra (Rs 11,104 crore). The surplus in MCs in Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, West Bengal, and Tamil Nadu was placed in the range of Rs 100 crore (Tamil Nadu) to Rs 687 crore (Delhi). In contrast, MCs in Tripura, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala budgeted for a revenue deficit in the range of (-) Rs 2 crore (Tripura) to (-) Rs 789 crore (Kerala) for 2023-24. Own tax revenue, inclusive of property tax, water tax, electricity tax, education tax, and other local taxes, constituted 30 per cent of total revenue during 2023-24, with significant variations across states. The Indian municipal bond market remains in a nascent stage, the report said. As of March 2024, the total municipal bonds outstanding at Rs 4,204 crore was just 0.09 per cent of the total corporate bonds outstanding.

Euron launches affordable, accessible EdTech platform for all

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BENGALURU

Euron, an innovative EdTech platform launched by Bengaluru-based entrepreneur Sudhanshu Kumar, is set to transform tech education by offering a comprehensive, accessible, and affordable solution for upskilling. Euron presents a one-stop resource for learning across key technology fields such as Python, Generative AI, and Data Science, making it easier than ever for learners of all levels to gain industry-relevant skills. Positioned as the "Netflix of Education," Euron's platform supports learners through a broad range of offerings tailored to individual and corporate needs. Euron Plus offers a premium tier for advanced learners, while Euron Org caters specifically to institutions and organisations seeking tailored tech training resources. "We are thrilled to

launch Euron with a range of affordable, high-quality courses that equip learners with the skills they need for today's digital workforce. At Euron, we believe that education is a right, not a privilege, and our goal is to make quality learning experiences accessible to everyone, regardless of background or financial means," said Sudhanshu Kumar, founder of Euron. India's EdTech sector is on a trajectory of significant growth, currently valued at \$7.5 billion and projected to reach \$29 billion by 2030. With over 100 million paid users and a 25.8 per cent CAGR, the demand for accessible, high-quality learning solutions is skyrocketing. Euron is a Bengaluru-based EdTech platform dedicated to making high-quality tech education accessible and affordable for everyone.

Arvindar Singh Sahney to be new chairman of Indian Oil

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Arvindar Singh Sahney will be the new chairman of Indian Oil Corporation, the nation's largest oil firm, according to an order issued by the petroleum ministry on Wednesday. Sahney, 54, is currently Executive Director (Business Development) - Petrochemicals, Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC). He was in August selected to be the company's director for business development but has now been appointed as the chairman of the firm. "The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the proposal of this ministry for appointment of Shri Arvindar Singh Sahney, Executive Director, IOC to the post of Chairman, IOC, for a period of five years with effect from the date of his assumption of charge of the post, or till the date of his superannuation, or until further order, whichever is the earliest," the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said in an order.

The post of chairman IOC fell vacant after Shrikant Madhav Vaidya completed his extended tenure on August 31, 2024. Currently, Satish Kumar Vaduguri (Director, Marketing, IOC), is holding the additional charge of chairman of the Fortune 500 company. Sahney will be the second person after B Ashok to be elevated to the top job of the company without a board experience. Ashok too was Executive Director (Retail) when in July 2014 he was appointed IOC chairman. A three-member search-cum-selection-committee in mid-August interviewed about a dozen candidates for the top job at IOC. Later vigilance profiles of four internal candidates - Arvind Kumar (Director, Refinery, IOC), Sahney, Sanjay Parasher (ED, Marketing, IOC) and Saumitra Srivastava (ED, Marketing and head of Maharashtra region, IOC) - were sought. After clearance by the anti-

corruption watchdog CVC, Sahney's name was approved for the top job at IOC. Sahney has been with the company for over three decades now. Schooled in Lucknow, he is a chemical engineer from Harcourt Butler Technical University, Kanpur. He joined IOC in 1993 following a brief stint at Tata Chemicals. He was appointed executive director of the company in February 2022. He was picked among a dozen candidates by the government headhunter Public Enterprise Selection Board (PESB) on August 20 for the job of Director (Business Development), IOC. Prior to that on August 11, he was among the 11 candidates who were interviewed by a search-cum-selection committee for the top job at IOC. Those interviewed that day included GAIL chairman and managing director Sandeep Gupta (who previously was Director (Finance) at IOC), IOC Director (Marketing)

Satish Kumar Vaduguri and IOC Director (Refineries) Arvind Kumar. Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) Director (marketing) Sukhmal Kumar Jain as well as company's director (refineries) S Khanna were also interviewed. Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) director (marketing) Amit Garg had also appeared. The panel was tasked to look for a replacement for Shrikant Madhav Vaidya, whose one-year extension beyond his retirement age of 60 years ended on August 31. The age eligibility cut off has been set at not more than 58 years for internal candidates and 57 years for outsiders with 60 years as the retirement age. But this was relaxable in the case of deserving candidates. This discretion was used in the case of Gupta, who has less than two years before retirement in February 2026, and Satish Kumar Vaduguri, who had only 11 months of service left at the time of the interview.

INBRIEF

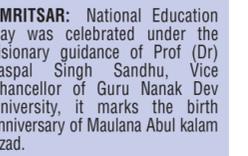
VIT CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY-RUBY JUBILEE

VELLORE: The Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) celebrated its 40th anniversary (Ruby Jubilee) with honouree Former Vice-President of India Mr. M. Venkaiah Naidu taking part as chief guest and inaugurating the Ruby Jubilee celebrations.



HONOURING MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD'S LEGACY

AMRITSAR: National Education Day was celebrated under the visionary guidance of Prof (Dr) Jaspal Singh Sandhu, Vice Chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University, it marks the birth anniversary of Maulana Abul kalam Azad.



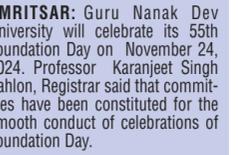
NATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE EXPANDING HORIZONS OF NEW CRIMINAL LAWS

AMRITSAR: Department of Law, Guru Nanak Dev University conducted a National Seminar on "The Expanding Horizons of New Criminal Laws: Issues and Challenges". The online seminar attracted 141 participants from across India and abroad.



GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY WOULD CELEBRATE ITS 55TH FOUNDATION DAY ON NOVEMBER 24

AMRITSAR: Guru Nanak Dev University will celebrate its 55th Foundation Day on November 24, 2024. Professor Karanjeet Singh Kahlon, Registrar said that committees have been constituted for the smooth conduct of celebrations of Foundation Day.



APEEJAY COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS, JALANDHAR, EMERGES AS OVERALL CHAMPIONS

AMRITSAR: The Inter Zonal Youth Festival 2024, held from November 8 to 10, brought together colleges from across the region to compete in various categories. The event concluded with Apeejay College of Fine Arts, Jalandhar, clinching the prestigious title of Overall Champion.



First American turkey shipment leaves for Indian market

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The first shipment of American Turkey products for India left on Tuesday, marking a new phase in the bilateral trade relations between the two countries. The shipment comes over a year after India agreed to the American request to reduce high tariffs on US turkey products. US Senator from Virginia Mark Warner, who is also co-chair of the Senate India Caucus, said this marks a historic milestone in



international trade, expanding the reach of American turkey products in global markets, and opening new doors for US turkey producers.

"This shipment is a tremendous opportunity for Virginia's poultry producers and a huge step forward for US-India trade," he said. "As co-chair of the Senate India Caucus, I look forward to the ongoing cooperation between our two nations and to seeing a wealth of new opportunities open up for Virginia's poultry producers," Warner said. This shipment comes as a result of a trade agreement and tariff reduction, facilitated by a collaborative effort between the two countries.

Last year, ahead of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the United States, Warner was joined by a number of his colleagues in urging Ambassador Katherine Tai to increase market access for US turkey and poultry products. These products previously faced significant barriers from the Indian market due to prohibitively high tariff. "Our US turkey producers have long been committed to providing safe, nutritious, and versatile protein options worldwide, and we're excited to see Indian consumers

experience the exceptional quality of American turkey," said Leslee Oden, CEO of the National Turkey Federation. This first shipment is a testament to the strength of US-India trade relations and a reflection of our shared commitment to expanding food diversity and quality, he said. John King, president of Virginia Poultry Growers Cooperative said the cooperative is "excited to be part of this new market opportunity". He added that the move will help nearly 200 independent

turkey grower owners. Hobey Bauhan, president of the Virginia Poultry Federation, also expressed hope of good returns, saying, "Virginia turkey farmers are pleased to offer high quality, lean protein for export to India, and we are grateful for those who facilitated this opportunity." Under the trade agreement announced in September 2023, India eliminated and reduced retaliatory tariffs on US turkey products, paving the way for increased access to the nation's rapidly growing protein market.

ACT women's hockey: India look to work on finer points against Thailand

PTI ■ RAJGIR (BIHAR)

Boyed by back-to-back victories in as many games, hosts India will look to work on the finer points of the game with an aim to thrash minnows Thailand in the women's Asian Champions Trophy here on Thursday.

Both India and reigning Olympic silver medallist China are unbeaten so far from two matches but the hosts have an inferior goal difference.

China are atop the points table with a goal difference of 20, while India have a goal difference of five and a handsome victory on Thursday will only help their cause ahead of final two round robin matches against China and Japan.

Japan are placed third in the points table ahead of Korea. The top four sides from the round robin stage will qualify for the semifinals of the six-team continental tournament.

In both the matches India created plenty of scoring chances but failed to score the amount of goals they would have liked.

While India defeated Malaysia 4-0 in their tournament opener, they scored a late goal to eke out a narrow 3-2 win over South Korea. The Indian players were guilty of rushing and faltered in choices once inside the opposition circle, a



fact which chief coach Harendra Singh admitted. "We could have scored more goals. We were guilty of rushing and did

not look for the right choices," Harendra said after Tuesday's match. "We will watch clippings of the

match and analyse where we went wrong and work on the finer points," he added. Another factor which would be a

cause of concern for Harendra is the team's poor penalty corner conversion rate.

Against Malaysia India secured as many as 11 penalty corners but utilised just three and that to from indirect attempts.

If that was not enough, India failed to make use of eight set pieces they managed to earn against Korea on Tuesday.

The bright spot for India has been the performances of forwards Sangita Kumari and Deepika, both scoring three goals apiece.

Sangita specially has been a livewire upfront with her deft stick work, but the likes of Sharmila Devi, Preeti Dubey, Beauty Dung need to share more responsibility.

Skipper Salima Tete and her deputy Navneet Kaur too need to pull up their socks in the midfield.

A win on Thursday will virtually seal India's place in the semifinals before tough matches against China and Japan.

Going by rankings, ninth placed India are the second best side in the tournament after world no.6 China. And Thailand, who are ranked 29th in the world, should be an easy outing for the Indians.

Meanwhile in other matches of the day, Korea will take on Malaysia while China will be up against Japan.



Spain-Poland tie in Billie Jean King Cup Finals postponed

AP ■ MALAGA (SPAIN)

The first tie of the Billie Jean King Cup Finals between Spain and Poland was postponed on Wednesday because of a severe weather alert in the Malaga region.

Organizers said the "decision has been made based on guidance from the relevant authorities to ensure the health and safety of all participants and attendees."

The first-round tie will now be played on Friday when Germany will also face Britain. Two ties are scheduled for Thursday: Japan-Romania and Slovakia-United States.

Both the Billie Jean King Cup Finals and the Davis Cup Finals are taking place in the southern Spanish city, with the men's competition beginning next week.

The women's event is taking place after a powerful storm caused flash floods that killed more than 200 people in the Valencia region, east of Malaga, about two weeks ago.

The International Tennis Federation recently announced a donation to the Spanish Red Cross to support relief and recovery efforts in the region and Spanish player Paula Badosa said she will donate half of her prize money to help the victims.

Aishwary-Sanjeeta strike gold in World University Shooting

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympian Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar and Sanjeeta Das combined to give India a gold medal in the 10m air rifle mixed team event as the hosts claimed their third top-podium finish at the World University Shooting Championship here on Wednesday.

Aishwary, following the disappointment of finishing fifth in men's 10m air rifle and having to settle for silver in 50m rifle 3-positions, finally came up with a gold-winning effort, combining with Sanjeeta, to overcome a strong challenge from the South Korean pair of Kim Hyobeen and Lee Junhwan 17-15.

The Polish team of Julia Piotrowska and Maciej



Kowalewicz defeated the Indian duo of Manini Kaushik and Umamahesh Maddineni 16-0 in the

bronze-medal clash. Sanjeeta (316.8) and Aishwary (316.2) had earlier aggregated 633.0 to top the qualification

round and move into the final, where they faced Korea who were second with an aggregate of 631.7.

The top two teams in the event fight for the gold, while the third and fourth-placed pair compete for the bronze.

Manini and Umamahesh were placed fourth at the end of the qualification round with an aggregate of 628.7 and faced third-placed Poland, who totalled 629.8.

On Tuesday, young Indian skeet shooter Bhavtegh Singh Gill had won the country's second gold medal, while the air pistol mixed team of Palak Gulia and Amit Sharma had struck the first gold on Sunday.

As many as 220 shooters from across 23 countries are competing in the championship. The event is being hosted by Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies.



FIFA workshop essential for strengthening our governance framework: AIFF secretary general

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

All India Football Federation (AIFF) secretary general, Anilkumar, who attended the FIFA Financial Governance Workshop in Sri Lanka recently, said such events would go a long way in improving and strengthening the financial management of the member associations.

The workshop was held in Colombo on November 6 and 7, with the participation of general secretaries and finance directors from the member associations of India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

"Attending the FIFA Financial Governance Workshop has been an invaluable experience. The insights shared on transparency, accountability and best practices in financial management are essential for strengthening our governance

framework," said Anilkumar. FIFA's commitment to develop football around the world depends on sound financial management to ensure that member associations get the best value for money for the funding distributed through the FIFA Forward programme.

As part of its effort to ensure this happens, FIFA has been holding regular workshops around the world to enhance financial governance and capacity development within the MAs.

The event was held under the banner of the newly established FIFA Campus, which serves as the central football learning hub for all FIFA capacity development and education initiatives for member associations.

Starting with a presentation of the Financial Governance Guide, the workshop included discussion, group work and case sessions on topics such as conflict of interest, planning and budgeting and procurement process, as well

as the importance of having adequate supporting documentation.

The sessions emphasised the importance of accountability, transparency, and responsible financial management within the context of the FIFA Forward programme.

The FIFA Forward programme was introduced in 2016 to provide funding for tailor-made projects in each of the 211 FIFA member associations.

In the first two cycles, between 2016 and 2022, more than USD 2.8 billion was committed to a diverse array of projects to provide football infrastructure and competitions, and to promote and advance women's football.

The four-year cycle of FIFA Forward 3.0, from 2023 to 2026, represents an increase in football development investment of almost 30 per cent and is a direct consequence of the reinforced governance and financial situation of the new FIFA since 2016.

Amandeep Johl appointed CEO of Professional Golf Tour of India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) on Wednesday announced the appointment of Amandeep Johl as its new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) from January 2025.

A respected name in Indian golf, Johl brings extensive experience to his new role.

The appointment comes alongside another recent significant leadership addition, with the legendary cricketer Kapil Dev assuming the role of PGTI President in June this year. Johl replaces Uttam Singh Mundy, who has essayed a key role in the organisation since its inception.

Johl, who until recently was on the PGTI board, will take



charge from January 1. In the interim period until December 31, he will be assisting Mundy in completing the handover process.

Welcoming Johl's elevation

to CEO, Kapil Dev said: "Amandeep has been on the Indian and Asian golf circuit for nearly 34 years and it is just apt that somebody who is so entrenched in the sport leads the PGTI.

"These are exciting times for golf in India and with Amandeep at the helm, the PGTI looks forward to strengthening its presence, in India and around the world."

The legendary all-rounder hailed the outgoing CEO for his contribution to PGTI and Indian golf.

"Uttam Mundy's commitment and vision have been instrumental in establishing PGTI as the premier professional golf tour in India, and his contributions are deeply appreciated," he said.

Johl, who holds a degree in mechanical engineering, has been an integral part of Indian golf since making it to the junior Indian team in 1985 and four years later

emerging as the National amateur champion in 1989.

Since then, he has worn various hats, be it as a professional player on the Asian and European Tours, national coach, a board member of the PGTI and also as a founding member of the Asian Tour (2004).

"I am thrilled and thank the PGTI for entrusting me with this huge responsibility," remarked the 55-year-old Johl.

"It is probably the most important role of my golfing career," he said, adding, "I have big shoes to fill thanks to my dear friend, Uttam Mundy, who has been instrumental in laying a strong foundation for the PGTI with his untiring efforts."

Gurpreet backs Manolo, says Asian Cup qualification is India's 'minimum goal'

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

India may still be searching for their first win under Manolo Marquez nearly four months into his tenure but goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu on Wednesday backed the head coach and said qualifying for the next AFC Asian Cup is the team's "minimum" target.

The Indian football team's last victory was a 1-0 win against Kuwait in the World Cup Qualifiers on November 16 last year. Since then, the side has struggled, losing seven of its last 11 matches and falling in FIFA rankings from a sub-100 position in July 2023 to 125.

"The past is past; we can't change it. As a team, we always want to win," said Gurpreet ahead of their home friendly against Malaysia here on November 18.

"Phases like this happen -- there was a phase when we were winning and not losing.

"It's about how you handle it and not getting bogged down by it. We're lucky to get opportunities to do well again and again. We need to use the games we've played against good opposition as stepping stones."

"The (1-1) Vietnam draw was a good test for us, and we need to carry the same understanding and energy into the next game," he added.

After a disastrous 2023 Asian Cup outing, previous head coach Igor Stimac was replaced in July this year by Marquez, who is also managing ISL franchise FC Goa.

Under Marquez, India drew with Mauritius and Vietnam and suffered a 0-3 loss to Syria.

The transition has been marked by the retirement of star forward Sunil Chhetri.

"A transition like this is always difficult. Everything would feel perfect if we



started winning games right away, but the important thing to remember is that we've played very competitive teams since the coach (Manolo Marquez) took over.

"He's trying to instill his philosophy, and that's going to take time. In every camp,

we're getting closer to what he wants from us as a team. With time, training, and the level of coaching he has, I have no doubt we'll be a strong team in the qualifiers.

"Qualifying for the Asian Cup is something we should strive for every single time, as

we've done in the last two editions. That should be minimum for us. It should be a no-brainer for us as a team."

Sandesh is a once-in-a-generation defender.

The upcoming match will mark the comeback of India's defensive mainstay Sandesh

Jhingan. He is returning after recovering from a knee injury he sustained in a match against Syria earlier this year.

"I'm very happy to have Sandesh back in the squad. The team is very young, and sometimes it's hard to have conversations with the younger players. Having someone like him in the dressing room is great."

"He's an important pillar for his club and the national team. Like Sunil bhai, he's a once-in-a-generation player, defender for us," said Gurpreet.

He also hailed India forward Manvir Singh and said he is a "natural goal-scorer".

"Manvir is a very good player, with great physicality and stamina -- he can run up and down the flanks. He has the potential to be a natural goal-scorer, in my opinion."

"He's versatile and can be used on the flanks or as a No. 9. Using him in both defensive and attacking set-

pieces is key for us.

"We need players like Manvir to stay hungry for the national team, to keep pushing our attacking threats forward," said Gurpreet.

Since taking over as India's No. 1 goalkeeper from Subrata Paul, Gurpreet has been a key figure for the national team.

The experienced goalkeeper emphasised the importance of team unity and healthy competition as India prepare for the upcoming Asian Cup Qualifiers.

"I don't think it's been a long time; in my opinion, it's probably been a short time (as No. 1 goalkeeper) in my experience," he said reflecting on his journey.

"I would love to play for the national team -- it comes with a lot of responsibility. I know the importance of it, and as long as I give my 100 percent, I'm satisfied. As for who plays or not, that's not my decision; it's up to the

coaches, and we have to respect that."

He also praised the competition within the squad, singling out the talented Vishal Kaith and Amrinder Singh.

"Vishal is a great keeper, a very talented player. I'm very happy for him. It's a pleasure to have him in the team, knowing there's someone who can push me just like Amrinder did."

"If our roles were reversed, I'd do the same for him. It's all about being in the team. It's not about who plays or doesn't; it's about achieving our goal for the Indian team."

"For me, it's important to do what I've learned from Sunil bhai. He always gives 100 percent, keeps a positive and competitive environment, and ensures the mood is good. We're all working towards one aim right now, which is to qualify for the Asian Cup," he signed off.

Work on technique and hit the reset button: Brett Lee's advice to Rohit, Kohli

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Former Australian pacer Brett Lee has advised India skipper Rohit Sharma and star batter Virat Kohli to hit the "reset button", work on their technique and hit the ground running in the five-Test series against Australia, beginning in Perth in less than 10 days' time. The two batting stalwarts will be keenly observed during the Border-Gavaskar series. Under following their underwhelming performance in the 0-3 Test whitewash by New Zealand recently. "When you have a couple of bad runs back to back, that's when the pressure gets set in. So, I guess the thing now is that someone like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, they've just got to go back to the drawing board," Lee said on his YouTube channel. "They are champions because they do the basics better than anybody else. Then, just hit the reset button, almost." Lee also warned that the Australian pacers would be aiming to attack Rohit and



Kohli with the new ball, and that they should quickly sort their batting. ("They should) work on

their technique, freshen up, much as they can and then get away from cricket for as hit the ground running when

they go to Australia because I can promise you the Australian fast bowlers will be attacking Rohit Sharma with that brand-new ball," he added. Rohit has managed 588 runs in 11 Tests at an average of just 29.40 this year, while Kohli has accumulated 250 runs in six Test at an average of 22.72. Lee felt the tendency of the two batter to be too aggressive might have resulted in their poor show so far this year. "It's hard to put your finger on why they (Rohit and Kohli) failed. If you first look at the way that Rohit Sharma got out, a lot of the quicks. "So, I can't say there's a technical fault there because I've seen him play for the last decade. I still believe he's one of the best players of the pull shot in world cricket, but maybe he's a little bit too aggressive. "Maybe there were a couple of shots... Was there a technique issue? Was his bat leaning his pad a bit too early? Was he getting that far forward or not enough forward? Or, was he sort of being a little bit hesitant?" Lee wondered.



Parthiv Patel joins Gujarat Titans' support staff as batting and assistant coach

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gujarat Titans have entrusted former India keeper-batter Parthiv Patel with the dual responsibility of serving as their assistant and batting coach in the upcoming IPL, the franchise said on Wednesday. Parthiv will perform the dual role in the support staff led by head coach Ashish Nehra. "The Gujarat Titans are pleased to announce the appointment of Parthiv Patel as their new assistant and batting coach. With a distinguished 17-year career as a former Indian wicketkeeper-batter, Parthiv brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the team," the franchise said in a statement.

"As the Titans prepare for the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) season, Parthiv's insights into batting techniques and strategies will play a crucial role in enhancing the players' skills. "Parthiv, who is known for his sharp cricketing acumen and ability to mentor young talent, will strengthen the coaching staff and contribute to player development and performance," GT added in the statement. This is the first coaching role in the IPL for Parthiv, who retired in 2020. Right after his retirement, he served as talent scout for Mumbai Indians for three seasons until 2023, and also the batting coach for MI Emirates in the inaugural season of ILT20.



Ponting, Langer could skip Perth Test commentary gig due to IPL auction

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting and his longtime teammate Justin Langer could potentially miss out commentating on the opening Test against India at Perth, starting November 22, due to commitments with their respective IPL teams for the mega auctions in Saudi Arabia's Jeddah on November 24 and 25. According to Australian newspaper "The Age", "Channel Seven could be without Ricky Ponting and Justin Langer for parts of the Perth Test due to a clash of commitments, and Australia may lose a vital backroom coach for the start of the blockbuster Border-Gavaskar series in a potential stand-off with Indian cricket."

Ponting, who has been appointed the head coach of Punjab Kings and Langer, who will be in his second season with Lucknow Super Giants, could be present at the IPL auction table for their respective franchises along with Australian team assistant coach Daniel Vettori, who is in-charge of Sunrisers Hyderabad. "Unless (Channel) Seven and Cricket Australia can protect their interests against powerful cricket authorities in India, Ponting, Langer and Australia assistant coach Dan Vettori will likely be in Saudi Arabia holding a paddle at the IPL's mega player auction in Jeddah instead of being at Optus Stadium when the first Test reaches its conclusion," the paper reported. "Seven" has a seven-year AUD

1.5 billion deal with Foxtel for broadcast of the game in Australia and even that, many fear, can't stop Ponting or Langer from missing the last three days of the Perth Test. Last year, Ponting, then coaching Delhi Capitals, left after day three of the Perth Test to attend the auction, while Langer stayed through till the end of the match. Vettori completed his duties with Australia before attending last year's auction, held two days after the Perth Test finished. "As of Wednesday morning, no decision had been made on whether Vettori would stay with the team through the entire Test or leave early for the auction, according to a team source with knowledge of the situation," "The Age" reported.

I've found ways and means to break it down: Ashwin on Smith's batting

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Senior India off-spinner R Ashwin says he has figured out ways to tackle Australian batting mainstay Steve Smith in the upcoming five-match Test series, extending their fascinating, decade-old rivalry in top-flight cricket. The two seasoned campaigners would face off during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy starting November 22 in Perth. They have in the past spent time together at IPL franchises Rising Pune Supergiant and Delhi Capitals, helping Ashwin to "break down the game plans" of Smith. "Steve Smith is especially fascinating as a player against spin. He has a unique technique, even playing fast bowling," Ashwin said in an interview with "Cricket". "But with spin, I think he came in with sound game plans and sound



preparations, and yeah, he used to execute it come what may. And over the years, I've found ways and means to break it down. "His time at Delhi Capitals, his time at RPSG, all these net sessions that I've seen him go about his business gave me an insight as to how he prepares and what he likes and

doesn't like." Ashwin, who first bowled to Smith during India's 2013/14 tour of Australia, lauded his fierce rival for being a "thinking cricketer", who has so far scored 348 runs in 570 balls while facing the ace spinner. Smith has got out to Ashwin three times. "He's a very thinking cricketer as well.

He wants to get one up on you all the time. But, he's got unique ways of practising and battling out with you in the middle. "And sometimes, as a bowler, when you're watching a batter go through his process, you do identify whether you have him or not. And several times in these years of having played with Steve Smith, I've felt he has me. "But several times, much later, when I think I've figured out what he does or how he bats, I've had an edge over him. I've had the wood over him." A modern-day batting great, Smith will be desperate to play some big knocks following his subdued stint as an opener after the retirement of David Warner, managing only 171 runs in four Tests at an average of 28.50. Ashwin is the third-highest Test wicket-taker for India in Australia with 38 scalps, behind Anil Kumble (49) and Kapil Dev (51).

Gambhir is prickly character, never took dig at Kohli: Ponting

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Responding to Gautam Gambhir's ribbe at him, former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting on Wednesday said the India head coach was a "prickly character" and insisted that his comments on Virat Kohli should not be construed as a dig on the star batter, who himself would be worried about his prolonged lean patch. Ponting, in an interview to ICC, had said that Kohli's poor form would be a concern and any other international player would have

struggle to keep his spot in the Test side with just two hundreds in five years. He though had also spoken highly of Kohli's ability to bounce back. Gambhir, when asked about Ponting's comments, said the Australian legend needn't be concerned about Indian cricket. "I was surprised to read the reaction but knowing the coach, Gautam Gambhir ... He's quite a prickly character, so I'm not surprised it was him who said something back," Ponting told 7News when asked about Gambhir's comments.



"If he comes my way, yeah. I don't expect him to. We have got quite a bit of history, against each other. I have actually coached him at Delhi Capitals and he is quite a prickly character," Ponting said in jest when

the anchor asked if he would shake hands with Gambhir if they cross path. One of the greatest batters of his time, Ponting then explained what he meant and felt that things were taken out of context. "In no way was it a dig at him (Kohli). I actually followed it up by saying he's played well in Australia and he'll be keen to bounce back over here...If you ask Virat, I'm sure he would be a little bit concerned that he hasn't been able to make the same amount of hundreds as he has in previous years," he said.

Indian batters 'can't stand up' to Aussie pacers: Haddin

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Former captain Aaron Finch believes Rishabh Pant and Alex Carey will be crucial in determining the outcome of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, while retired wicketkeeper Brad Haddin predicts that Indian batters will struggle against the Australian pacers. Finch feels the two wicketkeepers have the ability to shift the momentum in their team's favour in the event of a top-order collapse. "I think the key could be Alex Carey and Rishabh Pant. The two wicketkeepers are going to be so important," Finch said on "Willow Talk Podcast" when asked where this series is going to be won or lost. "A time or other in series the top order will get knocked over as

both fast bowling attacks are so good and they will get on a roll. For me, it is that really crucial role of Alex at number seven and Rishabh at number six likely." Both Pant, who played a key role in India's series victory last time, and Carey are known for their aggressive brand of cricket. "Carey is aggressive, Rishabh is aggressive. The game is going to go one or two ways really quick. And I think that will be so important. "Maybe when you are five down and the second new ball comes just before stumps and they take it for 50 that 10 overs before stumps, that changes the momentum of the game." Finch feels both side's bowling units are at par which each other, while their batters haven't been at their best recently. India head to the marquee series on the back



of an embarrassing 0-3 home series defeat to New Zealand. "It's so important that the number 7 has the impact on the game. In my opinion both fast bowling attacks cancel each other out Nathan Lyon and Ashwin or Jadeja cancel each other out, Lyon has the slight advantage of it being Australia. "Both batting line ups haven't been at their best for a little while so that's why the keepers are important." Indian batters to struggle against Australian pacers Haddin reckons the fast-bowling trio of Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood would trouble the Indian batters on bouncy pitches. "I don't think that the Indian batters are going to stand up to our quicks," Haddin. India are likely to be without the services of skipper Rohit Sharma

in the series opener at Perth, starting November 22. In Rohit's absence, either KL Rahul or Abhimanyu Easwaran will open the innings alongside Yashasvi Jaiswal, who will be playing his first series in Australia. Jaiswal has quickly established himself as one of the fiercest Test openers in recent times. In just 14 games, he has amassed 1,407 runs at an impressive average of 56.28, including three centuries, eight fifties, and a highest score of 214 not out. But Haddin is not sure how the youngster would negotiate the bouncy track that awaits India at Perth. "I know Jaiswal is a really good player, but he hasn't come out and seen Australia before, so I'm not sure whether he is going to handle the bounce. Opening in Perth is hard work," Haddin said.

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