

What is the real AQI?

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI
 Confusion prevails over the accuracy of the Air Quality Index (AQI) as Delhiites gasp for breath. While the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on Monday recorded the Delhi AQI at 486 at 6 am marking the worst of the season, another platform, IQAir, a Swiss air quality technology company, showed Delhi's AQI around 1,697 at 12.30 pm. It recorded 2,314 AQI at Vivek Vihar C block station, which is beyond severe, in the National Capital. An official statement issued by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) which comes under the Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena also cited the AQI at 1000. According to IQAir, the National Capital ranked at the top of the list of most polluted cities in the world. The PM2.5 concentration is recorded at 907.5 µg/m³ that is 182.5 times the World Health Organization (WHO) annual PM2.5 guideline value. Another platform, AQICN.Org, shared real time data that showed AQI at 874 in the hazardous category. The India Meteorological Department has issued an Orange Alert due to dense fog in the city. With the city shrouded in dense fog and visibility severely reduced, flight and train operations have been disrupted, leading to delays. As several platforms showing AQI at

hazardous levels beyond the severe, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) issued a communiqué urging to refer only to the SAMEER App or the CPCB Official Website for accurate and reliable data. "These are the authorised platforms for relaying the air quality index. Please avoid relying on unofficial or unreliable sources to ensure that correct information is alone disseminated to the public," it added. The Air Quality Index, is a numerical scale that measures certain pollutants and their concentration to communicate the quality of air in a specific area. It also provides information on how these numbers can affect human health and the environment. When asked officials say some platforms, like IQAir, provide real-time data, while others, like the CPCB, provide a single reading for a day. One of the reasons why the data collected by different platforms is varied is due to access to air quality monitoring stations. Since IQAir is an aggregator, it uses information from government-run sensors, which are also used by the CPCB. It also uses privately operated sensors, which may provide more localised readings. Platforms such as IQAir update the AQI of a city and its different regions much faster with real-time data, while the CPCB gives one reading which applies to the region for a day.
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Enforce GRAP IV strictly: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
 Noting the alarming rise in population and delays in implementation of stricter measures, the Supreme Court (SC) on Monday asked the Delhi-NCR States to immediately set up teams to enforce GRAP 4 restrictions, and said it will remain in effect even if the AQI is below 450. The SC also ordered that physical classes for all school students up to Class 12 be suspended in Delhi NCR for the time being. A Bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih said it is the constitutional duty of all States to ensure all citizens live in a pollution-free environment. "We direct restrictions under stage 4 of GRAP to continue even if AQI level falls below 450," the Bench said. The Supreme Court asked all National Capital Region States to immediately take a call on conducting physical classes up to Class 12 and directed the setting up of a mechanism where complaints can be made for violation of restrictions under stage 4 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP). The Bench questioned the Delhi Government and the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) over the delay in invoking pollution preventive measures under GRAP stages. "GRAP stages should be implemented immediately the moment the AQI level

touches alarming levels. Some sense of urgency needs to be there," the Bench said, after the counsel for the Delhi Government informed the Bench that stage 4 of GRAP has been implemented from Monday and heavy vehicles have been banned from entering the national Capital. "The moment the AQI reaches between 300 and 400, stage 4 has to be invoked. How can you take risk in these matters by delaying applicability of stage 4 of GRAP?" the Bench told the counsel. The Judges said that the CAQM waited for improvement in weather conditions instead of implementing different stages of GRAP over alarming rising pollution levels. Asking the Delhi Government and neighbouring NCR States - Uttar Pradesh and Haryana - to file their compliance affidavit by November 22 on the implementation of preventive measures to check pollution, the Bench said steps may be taken besides those suggested under GRAP.
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Delhi facing medical emergency: CM Atishi

RAJESH KUMAR/SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI
 Delhi Chief Minister Atishi on Monday raised an alarm over the severe air pollution engulfing a large swathe of North India, describing the situation as a "medical emergency" caused by rampant stubble burning in several "Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled" states. Experts have advised citizens to reduce outdoor activities, minimise exposure, wear N95 masks when outside, and decrease vehicular emissions, to minimise the impact of pollution in their day-to-day lives. Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a warning for dense to very dense fog, saying road, train and flight services may get affected. Fifteen flights were diverted, and around 200 were delayed at the Delhi airport on Monday as visibility reduces to 150 metres due to unfavourable weather conditions in the National Capital. Flight operations in Delhi faced disruptions on Monday as thick smog reduced visibility significantly at Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA). According to FlightRadar24, over 200 flights, 118 departures and 43 arrivals, at Delhi Airport experienced delays due to the low visibility till 8.30 am. More than 100 flights have been rescheduled. Out of the 15 flights, 13 were diverted to Jaipur and 1 to Dehradun, the official said and added that the diversions happened

between 8.30 am and 3 pm. Some of the pilots were not trained for CAT III operations due to which flights had to be diverted. Complying with the measures enforced under GRAP Stage IV, the Delhi traffic police imposed a total of 4,852 challans and 4,472 challans on the non-possession of Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates on November 15 and 17 respectively. It also imposed 138 and 155 challans on End of Life Vehicles (ELVs) on November 15 and 17 respectively. The police also diverted 423 non-destined trucks on November 15 while the numbers were higher for November 17 as 545 such trucks were diverted in Delhi. In adherence to the measures, the police also imposed challans on 514 Light Motor Vehicles (LMVs) (BS III petrol and BS IV diesel) on November 15. The numbers rose about 100 per cent on November 17 as 1,130 such LMVs were issued challans.
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No FIR filed 72-hours after Jhansi fire tragedy

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ JHANSI
 Even 72-hours after a devastating fire in the Special Newborn Care Unit (SNCU) of Rani Laxmbai Medical College claimed the lives of 12 newborns, no FIR has been registered, and accountability remains undetermined. The tragedy, which occurred on Friday night, left 10 newborns dead on the spot, and two more succumbed to their injuries on Sunday and Monday. While a preliminary investigation by the Divisional Commissioner has been completed and a report submitted to the state government, no concrete action has been taken against any staff member or official. A high-level team led by the Director General of Health Services began its probe on Monday, but legal and disciplinary actions remain pending. The inaction has fueled political outrage, with

Kailash Gahlot goes to BJP, Somesh Shoukeen comes to AAP

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI
 Delhi's former Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot, who called himself Arvind Kejriwal's 'Hanuman' till Sunday, and was one of the ruling Aam Aadmi Party's senior-most leaders, jumped the fence on Monday morning to join the rival Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a day after quitting the party. After joining the BJP, Gahlot clarified that he didn't quit Delhi's ruling party because of pressure from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). He alleged that efforts are being made to build a false narrative that his decision to join the AAP was the result of probe agencies pressure while AAP convenor said Gahlot was free to make his choice. Speaking to reporters, he said, "He is free; he can go wherever he wants." Similarly, former Congress MLA from Matiala, Somesh Shoukeen joined the AAP in the presence of Arvind Kejriwal. This comes a day after the AAP suffered a blow with its Jat leader Kailash Gahlot resigning from the party.
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MHA rushes 5,000 paramilitary troops to Manipur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI / IMPHAL
 Union Home Ministry on Monday rushed 5,000 paramilitary troops to Manipur to assist the State Government in handling the current volatile situation. While 35 units will be drawn from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the rest will be from the Border Security Force (BSF). Home Minister Amit Shah reviewed the prevailing security situation and deployment of troops for the second consecutive day and directed top officials to focus on restoring peace and order there as early as possible. A total of 218 Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) companies are now present in the State, which has been reeling from ethnic strife since May last year. The Home Minister took stock of the deployment of central forces there and directed the officials to restore peace and order there as early as possible, said officials. The situation in the Northeastern state, which has been reeling from ethnic strife since May last year, has been volatile following protests and violence after the recovery of bodies of women and children.



Meanwhile, in Imphal, defying curfew orders, a group of people led by members of the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) on Monday locked the front doors of several government offices in Imphal West district to protest the recent killing of three women and three children in Jiribam, officials said. The COCOMI is an influential organisation of the Meitei community, the majority ethnic group in the Imphal Valley region that comprises five districts including Imphal West.
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Campaigning draws to a close, high-stake polls next

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI/RANCHI/LUCKNOW
 Campaigning for the high-stakes single phase Assembly elections in Maharashtra, and second and final phase of Jharkhand Assembly elections ended on Monday evening, for the November 20 elections. Besides intense campaigning for the nine Assembly by-elections in Uttar Pradesh too concluded on Monday evening for the scheduled voting on November 20. Results for the polls scheduled on November 13 and 20 including, Wayanad Lok Sabha are set to be declared on November 23. The election campaign for the Maharashtra Assembly polls ended on Monday, with the ruling BJP-led Mahayuti

'One Earth One Family One Future' theme still relevant: PM Modi

PTI ■ RIO DE JANEIRO
 The countries of the Global South are most adversely impacted by the food, fuel and fertilizer crisis caused by global conflicts and G20 must focus on addressing it, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday. In an address at a session at the G20 summit, Modi said India's G20 theme of "One Earth, One Family, One Future" is as relevant at the ongoing summit as it was last year. "I would like to say that countries of the Global South are most adversely impacted by the food, fuel and fertilizer crisis caused by global conflicts," he said. "So our discussions can only be successful when we keep in mind the challenges and priorities of the Global South," he added. The PM made the remarks at the G20 session on "Social Inclusion and the Fight Against Hunger and Poverty". Modi also called for reform of the institutions of global governance. "And just as we amplified the voice of the Global South by granting permanent membership of G20 to the African Union during the New Delhi summit, we will reform institutions of global governance," he said. The PM said India supports Brazil's initiative for a global alliance against hunger and poverty. "The people-centric decisions taken at the G20



India is 'top sender' of students to America

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
 With more than 3.3 lakh Indians studying in the United States, it has become the "top sender" of international students for the first time in 15 years, according to the Open Doors Report 2024 released on Monday. In the academic year 2022-23, the leading "source country" for international students in the US was China followed by India. According to the latest Open Doors Report, the number of Indian students studying in the US in the academic year 2023-24 is at an "all-



time high" at 3,31,602, a rise of 23 per cent from 2022-23 when the number stood at 2,68,923. "India is now the leading country of origin for international students in the United States, accounting for 29 per cent of the total international student population," according to a note shared by the US Embassy on the Open Doors Report 2024. According to official data associated with the latest report, the top five source countries for international students in the US for 2023-24 are: India, China (2,77,398), South Korea (43,149), Canada (28,998) and Taiwan (23,157). "India is the top sender of international students (for the first time since 2008/2009) with over 3,31,602 students studying in the

United States. The number of Indian students is at an all-time high," the US Embassy's note read. Normally, the academic year in the US begins in September and runs through May. India also "remained the largest sender" of international graduate (masters and PhD level) students to the US for the second year. The number of Indian graduate students increased by 19 per cent to reach 1,96,567, it said. The number of undergraduate students from India also increased by 13 per cent to 36,053 while the number of non-degree students experienced a 28 per cent decline to 1,426 students, according to the report. The release of the Open Doors Report marked the beginning of International Education Week (IEW), which celebrates the benefits of international education and exchange worldwide. The report is published by the Institute of International Education. The IIE has been conducting an annual statistical survey on international students in the US since its founding in 1919 and in partnership with the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs since 1972.

Body of minor girl found near Indira Canal; kin allege murder

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 16-year-old girl was found murdered, with strangulation marks around her neck, in the thickets along the banks of Indira Canal in Bhatwara village under the Gosainganj police station on Monday morning. Bruises and injury marks were also detected on the body. When villagers discovered the body in the morning, they were gripped with shock and fear. The matter was immediately reported to the village head and police. Police arrived at the scene and sent the body for post-mortem, while nearby CCTV footage is being examined. In the meantime, a crowd gathered outside the deceased's home. According to her father, the teenager had left home on Sunday night without informing anyone in the family. The deceased, who was a resident of Bhatwara village in Gosainganj, had four siblings, and her parents worked as labourers and also bought and sold animals. Her father said, "She left the house on Sunday night without telling anyone, and we didn't know anything about it. We were shocked when we were

Man dies after falling off railway bridge

Lucknow (PNS): A 50-year-old Kanpur native died after reportedly falling from the Rakabganj railway bridge late on Sunday night. The victim, identified as Sunil Kumar Srivastava from Kydganj, Sisamau (Kanpur), had come to Lucknow to attend a wedding. It is believed he fell from the Rakabganj bridge and sustained severe injuries. Police rushed him to Balrampur Hospital in a critical condition. However, he was declared dead at the hospital. According to the police, the family of the deceased has been informed of the incident. Doctors stated that Sunil suffered a serious head injury as a result of the fall near the rail-

way track. According to the Wazirganj police, they received information on Sunday night about a man lying injured near the Rakabganj bridge, with a severe head injury. Police suspect that the man was crossing the bridge when he suddenly fell from the structure built over the railway track. Investigations are ongoing to determine how the man fell from the bridge. The police are yet to find any eyewitnesses or clues regarding the cause of the victim's fall. The body has been sent for an autopsy, and an investigation has been initiated. The police are also reviewing CCTV footage to help establish the cause of the fall.

informed that her body had been found on the banks of Indira Canal. Marks of strangulation were found on her neck, clearly indicating she was strangled to death. "It appears that the girl had put up a fierce struggle with her

attackers before the murder. Bruises that suggest she fought back to defend herself have also been found on the body, indicating she tried desperately to escape," police sources said. Police said that the exact cause

of death would only be determined after the post-mortem report was received. Four teams have been formed to crack the case and arrest the accused. DCP (South) Keshav Kumar and ADCP (South) Rajesh Kumar Yadav visited the scene and conducted investigations. Senior officers stated that all angles were being examined to determine the motive for murder and to identify the perpetrators. Initial findings suggest the murder may have been premeditated. The DCP confirmed that four teams have been formed to work out the case. "Nearby CCTV footage is being reviewed. The family has not yet accused anyone, and the case is under thorough investigation," he said. "The real cause of death will become clear once the post-mortem report is available," Inspector, Gosainganj, Brijesh Tripathi said. "Black marks were found on the neck, and there are other marks on the body as well. The family has not levelled any allegations yet. The true cause of death will be ascertained once the post-mortem report is received," he added.

Fire safety crackdown on city hospitals after Jhansi NICU tragedy

Lucknow (PTI): Notices have been issued to 80 hospitals found lacking in fire safety measures as authorities in Lucknow intensified inspections in the wake of the tragedy at a state-run hospital in Jhansi. Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Lucknow, Mangesh Kumar, said they have identified 906 hospitals and buildings in Lucknow for fire safety inspections. "Of these, 80 hospitals were found non-compliant with fire safety norms and have been served notices. We have also written to the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) to ensure these hospitals meet the required standards," he said. If corrective actions are not taken, legal proceedings will follow, and the establishments may be sealed, Kumar told PTI Videos. Meanwhile, Chief Medical Officer (Lucknow) NB Singh said hospitals with fewer than 50 beds are not required to obtain NOC (no objection certificate) from the department and only require registration. "However, if a building violates safety standards or lacks fire equipment, the fire department is free to take action. Our team is also conducting inspections, and notices are being served where deficiencies are found. If hospitals fail to address these after notice, their licences will be revoked," Singh added. The increased vigilance comes in the wake of 10 newborns dying in a fire that engulfed the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) of the Maharani Laxmi Bai Medical College in Jhansi district on Friday night. Two more infants, who were among the 39 rescued from the NICU Friday night, died on Sunday but officials claimed those deaths were due to illness and not related to the fire incident.

Prosecution diary pages stolen from police station

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The prosecution diary pages related to a dowry harassment case were allegedly stolen from the Chowk police station. After the theft came to the attention of senior officers, an order was issued to register a case in this regard. A team is investigating the matter. At present, the police have no leads. The incident came to light following the theft of two motorcycles—one belonging to a police inspector—from inside the Chinhat police station, as well as the theft of valuables, including ornaments, related to various crime cases registered at the Hazratganj Kotwali. These items were taken from the police station's sealed and locked maalkhana (storeroom). The revelation about the missing prosecution diary pages caused concern among the police, especially with winter approaching. The complaint was filed by Constable Vipin Singh, who is posted at the Chowk Kotwali. According to the complaint, a woman from Chowk had filed a case under sections 498A, 323, 506, and 377 of the IPC, as well as the Dowry Prohibition Act, against her husband Prabhat, her father-in-law Rajkumar, her mother-in-law Sushila, and her grandmother-in-law. A case was registered, and the investigation was carried out by the then sub-inspector, Dinesh Singh. After

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completing the investigation, a chargesheet (No. 229/13) was submitted on December 31, 2013. However, the case diary related to this matter was never filed in court. Following the discovery of the lapse, the then assistant police commissioner of Bazaarkhala conducted a preliminary inquiry. Based on the findings, a case was registered on November 5, 2024 concerning the disappearance of prosecution diary pages numbered 1 to 10, along with the chargesheet, which involved a total of 25 sheets of paper. The police stated that the case has been registered against an unknown individual, whose signature is believed to be on the missing pages. "It has been recommended that a case be registered as per the order of the deputy commissioner of police, west. The case was registered following the recommendation of the Chowk ACP," the police said.

Rly officer's 'ex' disrupts his wedding

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A girl claiming to be the ex-girlfriend of a railway officer created a ruckus on his wedding day, in the Mohanlalganj area. The groom, an Indian Engineering Service (IES) officer, fled from the hotel. As the situation escalated, the bride's family contacted the police, and a team of cops arrived to calm both parties. The wedding was scheduled to take place at a guesthouse, but the ceremony was disrupted due to the disturbance. The groom's wedding procession had arrived from Mumbai, where the groom, a Class I railway officer, resides. The bride, the daughter of a retired railway officer in Lucknow, had her marriage arranged with the groom. The procession reached Lucknow

on November 15, and the wedding was planned for November 17 at a venue on Shaheed Path. The Tilak ceremony took place on November 16. The groom's friend shared a photo of the Tilak ceremony on social media. When the groom's "ex-girlfriend" saw the post, she became suspicious and called him. When she asked where he was, the groom lied, claiming he was in Mumbai. However, her suspicions were not quelled, and she asked him to share his live location. The groom sent the location for Lucknow, and the girl, upon seeing the hotel address, called the hotel directly. She obtained contact details for the bride's family and then contacted the girl's father. The girl informed the bride's father about the situation, stating that the groom, who was attending the ceremony, was in

fact her husband, and that he had been avoiding her calls. She further claimed that she had been in a relationship with the groom for five years, during which he had promised to marry her. However, she accused him of deceiving both her and the bride by going ahead with the wedding in Lucknow. The bride's family, present at the guesthouse, checked the groom's phone and saw that his "ex-girlfriend" had been continuously calling him via video. When the bride's side sought the truth, the groom's family began causing a scene. Seizing the opportunity, the groom fled from the hotel. The bride's family became enraged upon discovering that the groom had disappeared. Upon learning the truth, the bride refused to go ahead with the marriage. As the commotion

intensified, the police were called to the scene. The police arrived and took both parties to the police station. The Mohanlalganj police eventually located the missing groom and brought him to the station, where he spent the night offering explanations. Sources claimed that the groom's marriage had been arranged through a matrimonial site a year ago, and he had been in communication with the bride for that entire period. However, the groom had been deceiving her while maintaining his relationship with his ex-girlfriend, who also lives and works in Mumbai. Mohanlalganj Inspector Alok Rao confirmed that no formal complaint had been filed by either party. "Once a complaint is lodged, further action will be taken," he said.

Toddler starts e-rickshaw, dies after it crashes into wall

Lucknow: A two-year-old boy died after he accidentally started an e-rickshaw and it rammed into a wall, police said on Monday. The incident occurred on Sunday evening when Yash Pandey was playing outside his house in Mukundpur village, they said. According to the family, an e-rickshaw parked nearby had keys left in the ignition. While playing, Yash accidentally started the vehicle, which sped out of control and crashed into a wall of the neighbour's house. The child suffered severe injuries in the collision and was rushed to the Maniar Primary Health Centre, where doctors declared him dead on arrival, police said. "We have not received any formal complaint regarding the

incident," Station House Officer Ratnesh Dubey said. **MAN ARRESTED FOR KILLING WIDOW IN HIS NEIGHBOURHOOD** Meanwhile, a man was arrested for allegedly killing a widow in his neighbourhood by slitting her throat in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar district, police said on Monday. The incident took place in Kalaunda village of the district on Sunday when Shahruckh (28) entered the 32-year-old woman's house and killed her with a knife, they said. Greater Noida Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (ADCP) Ashok Kumar Singh said that upon receiving information about the incident late Sunday, they reached

the spot, took the woman's body into custody and sent it for post-mortem. According to Singh the accused is married and the victim was his relative. Both had an affair for about three to four years and the accused suspected that the woman had an illicit relationship with someone else, the officer said. In a fit of rage, Shahruckh entered the woman's house at night and slit her throat with a knife, he added. Singh said that the accused was arrested and the knife used in the murder has been recovered from him. A case has been registered in the matter and the accused will be produced in the local court on Monday.

Retd army man opens fire on students

Lucknow (PNS): A retired army man struck terror on National Highway 58 in Meerut, on Sunday late night when he opened indiscriminate fire on students travelling on a tourist bus. A bullet grazed the stomach of a student, identified as Hriday Gupta. More than 12 students of a college in Greater Noida were travelling in the tourist bus. Other students saved their lives by hiding behind the seats. Police arrested the accused, Nitin Sirohi, a resident of SuperTech Pallavpuram. Anirudh Sharma, a resident of Bhuni village of Sardhana police station area, works in a food company providing online service. He was returning home on his motorcycle late at night. Meanwhile, on the flyover in front of Pallavpuram Phase-2, his motorcycle collided with a WagonR car going ahead. After this, the car owner, Nitin Sirohi, a retired army personnel, started beating Sharma. Meanwhile, the students returning from Mussoorie on a bus protested against this. Reports said that Sirohi lost his cool, and whipped out a pistol and opened fire at the students, creating panic on the highway. The students somehow saved themselves by hiding under the seats of the bus but one of them received injury as a bullet went touching him. Students Ansh, Rajveer, Neel, Hriday Gupta, Divyansh, Bagesh and others said that they were studying in a college in Greater Noida. On November 14, more than a dozen students had booked a travel bus and gone to Mussoorie for a trip. Bus driver Anuj said that the accused was hell-bent on killing someone. He started firing from his licensed pistol. He said the accused also broke the glass of the bus with sticks. SHO Munesh Singh said the police reached the spot after getting information about the incident and took the accused retired soldier into custody from the spot. The licensed pistol of the accused has been seized.

Formal inauguration of Green Corridor first phase by Feb

Lucknow (PNS): The first phase of the Green Corridor project will be formally inaugurated by the second week of February next year. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to be the chief guest on the occasion, Lucknow Development Authority Vice-Chairman Prathmesh Kumar said on Monday. "The Urban and Housing Development department made efforts to contact the Prime Minister's Office to invite Modi as the chief guest. However, the PMO has not yet provided any assurance in this regard," the LDA VC said. The PMO told the LDA that they were currently unaware of the prime minister's schedule but assured that efforts would be made to include the inauguration in his planned itinerary, he added. There are reports that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will personally invite the prime minister. The first phase, which links the IIM Road crossing to the Pucca Pul (a stretch of 7 kilometres), is already in use by the public, but the state government intends to formally inaugurate it. In addition, the prime minister is expected to inaugurate the Rashtriya Panna Sthala, located at Vasant Kunj, which is around one and a half kilometres from the site of the first phase.

Woman alleges theft by son, his friends

Lucknow (PNS): A woman accused her son and his friends of carrying out theft at her house in Aminabad. She claimed that they stole jewellery worth Rs 11 lakh from the cupboard. At the time of the incident, the woman and her husband had gone out. She alleged that her son called a key maker and had a duplicate key made to steal the items from the house. The complainant, Nandini Borkar of Hewett Marg, stated that she had gone to Jalaun with her husband on October 18. Her son Ankur was at home at that time. Nandini's son reportedly invited his friends, Osama and Raj, to the house. The duo booked a ride to bring a key maker from Campwell Road. They used the key to open the cupboard and took away jewellery worth around Rs 11 lakh. Nandini alleged that when she

opened the cupboard to retrieve her jewellery on November 10, she was shocked to find it missing. When she confronted her son, he initially denied any involvement. However, after further questioning, he allegedly confessed to the crime. Nandini contacted Osama and demanded that the jewellery be returned. Osama, however, threatened to kill her. To intimidate the complainant into not reporting the crime to the police, Osama called Ankur to meet him near the civil court. Osama reached there with a lawyer and threatened Ankur, warning that if the family went to the police, they would face severe consequences. Nandini filed a formal complaint at the Aminabad police station. Inspector Sunil Kumar Prajapati confirmed that a case has been registered against Ankur, Raj and Osama.

PM SVANidhi Yojana: Govt to appoint street vendors as 'brand ambassadors'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a novel initiative, the Yogi Adityanath government is set to identify street vendors across districts and cities in Uttar Pradesh to appoint them as 'brand ambassadors' under the Pradhan Mantri SVANidhi Yojana. This move aims to economically empower street vendors while acknowledging their vital role in society, marking a significant step toward their recognition and uplift. As part of this initiative, the 'SVANidhi Bhi, Swabhiman Bhi' fortnight has been rolled out from November 18 to December 2, 2024. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed the Urban Development department to ensure the active

engagement of street vendors and their families in the programme. Aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision, the Yogi government has designated members of Town Vending Committees (TVC) and active street vendors as SVANidhi Mitras. These Mitras will assist their peers in accessing scheme benefits and raise awareness about its various provisions. Additionally, the government is encouraging street vendors to adopt digital transactions. The government has previously honoured vendors who earned the highest cashback through digital platforms at events like SVANidhi Deepawali and Makar Sankranti Mahotsav. This initiative promotes Digital India,

ensuring transparency in earnings while fostering economic inclusivity for street vendors. As part of the event, free medical and health check-up camps will be organised for street vendors and their families, ensuring access to essential healthcare for a section of society that often lacks such services. This initiative reflects a broader commitment to extending health benefits to underserved communities. Last year, the SVANidhi Mahotsav was held on a grand scale across all districts from June 1 to July 7. Street vendors and their families actively participated, sharing their experiences and celebrating their journey. Moreover, cultural programmes during the Deepawali Mela and Makar

Sankranti Mela featured activities such as painting, slogan writing, mehndi, rangoli, dance, singing and culinary competitions, providing a vibrant and empowering platform for the vendors and their families. The initiatives undertaken by the Yogi government under the Pradhan Mantri SVANidhi Yojana continue to bring transformative changes to the lives of street vendors. Beyond financial assistance, these efforts honor their contributions to society. Through the 'SVANidhi Bhi, Swabhiman Bhi' fortnight and similar events, the government is fostering self-reliance and empowerment among street vendors, paving the way for a more inclusive and resilient community.

Youth shot dead, another set ablaze

Lucknow (PNS): In a sensational killing, a youth was shot dead in the parking lot of Lotus Garden in Govind Nagar police station area of Mathura late Sunday night. After killing the youth, the assailants fled from the spot. Police and family members reached the spot after they heard the gunshot. The cops sent the body for post-mortem and are investigating the case to confirm the motive and the identity of the killers. Reports said that Rahul Goswami (25) of Radheshyam Colony, was passing by Lotus Garden on Masani highway link road for some work, when someone called out and he went to the parking lot of the garden. Some unknown miscreants reportedly opened fire on him from point blank range and fled. The youth died on the spot as the bullet hit him on his temple. On receiving the information, acting police station in-charge Ajay Kumar reached the spot

with the police force. The deceased youth's brother-in-law Amit identified him and informed the family. It is not yet known who shot Rahul and why. The reason for the murder will be known only after talking to the family members. The deceased youth used to work as a pandit. SP (City) Dr Arvind Kumar also visited the spot to enquire about the matter. Meanwhile, in another incident in Azamgarh, a youth was critically injured after his neighbour set him on fire over a property related dispute on Sunday night. The incident took place at Para Mau Rangdih village under Saraimir police station of Azamgarh. The youth suffered severe burns and was admitted to the divisional district hospital for treatment. After the incident, tension prevailed in the village following which senior police officers visited the spot and deployed heavy police force to avert any un-

ward incident. Reports said that 30-year-old Gulshan, a resident of Para Mau Rangdih village of Saraimir police station area, was having a land related dispute with some people of his village. Gulshan had gone to the neighboring village to get milk. Around eight o'clock in the night, he was returning home on foot when two of his opponents intercepted him. Both of them started hurling abuses to which Gulshan objected. Both the youths subsequently called some of their associates and later they poured petrol over Gulshan and set him on fire to torch him alive. As soon as the information was received, the family members rushed to the spot and somehow controlled the fire. They took the youth to a private doctor in Phulpur from where he was referred to district hospital as his condition was critical. SP (Rural) Chirag Jain later visited the hospital and enquired

about the incident. Seeing tension in the area, he deployed a heavy police force to avert any clash. He claimed that two teams have been formed and they were trying to arrest the accused who were absconding after committing the crime. Meanwhile, a 15-year-old boy was killed and three others were injured when the roof of a house undergoing repair work collapsed in Sultanpur on Monday, police said. The victims were identified as construction workers Aman, Karma Raj and Govardhan (40). Govardhan's son, Ayush (10) was also present on the spot, they added. The incident occurred when the roof of a room in Bandhua Nagar area, which was being demolished, suddenly collapsed, trapping the victims under the debris, station in-charge Vijay Singh said. Police rescued them. However, Aman died on the spot, and the rest were injured, Singh said.

Man kills wife by slitting her throat

Banda (PTI): A man allegedly killed his 30-year-old wife by slitting her throat with a sword in Uttar Pradesh's Banda district, a police officer said on Monday. The incident took place in Maroli village of Mataundh area on Sunday evening. Deepu Singh (33) attacked Priyanka, when the couple was alone at their house, Station House Officer Sandeep Kumar said. According to Kumar, Deepu was addicted to alcohol and there was some dispute between the couple. He said that the wife died on the spot in the attack and her husband fled from the scene. Later in the evening, when the wife's mother-in-law returned home and saw the body soaked in blood, she informed the police, the SHO said. A case of murder has been registered and the body has been sent for postmortem, the officer said. Efforts are underway to nab the accused who is absconding.

Property of absconding wife of SP MLA seized

Bhadohi (PTI): The process to seize the properties of jailed Samajwadi Party MLA Zahid Beg's wife Seema Beg, who is absconding, was initiated at their home here on Monday following court orders, police said. A large police contingent arrived at the MLA's residence around 2 pm and began listing and collecting household items to initiate the seizure proceedings, they said. Zahid Beg is lodged in Prayagraj Jail, while his son, JM Beg, is in Varanasi Jail. They are accused in a case related to abetment of suicide of their domestic help, child labour violations and child trafficking. Seema Beg, also an accused in the case, has been evading arrest and failed to appear in an MP-MLA court despite repeated summons, a local police official said. "After Seema Beg ignored a

Property of absconding wife of SP MLA seized

notice issued under section 84 (proclamation for person absconding) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, a fresh case was lodged against her on the complaint of the police under BNS section 209 (nonappearance in response to a proclamation under section 84 of BNSS)," the official said. "Subsequently, the court of Judge Sadhana Giri ordered proceedings under section 85 (attachment of property of person absconding) of the BNSS for property attachment," the police official said. In compliance with the court's directives, City Kotwali Inspector Ashwini Kumar Tripathi led a team to Zahid Beg's residence in the Malikana Mohalla on Monday afternoon to carry out the property seizure. The attachment process was underway on Monday evening.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

Munni wife Ashok 18/01/1953 village- Fatehpur, police station- Ranipur, district- Mau I am the mother of Havaldar Vipin Kumar Singh of army number 15343565. In all my documents my name is Munni, hence Munni should be changed instead of Munni Singh.

NDA win will drive infiltrators out of Jharkhand: Yogi

PNS ■ SAHIBGANJ/ JAMTARA/ DEOGHAR

On the final day of the election campaign in Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched a scathing attack on the Congress, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and Rashtriya Janata Dal, accusing them of derailing the development envisioned by Atal Bihari Vajpayee for Jharkhand, leaving the resource-rich state lagging in progress.

“While Jharkhand’s people remained poor, mountains of cash were discovered in the homes of leaders from these parties. Crores of rupees were seized from Congress MP and JMM minister Alamgir and his staff — so much that counting machines overheated, requiring 70 machines to handle it. This money was meant for Jharkhand’s development, sent by (Prime Minister) Modi ji,” he said. Yogi Adityanath vowed that after November 23, following the formation of National Democratic Alliance government, every looted penny would be recovered and redirected to benefit the people of Jharkhand while infiltrators will be kicked out from the state.

Highlighting the illegal activities in Rajmahal, Sahibganj and surrounding areas, Yogi accused the opposition of turning these regions into safe havens for Bangladeshi infiltrators and Rohingya Muslims. “In BJP-led double-engine governments, there is no place for infiltrators, riots, curfews or hooliganism; only good governance and prosper-



(Right) Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath waves at the crowd at an election rally, and (Right) performs jalabhishek at Baba Vaidyanath temple, one of the twelve sacred Jyotirlingas, in Jharkhand on Monday



Rajmahal assembly constituency, backing sitting MLA Anant Ojha. His second rally took place in the Nala constituency, where the BJP has fielded Madhav Chandra Mahato. The third public meeting was held in Deoghar to garner support for sitting MLA and candidate Narayan Das.

CM VISITS BABA VAIDYANATH JYOTIRLINGA

On Monday, after wrapping up his election rallies in Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visited the Baba Vaidyanath temple, one of the twelve sacred Jyotirlingas, where he performed jalabhishek, offered aarti and prayed for a prosperous and harmonious India.

The Panda community warmly welcomed Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath upon his arrival at Baidyanath Dham, honouring him with garlands and a shawl. Yogi interacted with the community and enquired about their well-being.

The community expressed confidence in the Bharatiya Janata Party’s victory, assuring him that only Baba’s devotees would triumph in Deoghar and across Jharkhand, paving the way for the BJP to form the government. Thousands of devotees were present, and Yogi greeted them all warmly.

Rajya Sabha MP and Jharkhand in-charge of the party Laxmikant Bajpai, along with Godda MP Nishikant Dubey and other leaders, accompanied the UP chief minister during the visit.

ity,” he emphasised. Drawing parallels with Uttar Pradesh, Yogi stated, “Under the double-engine government in UP, infiltration, cow slaughter and crimes against women are unthinkable. Anyone attempting such acts is guaranteed a one-way ticket to Yamraj.” He asserted that only the BJP alliance could deliver on these promises, not the Congress or the JMM. Yogi Adityanath confidently stated that the first phase of voting signals the formation of

a BJP-led NDA government with a clear majority, securing more than two-thirds of the seats. Addressing the crowd, the Yogi emphasised the “Modi guarantee”, stating that once the BJP government takes power in Jharkhand on November 23, 21 lakh families will be provided with PM housing, and 1.5 lakh government jobs will be advertised. He urged voters to prevent infiltrators from entering, assuring that once the BJP is in power, these intruders will

be driven out of the state and their leaders will be held accountable. He also warned, “bate the, toh kate the, ab batna nahi hai,” cautioning against leaders who divide society based on caste, calling them enemies of the nation. Yogi further criticised the opposition for allowing infiltration and illegal activities in Jharkhand, stating that while such actions were common before 2014, they no longer occur in India today. He pointed out that while illegal mining and the sand

mafia are destroying Jharkhand’s resources, the people continue to struggle. “In UP, strict action is taken against the mafia,” he said. He also highlighted how the mining, coal, forest and land mafias are exploiting Jharkhand, pushing citizens into poverty and ruining the lives of its youth. Under the JMM government, he claimed, the state faces a crisis over basic needs such as food, safety and land. Yogi Adityanath also made a spiritual appeal to the people

of Deoghar, saying, “Every pebble of Deoghar is Shankar”. He called for a true vote of Baba to win in Baba’s city. Attacking the opposition again, Yogi accused the JMM, Congress and RJD of putting political interests above the welfare of the people, creating insecurity and dishonoring women. “They are promoting love jihad and occupying land in the name of land jihad. There is no such thing in UP. If anyone dares to do this, they will face consequences,” he asserted.

Yogi also praised MP Nishikant Dubey for his efforts and recalled the BJP’s commitment to building the Ram Jannabhoomi temple. “When we said we would build the Ram mandir, they opposed us, but we have built it. Now, Baba Vishwanath and Krishna Kanhaiya will also not remain silent,” he declared, reaffirming the BJP’s commitment to religious and cultural development. Yogi Adityanath kicked off his campaign with a rally in the

Campaigning for UP bypolls ends

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Campaigning for the bypolls to nine constituencies of Uttar Pradesh assembly ended on Monday evening. Polling in these nine assembly seats will be held on November 20 from 7 am to 6 pm and the counting of votes will be taken up on November 23.

These bypolls are being termed as a semi-final of the 2027 UP assembly elections and have turned into a prestige issue for Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath after the Bharatiya Janata Party’s dismal performance in the Lok Sabha polls in the state. Both the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Samajwadi Party face the challenging task of winning the by-elections. For the BJP, the bypolls are an important occasion to avenge the dismal performance in the Lok Sabha elections largely due to the ruling party’s failure to counter the fake narrative spread by the opposition about abrogation of Constitution and reservations for Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes.

The SP faces the challenge of retaining and further strengthening the euphoria generated by its stellar performance in the Lok Sabha elections in which it won 37 seats against the only five seats it bagged in the 2019

parliamentary polls. If the SP fails to perform then it will have serious bearings on its claims of coming to power in Uttar Pradesh in the 2027 state assembly elections. Though the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), the opposition bloc, is intact, its important constituent Congress has opted to stay out of the by-elections in UP and has not fielded any candidate. The grand old party is supporting the SP. In all the nine constituencies where bypolls are being held, there is a direct contest between the BJP and the SP. However, the Mayawati-led Bahujan Samaj Party is also contesting all the seats, and this could impact the results for both the SP and the BJP as it could dent the Dalit votes in all nine assembly seats. The BSP had drawn a blank in the Lok Sabha elections held in June last.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has single-handedly led the campaign for the BJP and has visited each assembly constituency going to bypolls at least twice along with holding roadshows to woo the voters. Yogi has been assisted by his ministerial colleagues and the BJP state leaders in the electioneering.

On the other hand, SP president Akhilesh Yadav spearheaded the campaigning for his party and visited all nine constituencies.

Out of the nine assembly seats going to bypolls, four were held by the SP, three by the BJP, one each by BJP ally NISHAD Party and SP’s former ally Rashtriya Lok Dal which switched sides to the National Democratic Alliance before the Lok Sabha polls. Eight of these seats fell vacant after their MLAs were elected to the Lok Sabha polls. In Sisamau, the bypoll is being held due to the disqualification of SP MLA Irfan Solanki, who was convicted in a criminal case.

Karhal and Katehari assembly seats are important as they were held by the SP but this time the BJP has put all its pressure on winning them. Among the constituencies where by-elections are being held, Ghaziabad, Khair and Phulpur were held by the BJP while the Meerapur seat was won by RLD. Similarly, Majhwan seat was with the NISHAD Party, but this time, the BJP has fielded a former MLA from there. The saffron party is also trying to wrest the Kundarki seat in Moradabad and Sisamau seat in Kanpur from the SP.

Fight between believers of Babasaheb and Baba: AKY

Lucknow (PNS): Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, on Monday, said the Uttar Pradesh assembly bypolls were a fight between those who believe in Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar and those who believe in “Baba”, alluding to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. “This is a fight between those who believe in Babasaheb and those who believe in ‘Baba’ On one side are those who make and protect the Constitution; on the other side are those who destroy it,” Akhilesh Yadav said in a post on X in Hindi.

“So far, the Constitution has protected the PDA; now the PDA will protect the Constitution! Proclaim Unity. Jai Samvidhan, Jai PDA!” he added. Before the Lok Sabha elections, the SP chief had coined the acronym PDA — Pichhde, Dalit, Alpsankhyak (Backwards, Dalit and Minorities). In Uttar Pradesh, nine assembly seats are going to polls on November 20 — Katehari (Ambedkar Nagar), Karhal (Mainpuri), Meerapur (Muzaffarnagar), Ghaziabad, Majhwan (Mirzapur), Sisamau (Kanpur Nagar), Khair (Aligarh), Phulpur (Prayagraj) and Kundarki (Moradabad).

IB looking into funding of maktabas, unrecognised madrasas in Gonda

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a surprise move, the sleuths of the Intelligence Bureau have initiated an investigation into the funding of 286 maktabas and 19 unrecognised madrasas in Gonda.

Sources on Monday confirmed that the IB is looking into various aspects of the case with the aid of the Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS). IB officials visited the office of Gonda’s minorities welfare officer to obtain a list of 286 maktabas and 19 madrasas operating illegally without proper recognition. The objective of the said investigation is to uncover the sources of funding, understand the demographics of students attending these institutions, and determine why proper recognition has not been obtained by them. The investigation also aims to uncover how long these madrasas have been functioning.

While the UP ATS was already probing the funding aspect of these maktabas and madrasas, the IB’s involvement has intensified the

scrutiny, causing a stir among madrasa operators and across the district.

The madrasas in Gonda, primarily run by the Minority Welfare department, operate to provide education to Muslim children. However, alongside government-subsidised and aided madrasas, a significant number of unrecognised such institutions are also operating. The IB is investigating multiple aspects, including funding sources. On government directives, the IB has identified these unrecognised madrasas and maktabas and commenced a thorough inquiry into their funding. The findings from this investigation, which will also address other key concerns, will be compiled into a detailed report and submitted to the government and related agencies.

As per the reports, Gonda’s District Social Welfare Officer Ramesh Chandra has been instructed to support the IB officials during their investigation. This includes assisting in resolving any challenges faced by the investigation team and facilitating

access to necessary locations and records. The IB officials will examine a variety of factors and may summon documents from madrasa operators as part of the investigation. A state-wide inspection of madrasas revealed that 4,000 were operating without recognition. In Gonda, 286 maktabas and 19 unrecognised madrasas have been identified. The responsibility for investigating the funding of these institutions was assigned to the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS). To streamline the process, the madrasas were categorised department-wise, and separate ATS units were tasked with the investigation. Officers and personnel from UP ATS have been deployed to carry out the probe.

Both maktabas and madrasas provide education to Muslim children, but there are significant differences between them. Maktabas focus solely on imparting religious education, and children usually return home after classes. Modern education is not part of their curriculum. Further, these maktabas can operate without official recognition,

allowing individuals or groups to provide religious education informally.

On the other hand, madrasas are institutions of higher learning that offer both religious and modern education. Unlike maktabas, madrasas often provide accommodation for students along with their studies. Madrasas are generally recognised and follow a broader curriculum, combining traditional and contemporary teachings. Despite these distinctions, the operation of unrecognised institutions, whether maktabas or madrasas, has raised concerns, prompting large-scale investigations into their activities and funding.

Meanwhile, Gonda District Minorities Welfare Officer Ramesh Chandra revealed before the local media persons that the Intelligence Bureau has also been provided the list of madrasas and maktabas, as requested by them. The department is fully cooperating with IB officials in their investigation, and madrasa operators have been directed to assist as well, he confirmed.

Hizb militant involved in attack on Deoband police arrested after 3 decades

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Sleuths of the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) and Saharanpur police achieved a major success when they nabbed Hizbul Mujahideen terrorist Nazir Ahmed Wani, wanted for the last three decades for throwing a grenade at Saharanpur police personnel in Deoband. Nazir, who hails from Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir, had a case registered against him for attacking policemen in Deoband in 1993. The purpose of this attack was to kill the policemen and a reward of Rs 25,000 was also announced on him.

According to Saharanpur police, on August 26, 1993, some policemen were deployed for security at Union Tiraha in Deoband when a grenade was thrown at them, injuring two cops and two civilians named Jai Prakash Saini and Sukhbir. After this attack, the police had registered a case under Section 307 (attempt to murder) of the Indian Penal Code and Explosive Substances Act. Investigation revealed that the accused of this attack was Nazir Ahmed Wani, who had been living in Deoband for a long time using fake documents. Nazir Ahmed was a resident of village Inzak Sharifabad in Parimpora police station area of Budgam district of Kashmir. He was an active terrorist of

Hizbul Mujahideen who had been living in Deoband for a long time with the help of fake documents. Finally, on May 26, 1994, the police arrested Nazir Ahmed Wani. Then the police had registered another case against him for using fake documents.

This FIR was registered in the new Deoband police station under sections 467, 468 and 471 of the IPC. Nazir Ahmed got bail in 1994 itself and since then he never appeared in court. For the last more than 30 years, he was constantly changing his name and address.

On May 20, 2024, a Saharanpur court issued a permanent warrant against Nazir Ahmed Wani, a long-time absconding warrantee. The Saharanpur police took cognisance of this warrant and announced a reward of Rs 25,000 for the arrest of Nazir Ahmed. The ATS was also deployed along with Saharanpur police for the arrest of Nazir Ahmed. Finally, on Sunday, the police arrested him from Hakar Mulla village in Budgam district, where he was living. Hakar Mulla village is located near Soibuddh town in Kashmir. After necessary legal action, Nazir Ahmad Wani was brought from Kashmir to Saharanpur and presented before the court on Monday. The court has sent him to jail.

Pathak confident of winning all 9 seats

Lucknow (PNS): Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, on Monday, exuded confidence in winning the bypolls in the state, saying the way people have welcomed the welfare policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it shows that the Bharatiya Janata Party is winning all the nine assembly seats. “In the by-elections, the BJP alliance is winning all the nine seats here. The way people have approved the welfare policies of Prime Minister Modi for the welfare of the poor, we can say that we will win all the seats... The truth of those who ran a negative narrative in the Lok Sabha elections has come out in front of the people... Samajwadi Party has been completely derailed.”

Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said that the voice of the Lucknow engine (UP government) has changed as the Uttar Pradesh bypolls are approaching. “The voice of the Lucknow engine (UP government) has changed as the elections (UP bypolls) approach. Are they talking about any development? They say that Samajwadi people are mafia and goons... But the truth is that when the chief minister (Yogi Adityanath) leaves his house, he does not look in the mirror,” Akhilesh Yadav said while addressing a public rally in Katehari assembly constituency.

Further, speaking on the Jhansi medical college tragedy, Brajesh Pathak said that the investigation was going on. “We are investigating. Today a meeting has been called,” he said. The Uttar Pradesh government has formed a high-level committee to probe the fire which engulfed the neonatal ward of Rani Laxmibai Medical College hospital last Friday. The tragedy occurred when a fire, suspected to have been caused by a short-circuit in an oxygen concentrator, spread rapidly in the highly oxygenated environment of the NICU, leading to the deaths of 10 newborns.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced financial assistance of Rs5 lakh for the families of the deceased newborns. A four-member committee comprising members of the UP Health department has been asked to submit its report in seven days.

Avian wonders to greet visitors

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The eagerly awaited Maha Kumbh 2025 will offer a unique experience for bird enthusiasts visiting Prayagraj. Already, 150 pairs of endangered Indian skimmers have arrived at the Sangam, offering visitors an enchanting sight. Their melodious calls, combined with the serene flow of the Ganga, create a natural symphony that is attracting birdwatchers from around the world.

Adding to the excitement is the anticipated return of the peregrine falcon, the world’s fastest bird, capable of diving at speeds exceeding 300 km/h—faster than bullet trains in Japan and China. This gathering of rare avian species underscores the Yogi government’s focus on promoting eco-tourism in Uttar Pradesh. To celebrate this natural spectacle, the Forest department will host a grand Bird Festival in the lead-up to the Maha Kumbh. Alok Kumar Pandey, IT Head of the Forest department in Prayagraj, noted, “Migratory birds, including the endangered Indian skimmer and Siberian crane, are already arriving. A dedicated wildlife team is monitoring them around the clock.”

Wildlife Community Officer KP Upadhyay highlighted the ecological importance of the Indian skimmer, noting that their presence helps purify water and reduce pollution. “This breathtaking spectacle at

MAHA KUMBH 2025

Sangam reflects the harmonious coexistence of nature and human celebration,” he said.

The banks of Sangam have become a haven for birdwatchers, with over 90 species expected to gather ahead of the Maha Kumbh. These include the Siberian crane, black crane, and sarus crane, alongside the Indian skimmer. Many of these birds travel from regions as far as Siberia, Mongolia, and Afghanistan, adding to the event’s natural beauty. The Indian skimmer, or Panchira, is particularly fascinating due to its unique behaviour. These endangered birds lay only three eggs and display remarkable teamwork in raising them, with the male and female taking turns guarding and moistening the eggs. Also eagerly awaited is the return of the peregrine falcon, often called the ‘rocket bird’ for its incredible speed. Last seen at Sangam in 2022, it is expected to return for Maha Kumbh 2025.

BENCHMARK FOR CLEANLINESS

The UP government is committed to making the Maha Kumbh 2025 a benchmark for cleanliness, ensuring a memorable experience for all devotees. To achieve this, the fair administration has issued detailed guidelines, emphasising the maintenance of clean toilets and urinals throughout the event. The government plans

to deploy one sweeper for every 10 toilets, supervised by one supervisor for every 10 sweepers. Similarly, one sweeper will be assigned to every 20 urinals, with one supervisor overseeing 20 sweepers. All vendors are required to adhere to these standards and safety measures, where sweepers must wear personal protective equipment (PPE), including gloves and shoes, ensuring both cleanliness and worker safety.

Special Executive Officer Akanksha Rana said, “These measures aim to upgrade sanitation facilities and enhance the overall experience for devotees and tourists.”

Under the prescribed guidelines, all toilet facilities will be maintained to the highest standards of cleanliness. Toilets, washbasins, floors, and tiles will remain stain- and dirt-free, with essential supplies such as toilet paper, soap dispensers, hand sanitiser, and feminine hygiene products readily available. The functionality of flush systems, taps, showers, and jet spray machines will be thoroughly maintained, ensuring they operate efficiently without leaks. Advanced technology will be used to eliminate odours within 10-15 minutes, and waste will decompose within 24 hours, maintaining freshness even during heavy use. Additional measures include: appropriate lighting, timely repairs of concrete joints, electrical fittings, and signage. Toilets will be equipped with mugs and buckets and will be located at easily accessible points.

UP Board examinations from 1st week of March: Secy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The examinations of UP Board i.e. Uttar Pradesh Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad are going to start from the first week of March 2025 instead of February. Preparations are going on for this on a large scale. In view of the huge crowd of devotees coming from the country and abroad during the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, the state government is going to conduct the board examination after the end of Mahakumbh. UP Board Secretary Bhagwati Singh said preparations for the board examination are in the final stages. Selection of examination centres is going on. Practical examinations will start in the month of December and end in January and after that the examinations will start in the first month of March. However, the exact date of both the exams is yet to be declared. A total of 54,38,597 candidates are going to appear in the

class X and XII examinations of UP Board 2025. Besides, 27,40,151 candidates will appear in high school and 26,98,446 in intermediate. The board examinations of the year 2024 started from February 22. This time also, preparations for the high school and intermediate examinations of UP Board have started on a large scale. The divine and grand event of Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj is going to be held on the banks of Sangam from January 13, 2025 (Paush Purnima) to February 26, 2025 (Mahashivratri). The state and central government are promoting the grand event of Maha Kumbh on a large scale in the country and abroad. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also likely to come to Shringaverpur Dham and Prayagraj on December 12 for the promotion and grand organisation of Maha Kumbh. **THREE CHEATED:** Cyber criminals defrauded three people, including a student here.

The student was lured with a gift of ₹32 lakh and swindled of ₹97,000. Besides, a man was cheated through credit card. The student Aparna Singh of Cantt area given a complaint she received a call from an unknown number. The caller told her about getting a gift of ₹32 lakh. He cheated her of ₹97,000 in eight instalments. When she came to know about the fraud, she registered a case at the Cantt police station. Besides Rupa, a resident of Ashoknagar in Cantt, has given a complaint that she went to withdraw money from the ATM on November 5. The amount was deducted from the account but the money was not withdrawn. She complained about this to the bank. After this, she received a call on November 9. The caller posed as a bank employee, made a video call and told her to do as he said. After that he found out the ATM card PIN and withdrew a total of ₹78,700.

Avinash, a resident of Dayanand Marg, has given a complaint in the Cantt police station that cyber criminals had committed online fraud of ₹51,178 through his credit card. It is alleged that the fraudster called posing as a bank representative. Station House Officer (SHO) Sunil Kumar Kanaujia said that the Cantt police is investigating after registering a case. **PROGRAMME:** Former minister of Law and Justice Dr Subramanian Swamy attended the death anniversary programme of Ashok Singhal, the pioneer of Ram Mandir movement, as the keynote speaker at the District Panchayat auditorium. This event was organised by Arundhati Vashisht Research Centre. A memorial lecture on Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement and national renaissance was held. The book *Hindu Rashtra* written by Dr Chandraprakash Singh, patron of Arundhati Vashisht Research Centre, was released.

Giridhar Malaviya no more

PTI ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Retired Justice Giridhar Malaviya, the grandson of Banaras Hindu University founder Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, died on Monday at his house in Prayagraj. He was 88. Manoj Malaviya said his father had been unwell since last week but did not suffer from any major illness. Malaviya is survived by his wife, two daughters, and a son. Malaviya served as a judge at the Allahabad High Court from 1988 to 1998. In November 2018, he was unanimously elected as the Banaras Hindu University Chancellor. "The Banaras Hindu University is deeply saddened by the passing away of Honourable Chancellor, Justice (ret'd) Sh. Giridhar Malaviya ji. Our heartfelt tributes," BHU said in a post on X. His last rites will be performed on Tuesday at Rasulabad Ghat in Prayagraj, his son said.

India can host Olympic Games soon due to PM's efforts: MLA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI



MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari addressing a sports event at DAV PG College in Varanasi

The Kashi Sansad Khel Pratiyogita (MP sports competition) of Kotwali zone was inaugurated on Monday at the late PN Singh Yadav Memorial Sports Ground of DAV PG College. The chief guest and MLA of Varanasi City South assembly constituency Dr Neelkanth Tiwari along with college manager Ajit Kumar Singh Yadav inaugurated the games by lighting the lamp. Encouraging the players on the occasion, the MLA said through sports both body and mind remain healthy. "To increase the interest of students towards sports from childhood and understanding the importance of sports, Prime Minister Narendra Modi decided to start a sports competition in his parliamentary constituency and this is the second phase of the competition, in which a large number of participants are participating with enthusiasm," he said, adding that due to the

efforts of the PM, India can soon host the Olympic Games. In the beginning, the guests were welcomed by acting Principal Prof Mishrilal. The function was conducted by Prof Rakesh Kumar Ram and the vote of thanks was given by Dr Meenu Lakra. On the occasion, Assistant Municipal Commissioner Anil Yadav, Block Education Officer Akhilesh Yadav, Haribansh Singh, Dr Vivek Kumar Singh, Dr Vijay Yadav, Gopal Gupta, Sandeep Chaurasia, Sanjay Keshari, Shrawan Gupta and other dignitaries were also present. After this, various competitions were organised. On the first day of the competition, more than 1,500 students from 29 schools participated. The jury for sports included Kanai Chandra Talapatra, Chandrabhan Yadav etc. The sports were conducted by Vivek Srivastava. Meanwhile, at UP Inter College, in the sports competition, the certificates were distributed by Mayor Ashok Tiwari and District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam, along with Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal to the winning players of athletics and kabaddi.

Settlement of akhadas begins

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

MAHA KUMBH

In preparation for Maha Kumbh 2025, the grandest gathering of the Sanatan tradition in Prayagraj, the Kumbh area is abuzz with the increasing presence of saints. The process of settling the akhadas, a centerpiece of public faith and devotion, has officially commenced. Acting on Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's directive, the Kumbh Mela administration has initiated land allocation for setting up akhada camps, with the full consent of the saints. This marks the first step towards Chief Minister Yogi's vision of hosting a magnificent Maha Kumbh. Land allocation for Sanyasi and Udasin akhadas began on Monday, overseen by the Kumbh Mela administration. Additional Kumbh Mela Officer Vivek Chaturvedi confirmed that land was allotted to 10 akhadas on the first day, ensuring a harmonious process. Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad president Mahant Ravindra Puri expressed satisfaction, stating that after the ini-

On the first day on Monday, land was allocated to 10 akhadas, with the remaining three akhadas set to receive their plots on Tuesday.

tial land allocation, rituals such as bhoomi puja will pave the way for completing other preparations with administrative support. With unanimous consent for land allocation, the Kumbh Mela administration, accompanied by saints from various akhadas, visited the Akhada Sector within the Kumbh Mela Area. Here, the designated land for each akhada's camp was demarcated by the administration. The akhadas marked their territories on the levelled ground, completing the traditional rituals. Mahant Ravindra Puri said, "With the land demarcation complete, the akhadas will now conduct all their activities and traditions from their designat-

ed plots." Mahant Jamuna Puri, secretary of Shri Panchayati Akhada Maha Nirvani, expressed satisfaction, noting that the land allocation followed the established traditions of the Kumbh, and the settlement process will now proceed as planned. The Mela administration had scheduled land allocation for November 18 and 19. A coordination meeting was held on Monday at the headquarters of Shri Panchayati Akhada Bada Udasin Nirvana, finalising the land allotment. After the meeting, Mahant Ravindra Puri emphasised unity among the 13 akhadas, stating, "This is our fair, and our chief minister is Yogi Ji. Wherever land is allocated, we will gladly accept it." He also confirmed that the administration had addressed all concerns, including requests for increased land and facilities. On the first day, land was successfully allocated to 10 akhadas, with the remaining three Vaishnav akhadas set to receive their plots on November 19.

Germany's expanding need for multilingual talent highlighted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

An engaging international workshop titled 'Exploring Language-Oriented Job Opportunities in Germany' was held on Monday to provide insights into the growing demand for language professionals in Germany. Organised by Dr Jyoti Sharma from the Department of German, Faculty of Arts, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), the event attracted students of various academic levels aspiring to work in a multicultural and linguistically diverse environment. The workshop was inaugurated by Dr Jyoti Sharma (Assistant Professor of the German Studies Department) who elaborated on the significance of the workshop. Prof Maya Shankar Pandey, Dean, Faculty of Arts, further illustrated the intricacies of German values and how this would provide an amazing chance for the students. The guest speaker Dr Josef Neumair (Franchisee of

McDonald's Germany LCC) highlighted Germany's expanding need for multilingual talent in sectors like tertiary sector, education, and corporate communication. With Germany being a global economic powerhouse, participants were informed of the critical role language skills play in fostering business relationships and cultural exchange. The sessions included discussions on building careers as trained and untrained workers, and carefully unraveled the pros and cons of working in Germany. Special emphasis was placed on learning German and leveraging it to enhance employability. Panelists, which included Dean of Arts Faculty Prof Maya Shankar Pandey, Deputy Registrar Dr Ranjit Sandilya, Head of the German Department Prof MK Natraj, also shared insightful tips on navigating the German job market, including cultural adaptability and the work culture.

Physiotherapy unit starts at CHC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI



MLA T Ram distributing Ayushman card to an elderly at CHC Chhapur in Varanasi on Monday.

Physiotherapy unit has been started by expanding the facilities provided to the patients at Community Health Centre (CHC) Chhapur here on Monday. State-of-the-art machines have been installed in the physiotherapy unit which was inaugurated by Ajgara MLA T Ram. On the occasion, a mega health camp was also organised under Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana at CHC Chhapur, in which Ayushman cards of people above 70 years of age were made. The MLA said that thousands of people of the area will get benefit from this physiotherapy unit. "Now patients will get relief from bone pain in the hospital itself and Ayushman card will empower the elderly. Now the elderly will not feel the need for anyone's support for the treatment of diseases," T Ram said. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said patients will get the benefit of physiotherapy centre under the supervi-

sion of CHC Superintendent Dr RB Yadav. "With this arrangement, now patients will not have to wander here and there. With the start of this facility of physiotherapy unit in CHC, people of Chhapur and Harhua blocks will not have to go to private physiotherapy centres and this will give patients timely treatment as well as financial benefit," he said. CHC Superintendent Dr RB Yadav said other equipment used in the physiotherapy unit is also being ordered. "For the first time in the district, so many modern machines have come to CHC for physiotherapy which will help thousands of people of the area get relief from bone pains through various types of exercises for muscles to be explained by the physiotherapists," he added. On the occasion, apart from regional dignitaries and doctors, health education officer Dr Shikha Srivastava and other employees were also present.

Convention on clean and inclusive urban transport systems today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Climate Agenda will host the first Regional Convention on Clean and Inclusive Urban Transport Systems in a hotel near Bhelupur here on Tuesday. The convention will focus on fostering equity and inclusivity in sustainable mobility solutions and aims to highlight the challenges faced by marginalised groups, such as women, children, and the elderly, while promoting their active participation in shaping urban transport systems that cater to their needs. "The convention seeks to align with and support existing government initiatives like the Smart Cities Mission and FAME. By identifying unique regional challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and informal transit systems, the event aims to offer actionable solutions tailored to these states. With a focus on electrifying public transport fleets, the convention will present a roadmap to accelerate adoption and set the foundation for future collaborations, ensuring that the region contributes significantly to India's climate goals while fostering sustainable urban growth" said founding director Ekta Shekhar. She said India's policy and programmes for decarbonising its cities will have a significant impact on global greenhouse gas emissions. According to a 2020 report by Climate Action Tracker: Decarbonising the Indian Transport Sector Pathways and Policies, India's transport sector is responsible for 13.5 per cent of the country's energy-related CO2 emissions, with road transport accounting for 90 per cent of the sector's final energy consumption, she said. She said the Indo-Gangetic Plain (IGP) encompassing Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand, remains one of India's most polluted and climate-vulnerable regions. "Decarbonising urban mobility here is crucial for addressing the dual crises of air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions", she said, adding that in this context the convention will also be an opportunity to launch first-of-its-kind collaborative platform aimed at knowledge-sharing, demand generation and joint action in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand in promoting the electrification of public transport, fostering collaboration across sectors and supporting a transition to cleaner, more sustainable urban mobility solutions. The convention will be attended by research scholars, academicians, policy makers, technical and subject experts, representatives from development agencies and grassroots civil society organisations. With India on path to become one of the major global economies, its energy consumption is also projected to increase exponentially. Decarbonising transportation and reversing the current trend of GHG emissions will require a transformative approach.

Man dies due to head injury after falling on floor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A mason died of head injury after falling on the floor in his house in the Panki police station area. His kin alleged that he died after being thrashed by his son when the former refused to give him money for consuming liquor. According to a report received here, Ram Kishan (55), a resident of Mannipurwa, Panki, was a mason and lived with wife Ramdulari and two sons — Sriram and Neeraj. Neeraj was married to Shivani six months ago. Sriram said late on Saturday night Neeraj returned home and demanded money from father for consuming liquor. When Ram Kishan refused, he had an argument with his father. Meanwhile, Neeraj allegedly thrashed his father who fell unconscious on the floor and sustained serious head injury. Ram Kishan was immediately taken to the LLR (Hallet) hospital where he succumbed to his injury during treatment late on Sunday night. His kin said there was a marriage ceremony in Shivani's family and Neeraj was demanding money from father for going to his in-laws' place. In the

autopsy report, it was confirmed that Ram Kishan died of head injury. Station House Officer (SHO) Manvendra Singh said he had not received any complaint so far. On receipt of complaint, further action will be initiated in the matter after a probe. On the other hand, a bike-borne mason was killed on being knocked by a speeding dumper in Goriaklan (Garhi) village under Behta Mujawar police area of Unnao on Monday morning. The irate mob tried to create hurdles in sending the body for an autopsy but were later pacified by the police. Besides, police have lodged a first information report (FIR) against the dumper driver and started a probe in the matter. Meanwhile a teenaged girl was found hanging under mysterious circumstances in her house in Unnao late on Sunday night. She was found hanging from the iron grill of the roof. Police sent the body for autopsy after investigation. Her kin could not divulge the cause of her death. Inspector Avaneesh Singh said the body had been sent for an autopsy. On receipt of autopsy report, further action will be initiated in the mat-

ter, he said. **ARRESTED:** The Collectorganj police on Monday arrested three criminals who had looted a woman's chain about a week ago. Police have recovered the broken chain and a mobile phone from them. It may be recalled that on November 9, Vineeta Devi wife of Mahendra Kumar Sharma of Kachhiyana was robbed of her chain. Mahendra had lodged a first information report (FIR) at the Collectorganj police station on November 10 against unidentified miscreants in this connection. Addressing mediapersons, DCP (East) Shrawan Kumar Singh said ACP Collectorganj Mohsin Khan and his team were deputed to workout the crime. With the help of electronic and human surveillance, police identified the robbers and arrested them. They were identified as Rehman alias Lala, Akash Singh alias Sonu and Samad Khan alias Chand of Kashiram Colony, Panki. Police recovered the looted chain in three pieces and a mobile phone from the accused. ACP Mohsin Khan said the accused had sold the chain in pieces to jewellers in Beconganj and Panki areas. Police recovered the chain from these jewellers.

Chaturvedi elected IDA UP president

Varanasi (PNS): The three-day conference of the 46th Indian Dental Association (IDA) Uttar Pradesh concluded in Noida on Sunday in which lectures of many famous dentists of the country and dental clinical courses were organised. On the occasion, the general meeting of the members of the IDA of UP was also held and Prof TP Chaturvedi of Dental Faculty, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) was unanimously elected as the president of UP branch (tenure from November 2024 to November 2025). Prof Chaturvedi has 28 years of academic experience and he has been the Dean of the Faculty of Dental Science IMS-BHU from 2011 to 2014. **ISMSCON:** The 42nd Annual Conference of the Indian Society for Medical Statistics (ISMSCON- 2024) will be held from November 21 to 23 at the Department of Statistics, Institute of Science, BHU. The conference will bring together around 200 participants, including researchers, professionals, and academics in the field of medical statistics. The event will feature a variety of engaging sessions, including a keynote address, symposia, plenary sessions and paper/poster presentations covering a wide range of topics in medical statistics.

Health workers trained in entomological surveillance



Entomological training workshop being held in Varanasi on Monday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A divisional level one-day Entomological Surveillance Training Workshop was organised on Monday at the Divisional Additional director's office located at DDU Government Hospital, Pandeypur. The Health department employees of all the districts of Varanasi division, Varanasi, Chandauli, Ghazipur and Jaunpur participated in it. Regional entomologist and biologist Dr Amit Kumar Singh gave training under the leadership of Divisional Additional Director (Medical Health and Family Welfare) Dr MP Singh. During this period, 50 health workers, including malaria inspectors, filaria inspectors, health supervisors, basic health workers of all the four districts of the division were given training for entomological surveillance under the Communicable Disease Control Programme. District Malaria Officer (DMO) Sharat Chand Pandey said diseases that spread due to the bites of mosquitoes, flies and fleas etc are called vector-borne diseases. These vectors carry with them pathogens like bacteria, viruses and parasites due to which a person falls prey to diseases. Common examples of these diseases include malaria, dengue, Zika virus and chikungunya etc. Such diseases cause high fever. The affected person also complains of pain in the body, muscles and joints. Frequent headaches, feeling tired or weak is also a common symptom of vector-borne disease. In some cases, respiratory symptoms like cough and difficulty in breathing can also be seen, he added. Regional entomologist Dr Amit Kumar Singh said the objective of this training was to complete the preparations for activities and transmission period for vector-borne larva elimination and to take effective action in relation to it. In the training, all districts were also instructed to form a team for vector surveillance. Dr Amit gave detailed information about the causes, identification, symptoms, investigation, treatment and prevention of all vector-borne diseases such as dengue, malaria, filariasis, kala-azar, etc. He said in view of the current transmission period of mosquito-borne diseases compared to last year, it is necessary to carry out entomological surveillance work such as density of mosquitoes and information and screening of patients suffering from fever in the affected areas (hotspot zones) of dengue, malaria, filariasis, etc in the district.

Students made aware of global environmental pollution



The winners of poster competition at MMV on Monday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A poster competition was organised under the joint aegis of the Department of Sociology, Environment Committee and Mission Shakti of Mahila Maha Vidyalaya (MMV), Kidwai Nagar, on Monday. The topic of the competition was environmental protection. The BA and MA students participated enthusias-

tically in it. On the occasion the Head of the Department of Sociology, Dr Preeti Dwivedi, made the students aware of global environmental pollution and gave information about various measures of environmental protection. Professor Vandana Sharma, Head of the Department of Painting and Professor Manish Shukla of the Department of Economics were present as judges. Nisha got the first prize as the winner of the poster competition, Riya Singh was the second prize winner while third and consolation prizes went to Prachi Vishwakarma and Najma and Ashi Arya. Under the Mission Shakti, the topic of anti-ragging was also discussed. Mission Shakti in charge Dr Saba Yunus told the students that ragging in college is a major crime. Therefore, it is the duty of all students to contribute in keeping the college free from ragging and behave in a friendly manner with classmates and juniors. Dr Rashmi Singh, Vandani Sharma, Dr Akanksha made a special con-

tribution in making the programme successful. **BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIP:** Utpreksha achieved the hat-trick of medals with her astounding performance in the First Cosco Badminton Championship concluded here at the Ragendra Swarup Sports Academy on Sunday. In the U-11 category, Utpreksha won the medals in singles, girls' doubles and mixed doubles events. In the singles (boys) category, Rushank Mehrotra beat Jainil, 30-22, while in girls' category, Utpreksha defeated Anika, 30-25, to emerge champion. Organising Secretary Ashutosh Satyam Jha said around 200 shuttlers took part in the championship. Chief guest Atul Mehra (Chairman, Tasty Dairy Specialities Limited) along with Arpit Mehra, Dr Dharendra Singh, Mukesh Paliwal, Vijay Srivastava, Dr Deepak Agarwal, Ruchi Srivastava, Devika Mehra, Amit Khattri, Amit Srivastava, DP Singh, Maheep Saxena, Saurabh Srivastava, Arun Dubey, Keshav Dwivedi, Kamlesh

Yadav and Kanishk Sharma distributed the prizes. **GIRDHARI EXCELS:** Girdhari Agarwal did the city proud by excelling in the field of para-shooting. He won bronze medals in the 5th zonal para shooting championship and national para shooting championship 2024 held in Pune. The championships were organised by the Paralympics Committee of India. Girdhari had an opportunity to participate with world level players, including Avani Lekhara and Mona Agarwal, who had won medals in Paralympics Paris 2024. He attributes his success to the hardwork, discipline and the unwavering family support. He said, "this is a great privilege for me that I represented the state and city in the national championship. It was very inspiring to play with ace shooters like Avani and Mona". His success serves as an inspiration for the youths of state proving that it can be achieved in any field with devotion and hard work. He is now planning to improve his performance in the ensuing competitions.

BJP's 'chota popat' jibe at Rahul after he mocks PM Modi's slogan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

After Rahul Gandhi's swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Ek hai toh safe hai' slogan, the BJP hit back at the Congress leader on Monday, calling him "chota popat" which it claimed was coined by Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray to mock him. The party also slammed Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge over his "poisonous snakes should be killed" barb, saying it shows the party's Emergency mindset which likens rivals to snakes and incites violence against them. Earlier in the day, claiming a link between the BJP's slogan and the Dharavi redevelopment project being given to the Adani Group, Rahul Gandhi pulled out two posters from a safe he had brought to his press conference in Mumbai -- one featuring a picture of industrialist Gautam Adani and



Prime Minister Modi along with the caption "Ek hai toh safe hai" and another showing a map of the project. "It was a very low-level press conference. Bringing a safe and creating drama around it, holding of this kind of press conference by the so-called top leader of the so-called national party does not suit Rahul Gandhi and the Congress," BJP MP and national spokesperson Sambit Patra said reacting to Rahul Gandhi's jibe.

"Today I say this from this platform and in Rahul Gandhi's language that 'Chota popat ne kiya hei Congress ko chaupa' (he has ruined the Congress). His name is Rahul Gandhi," the BJP leader said. "I saw an interview of Bal Thackeray where he referred to Rahul Gandhi as chota popat. From today onwards, Rahul Gandhi's name is going to be 'chota popat'. This name will now be there on every child's lips in Maharashtra," he said.

The BJP also criticised Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge. Addressing a rally in Sangli on the penultimate day before the campaigning for the Maharashtra assembly polls concluded, Kharge used the "killing the poisonous snake" analogy in his speech. "If there is anything which is politically the most dangerous in India is the BJP and RSS. They are like poison. If a snake bites, the person (who is bitten) dies. Such a poisonous snake should be killed," said Kharge. Flaying Kharge over his remarks, Patra said, "The BJP condemns it". "It is the mindset of Emergency because of which you liken your rivals with snakes and incite violence by calling for killing them," he said, asserting that Rahul Gandhi and the Congress will get a befitting reply from people on November 23, when election results in Maharashtra and Jharkhand assembly polls will be declared.

Farmers' bodies announce Delhi march on December 6 to press Centre to accept their demands

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha on Monday announced that farmers will march towards Delhi on December six to press the Centre to accept their various demands, including a legal guarantee of MSP for crops. The decision was taken at a meeting of farmer leaders in Chandigarh. The protesting farmers have been camping at Shambhu and Khanauri border points between Punjab and Haryana since February 13, when their 'Delhi Chalo' march, spearheaded by the SKM (Non-Political) and the KMM, was stopped by security forces. Addressing the media in Chandigarh, KMM leader Sarwan Singh Pandher said after a long wait, they have decided to head towards Delhi. "We will move towards Delhi on December 6," he said. Pandher charged the Centre with not holding any talks with the farmers to discuss



their demands. "We have been left with no option. We waited peacefully for the government (to reach out) for nine months. But now we will head towards Delhi," he added. The farmers will move towards the national capital in batches from the Shambhu border. Tejevir Singh of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Shaheed Bhagat Singh) said they have been camping at the two border

points for 280 days and the Centre has not held any talks with them since February 18. Last week, the farmers announced that they would intensify their agitation and start a fast unto death from November 26. Farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal will observe the fast. Besides a legal guarantee of minimum support price (MSP) for crops, the farmers

are demanding a farm debt waiver, pension for farmers and farm labourers, no hike in electricity tariff, withdrawal of police cases and "justice" for the victims of the 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence, reinstatement of the Land Acquisition Act, 2013, and compensation to the families of the farmers who died during a previous agitation in 2020-21.

UK is committed to foster deeper cooperation with India: British Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The UK is committed to foster deeper cooperation with India as it is a "vital" partner and one of the fastest growing economies in the world, British Minister for Indo-Pacific Catherine West said on Monday as she embarked on a two-day visit to the country. West will continue to unlock the full potential of the UK-India partnership and drive forward greater growth for both countries building upon the ambitions set out by Foreign Secretary David Lammy during his visit to New Delhi in July, a British government readout said. She will also reiterate that the UK remains committed to negotiating a mutually beneficial free trade agreement and bilateral investment treaty, it added. "I am delighted to be visiting India for the first time as Minister for the Indo-Pacific," West said. "As one of the fastest growing economies in the



world, India is a vital partner," she said. Minister West's visit will include a meeting at the Ministry of External Affairs where she will reinforce the UK's commitment to a stronger partnership and the importance of the enduring links between people of the two nations, the readout noted. The two sides are expected to review the overall situation in the Indo-Pacific and explore ways to bolster cooperation in the region during West's visit to India. During an education roundtable at the British Council, the Minister will learn more about the unique "living bridge" between the UK and India, representing the 1.7 million people in the UK with Indian heritage and connecting our two countries, it said. The British minister is also scheduled to visit the Jama Masjid where she will learn about its history and architecture, it said. West's visit to New Delhi comes nearly four months after India and the UK signed a mega technology security initiative that sets out a bold new approach for collaboration in a range of "priority" sectors including telecom, critical minerals, semiconductors and artificial intelligence. The initiative was signed during Lammy's trip in July. In 2021, India and the UK adopted the 10-year roadmap to expand ties in the key areas of trade and economy, defence and security, climate change and people-to-people connections among others. West's visit to India follows a two-day trip to Bangladesh, where she reaffirmed UK support for the interim government's work to build a more prosperous and democratic future for the country.

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BJP, Congress seek seven days from EC to respond to poll code violation complaints

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress and the BJP have sought seven days from the Election Commission (EC) to respond to poll code violation complaints filed by them against each other in Jharkhand and Maharashtra, sources said Monday. In the wake of the BJP and the Congress lodging complaints against each other with the EC for poll code violations, the election panel on Saturday had asked the presidents of the two parties to comment on the charges levelled against their leaders. The EC wrote separate letters to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president J P Nadda and Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, asking them to comment on the complaint of the other. The Commission exchanged the complaints between the two parties while seeking their responses. The EC has sought formal responses from both the party



presidents by 1 pm on Monday (November 18). Now the two parties have sought from the EC seven more days to send their respective responses. While the Congress had accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah of violating the poll code, the BJP had lodged complaint against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. While seeking their com-

ments, the poll panel had reminded them of the Commission's earlier advisory to them during the Lok Sabha election to keep star campaigners and leaders under check so that public decorum is not flouted and the model code is followed in its letter and spirit during campaigning. Top leaders of the two parties are campaigning in Jharkhand and Maharashtra for the ongoing Assembly polls.

SC hold order to President's Secretary on Rajoana mercy plea

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday put on hold its order directing President Droupadi Murmu's Secretary to place before her the mercy petition of death row convict Balwant Singh Rajoana, convicted in the 1995 assassination case of then Punjab chief minister Beant Singh, for consideration. After the order was passed in the morning, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta urged that it should not be given effect as there are "sensitivities" involved in the issue and that it be heard on Friday. Mehta told the bench that the file is with the Home Ministry and not the President. The bench agreed to the SG's request and posted the matter for hearing on Monday. Earlier in the day, a bench of Justices BR Gavi, PK Mishra and KV Viswanathan requested the President to consider the plea within two weeks. "In spite of the matter being specifically kept today none appeared for Union



of India. The bench assembled only for this case," the bench said, by holding the earlier order directing Secretary to take a decision by President in two weeks. The then Punjab Chief Minister and 16 others were killed in a blast at the entrance of the Civil Secretariat in Chandigarh on August 31, 1995. A special court sentenced Rajoana to death in July 2007. Rajoana has said that a mercy petition under Article 72 of the Constitution was moved by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) on his behalf in March 2012. On May 3 last year, the SC had refused to commute his death sentence and said the competent authority could deal with his mercy plea.

RSS urges Govt to resolve Manipur conflict 'sincerely'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has condemned the latest violence in Manipur and demanded the government, both at the Centre and the state, that they "sincerely" resolve the conflict. "It is unfortunate that 19 months old violence in Manipur starting from May 3, 2023 has remained unresolved. Due to the ongoing violence, innocent people have immensely suffered," the Manipur unit of the RSS said in a statement on Sunday. The RSS Manipur 'prant' strongly condemns the "inhuman, brutal and merciless acts of killing of women and children," the statement said. "The act is cowardly and is against the principles of humanity and co-existence," it said, adding, "The central and state government should sincerely resolve the ongoing conflict at the earliest." The English version of the statement, originally issued in Manipuri, was released by the Manipur unit of the Vishva Samvad Kendra, the RSS' media wing, on Facebook. The Manipur unit of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the RSS' youth wing, also condemned the violence and said both the Centre and the state government have "failed to ensure the safety and normalcy" in the state. "The ongoing violence in Manipur since May 3, 2023 has plummeted to unprecedented depths with the heinous abduction and murder of six innocent civilians, including three women and three children, among them a seven-months-



old infant," it said in a statement on Monday. "The ABVP Manipur vehemently condemns the brutal killings of the six abducted individuals, the burning of houses by armed militants, attacks on police and CRPF personnel in Ziribam," it added. "The RSS youth wing further said the destruction of properties belonging to democratically elected leaders by "enraged mobs" was deeply disturbing. "We believe timely intervention could have saved the six lives lost. The concerned authorities have failed in their duties, and both state and central governments have failed to ensure the safety and normalcy in Manipur," it said. "The ABVP Manipur demands immediate action for restoration of peace and order, protection for innocent civilians and accountability for the failed response," it added. The RSS affiliate called for "patience and peace" as it appealed to the people to stand together against violence and work towards building "a harmonious Manipur." "The ABVP Manipur stands in solidarity with the affected families and demands swift action to prevent further unrest," it added.

Delhi HC seeks CBI's stand on Chidambaram's plea in INX media case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday sought the stand of the CBI on pleas by former Union Minister P Chidambaram and his son Karti Chidambaram seeking to defer arguments on framing of charges in the INX media case. Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri issued notice to the investigating agency on the petitions and said "let response be filed". The Congress leaders argued that the arguments on framing of charges ought not to commence before the trial court as the investigation was still pending. CBI's counsel said there was sufficient material to show

"demand of bribe" and framing of charges should not be stopped on account of any pending investigation. The CBI had registered its case on May 15, 2017, alleging irregularities in a Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) clearance granted to the INX Media group for receiving overseas funds of Rs 305 crore in 2007 during P Chidambaram's tenure as Finance Minister. The accused and bribe give Indrani Mukerjee had already confessed that she had paid bribe to Karti to save from Income Tax notice for illegally brining FDI in the TV channel. She is already turned as Approver in the case. In the pleas before the high court, Chidambaram and Karti,



who were represented by senior advocate Sidharth Luthra and advocate Akshat Gupta, have assailed a trial court order refusing to defer the arguments of charge. Luthra said the chargesheet filed by the CBI in the case was incomplete and the accused persons were

yet to be given access to all the material collected by the agency as probe on certain aspects was going on. "You have been doing investigation since 2017. If you choose to be lackadaisical, should I proceed to argue on charge? It can't be an unfair battle," he

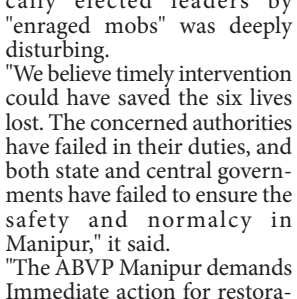
said. Karti, in his plea, said the necessity of further investigation being concluded before consideration of charge impacts his right to fair trial under Article 21 of the Constitution. "The Ld. Special Judge failed to appreciate that the alleged offence pertains to a period of 2007-08, for which, the said FIR was registered by the CBI on 15.05.2017. Thereafter, the chargesheet in relation to the said FIR was filed on 17.10.2019, after investigation for over 2.5 years," the plea stated. It said more than 17 years have lapsed since the period of the alleged offence and about seven years have lapsed since the commencement of investigation. Yet further investigation remains pending even as on

date, it said. "The Ld. Special Judge failed to appreciate that further investigation cannot be a never ending or an endless exercise as it has the effect of delaying the proceedings and, thereby, violating the right to fair and speedy trial, which includes the right to fair and speedy investigation, under Article 21 of the Constitution," added the plea. Chidambaram was arrested by the CBI in the INX Media corruption case on August 21, 2019. On October 16 that year, the ED also arrested him in a related money laundering case. Karti was arrested by the CBI in February 2018 and he was granted bail in March 2018 in the INX Media corruption case.

CJI Khanna recuses himself from hearing pleas in case related to illegal felling of trees in Delhi Ridge area

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna on Monday recused himself from hearing pleas related to the case on illegal felling of several hundred trees in the Delhi Ridge area. Earlier, a bench headed by the then CJI DY Chandrachud, since retired, had sought a personal affidavit of Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena in the case which had also sought initiation of contempt proceedings against certain DDA officials. The CJI, who was sitting on the bench with Justice Sanjay Kumar, said, "One thing I would like to point out that when I was the NALSA chairman, I had gone to Patna and with Delhi LG had toured jails there. So, it will not be appro-



priate for me to hear the plea...". The bench ordered the listing of the pleas before a bench of which the CJI is not part in the week commencing November 27. A lawyer pointed out that there were orders passed by two other benches. "We know," the CJI responded. On November 7, the top court had asked the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) about the measures undertaken to restore the

Delhi Ridge area, where several hundred trees were allegedly felled illegally, and sought the extent of plantation done by the authorities. The bench had said it would introduce a monitoring system to ensure planted trees were surviving. It had wondered if any independent mechanism was in place to ascertain the number of trees planted. The bench had asked the DDA counsel and the petitioner to inform it about the status of trees felled, consequential actions and the monitoring mechanism. However, the then CJI-led bench did not pass any order on November 8, the last working day of Justice Chandrachud. The ridge is an extension of Aravalli Hill range in Delhi and is a rocky, hilly and forested area.



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ICG to host largest National Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise at Kochi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) will host the largest National Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX-24) ever held alongside the 22nd National Maritime Search and Rescue (NMSAR) Board Meeting at Kochi, Kerala for two days starting November 28, ICG said here on Monday. Giving details, officials said here this prestigious event themed "Enhancing SAR Capabilities Through Regional Collaboration," is set to redefine maritime safety standard across the region and beyond. The two-day event will feature largest ever real-time simulations aimed at honing the skills required for effective Search and Rescue (SAR) operations, collaborative efforts among regional and international mar-



itime stakeholders. This gathering of maritime expertise will not only enhance SAR capabilities but also strengthen SAR linkages with the participation of more than 40 international observers from partner nations, the event will underscore the essentials of global cooperation in safeguarding lives at sea and advancing maritime security standards. The exercise highlights India's proactive stance in fostering

stronger regional coordination for maritime safety. This initiative demonstrates India's commitment to not only bolstering its own SAR capabilities but also contributing to global maritime safety standards. The event will showcase India's leadership in enhancing operational readiness and establishing stronger regional coordination in maritime safety. The workshop will serve as a crucial platform for sharing best practices and strengthening ties with friendly nations. This increased engagement in international cooperation is pivotal for addressing the complexities of modern maritime challenges. The event's emphasis on regional collaboration reflects India's strategic approach to ensuring comprehensive maritime security and operational excellence.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

G20: Delhi to Rio

It is yet another crucial opportunity for world leaders to bridge divides and collaborate on creating a better future

Prime Minister is in Rio de Janeiro to attend the G20 Summit, which is one of the biggest platforms for the world leaders to make collective decisions for the betterment of the world and address the issues confronting the humanity. The 19th G20 Summit brings together world leaders to address some of the most pressing global challenges. Hosted by Brazil, this year's Summit builds on India's successful presidency, which left a lasting impact by inducting the African Union as a permanent member and fostering consensus on divisive issues such as the Ukraine conflict. The summit will feature prominent leaders, including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping. In Brazil, Modi attends the summit as a member of the G20 Troika, alongside Brazil and South Africa, reflecting India's continued influence in shaping global discourse. The summit's agenda is wide-ranging, reflecting the multifaceted challenges the world faces today. Economic recovery remains a critical priority as nations grapple with the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and global geopolitical tensions. Issues such as inflation, debt crises and financing for sustainable development are likely to dominate discussions. Simultaneously, climate action will take centre stage, with a focus on enhancing climate financing, accelerating the transition to renewable energy, and achieving the commitments of the Paris Agreement. The geopolitical landscape, particularly the ongoing Ukraine conflict is another focal point. While the issue remains divisive, leaders will seek to find common ground on mitigating its impacts on global food and energy security. The summit is also likely to explore the role of technology in bridging development gaps, emphasising responsible use of artificial intelligence and fostering digital cooperation. For India, the summit is an opportunity to reinforce its leadership on the global stage. As part of the G20 Troika, Modi brings India's vision of "One Earth, One Family, One Future" to the table, advocating for greater inclusivity and collaboration. His interactions with leaders such as Joe Biden and Xi Jinping on sidelines are expected to address key issues like trade, defence partnerships and technology sharing, furthering India's bilateral and multilateral engagements. India's presidency last year emphasised the importance of representing the Global South, a theme that Brazil is expected to continue. This focus on equitable development resonates with nations across Africa, Asia and Latin America, underscoring the need for a more balanced global governance system. For India and Prime Minister Modi, it is a moment to showcase the nation's growing influence and commitment to global solutions, setting the tone for the future of multilateral cooperation. This is one of the big opportunities to bring about meaningful change, hope it is not wasted.



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PICTALK



Riders take part in the MRF MOGRIP Supercross Championship 2024, in Bengaluru

New tentacles of international terrorism



SUDHIR HINDWAN

Proactive leadership is crucial for implementing strategic plans, while swift judicial reforms are needed to handle terrorism cases more effectively

The recent wave of terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, following the formation of a new state government, has reignited concerns over transnational terrorism. These incidents, marked by escalating violence in vulnerable areas, highlight a disturbing evolution in militant strategies. This resurgence is rooted in multiple factors, each revealing the complexities of the situation.

Firstly, the attacks aim to signal that despite the abrogation of Article 370 and the central government's efforts to stabilise the region, Jammu and Kashmir remain unstable. Secondly, Jammu's expansive forested terrains have become a haven for militants, offering natural cover for guerrilla warfare and hindering security forces. Thirdly, the improved law and order in Kashmir has shifted insurgent focus to Jammu, where vulnerabilities are being exploited. Fourthly, while terrorist activities were temporarily subdued, the resurgence of militancy underscores the persistence of deep-rooted threats.

Lastly, despite the successful Assembly elections and the formation of Omar Abdullah's government, the region continues to grapple with relentless attacks. The situation in Jammu and Kashmir resonates with broader developments in the West Asia. Recent events, such as the targeting of an Israeli ship by Iran-backed Houthi groups in the Red Sea and subsequent retaliatory strikes by Israel, the UK and the US on Houthi positions in Yemen, have heightened regional tensions. The involvement of Hamas and Hezbollah in supporting the Houthis underscores a dangerous convergence of terrorist alliances. The killing of prominent figures like IRGC General Sayyed Razi Mousavi and Hamas Deputy Leader Saleh-al-Arouri has added to the volatility, while Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi's aggressive strategies have intensified attacks.

Adding to these concerns are the January 3, 2024, twin blasts in Karman, southern Iran, which left over 85 dead and hundreds injured. This violence has spread



to Lebanon and Syria, where terror networks have previously used locations like Sana, Yemen, as bases for planting explosives in international airports. These incidents reveal two critical trends: the increasing potential for transnational terrorism and the extension of terror operations into global trade routes and economies. Modern terrorist networks demonstrate an unsettling capacity for precision in choosing targets and timings.

The persistence of global terrorism is not new. Tragic events, from the Oklahoma City bombing that claimed over 200 lives to the Tokyo subway gas attack, which killed 12 and hospitalised thousands, reveal its devastating history. Other instances, such as the long-running insurgency of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, have inflicted severe casualties and losses. Nations worldwide—be it Russia, Spain, the UK, Italy, Israel, or China—face the unrelenting specter of terrorist violence.

Social inequities, global economic disparities and historical grievances contribute to the conditions that foster extremism. The post-Cold War global order, shaped by power dynamics of major nations, has exacerbated these tensions. For instance, the power network established by the US and its allies in West Asia has sparked resistance in



THE PERSISTENCE OF GLOBAL TERRORISM IS NOT NEW. TRAGIC EVENTS, FROM THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING THAT CLAIMED OVER 200 LIVES TO THE TOKYO SUBWAY GAS ATTACK, WHICH KILLED 12 AND HOSPITALISED THOUSANDS, REVEAL ITS DEVASTATING HISTORY

many regions, deepening conflicts and animosities. In an interconnected world, socio-economic conditions in one region influence those in another, creating a fertile ground for transnational grievances. The rapid dissemination of advanced weaponry and transportation networks has further facilitated the expansion of terrorist activities. Suicide squads and other modern militant tactics have left security apparatuses reeling. It is imperative to reject narratives that romanticise terrorists as freedom fighters and foster cooperation between local communities and law enforcement to dismantle these networks.

A diversified approach, integrating technical expertise and on-the-ground insights, is essential. Specialised training programmes for security personnel to anticipate and respond to emerging threats are crucial. Countering terrorism requires a multifaceted approach, beginning with detailed analysis of major incidents to formulate actionable strategies. Advanced communication networks must be established to intercept terrorist communications effectively, while enhanced intelligence gathering, supported by strengthened local sources, is essential for generating actionable insights. Investment in cutting-edge technology for maintaining secrecy and secu-

ity, along with training specialists in counter-terrorism tactics, is vital to address evolving threats. Dedicated think tanks should be created to develop innovative solutions, and comprehensive training programs for police, intelligence, and military personnel must be prioritised. Proactive leadership among security officials is crucial for implementing strategic plans, while swift judicial reforms are needed to handle terrorism cases more effectively.

These measures must be accompanied by the political will to enforce them effectively. Public awareness and grassroots support play pivotal roles in countering terrorism. Localised insights should inform security measures to ensure they are contextually appropriate and effective. Ultimately, combating terrorism requires a coordinated global effort.

Nations must share intelligence, align strategies, and foster international cooperation to address this pervasive menace. Time is of the essence, as modern terrorists continuously adapt their tactics. Without addressing the underlying socio-political and economic factors that nurture terrorism, efforts will only provide superficial relief.

(Author, a Bharat Gaurav Award recipient, is a professor, HOD, and expert on strategic affairs; views are personal)

Turning missteps and misjudgments into growth

Our capacity for introspection determines the kind of individuals we become. Our personal blunders and societal faux pas can shape us

I believe that we are a sum total of experiences. While most are pleasant, a few leave us red-faced at the very best. It is for us to make the choice to introspect and evolve into a better person. My wife and I gingerly stepped out of the confines of our home after the restrictions imposed during the difficult COVID times had been relatively relaxed.

We thought we had crossed the hurdle. Our optimism was misplaced. We observed many vigilantes hanging out on their balconies to catch the hapless walkers at any time of the day or night and call the PCR. The police would necessarily have to come since a complaint had been raised and then go back, irritated at the complainant. We were still terrified enough to wear a mask. However, a few had to be nudged.

My wife would good-naturedly point at her mask as a request to those not wearing one. We encountered a young lady walking with no mask, not even one dangling around her ears. The sensibilities of my wife aroused, she stopped the lady and requested her to comply with the regulations.



My wife was rudely brushed aside. The lady stopped us during the next round, to let us know that she was a doctor who spent long hours in the hospital with a mask on, and her lungs needed fresh air, uninterrupted by a mask. Unaware of a different set of rules for medical professionals, I inquired from a few doctor friends. They were unequivocal in their judgement, the lady in question is an idiot. We have all been guilty of an occasional faux pas at some time or the other. I attended a literature festival at a university, a few days before the lockdown, to speak about my book.

I made a point that communication amongst people should never stop, even if it means communicating on

social media, be it Facebook, Instagram or Tinder. The audience erupted in loud laughter and I preened with pride at my oratory skills. My jubilation was short-lived. I found out over the net during the train back that Tinder was a dating platform. I may choose to call this a blunder, but the simple fact is that it was stupid of me to speak of something about which I did not know.

This foot-in-the-mouth syndrome is nothing new, particularly amongst a certain section of society, who are supposed to be beacons of the good and should be upholding values. A minister in one of the states defended the decision of a medical college to ask the female candidates to declare their virginity in the

admission form because, "Virgin, as per the dictionary, means an unmarried and pure girl. So, all these words are not objectionable."

A senior leader observed that electricity must be provided in all villages so that people spend more time watching television than procreating. Another leader mentioned that crimes against women are happening in urban India and not in the villages since we are losing our culture in the cities. The anecdotes narrated above may appear disjointed at a cursory glance. The common thread I detect is the misplaced value system of authority: 'My word is supreme.'

Nothing gives one the right to dispense half-baked wisdom, not follow the rules, or make discriminatory statements. Our experiences should evolve us. Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire, has said aptly, "No one is born fully-formed: it is through self-experience in the world that we become what we are."

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



SANJAY CHANDRA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CLOUDS OF WAR

Madam — Apropos of the article 'US-Iran tensions: War clouds over West Asia' (November 16), the analysis of the geopolitics, particularly in the West Asian context, shows warmongering in West Asia in a long-distant future. Beyond doubt, US-Iran tensions are extremely deep-rooted, and no solutions are visible in the near future. The advent of Donald Trump in his second tenure may be seen as intolerant of any terrorism-oriented politics of West Asian countries where Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, etc., with hundreds of militia, deep state forces, and terrorist organisations, who have no obligations of following or adhering to any international, UNO, or multilateral treaties, conventions, agreements, norms and regulations. Bangladesh is the new entrant of the explosive block.

Such organisations have tacit financial, army and logistic support from these nations while their regular armies execute and control their plans, attacks, hijacks and other disruptive, destabilising and assassination activities. The USA is not solely to blame for West Asian problems and war-ridden Islamic governments rattling guns and bombs as their mainstream administration and geopolitical politics. Obviously, all these countries are devastated and ruined by the compelling influx of illegal immigration from these countries in all European countries, the US, and also India. While Hamas carried out the most sinister attacks on Israel on Oct 7, 2023, the self-annihilation of Hamas and its supportive Hezbollah was on the cards. But the truth is that such organisations supported by their sponsoring governments will never be extinct. These are the façades of the regular armies. It may be seen in European countries that unrest over illegal immigrants is growing. US-Iran enmity is only one of the factors. The world is smarting under the threats of terrorism

Chaos in Imphal



Manipur's Imphal Valley relapsed into chaos after unconfirmed reports that the bodies of all six persons, believed to be women and children missing since November 11, had been recovered from a river along the State's boundary with Assam. As protesters took to the streets, setting vehicles ablaze and attacking the residences of several MLAs in the State capital, Imphal, the

and fighting against it tooth and nail. Vinod Johri | Delhi

BLAME GAME

Madam — Farmers' issues continue to haunt the Government and the fallout from the UPA government's time continues. Blame games are played just to find an escape route for decades. Instead of punishing farmers, the government should find ways of empowering them so that they can explore alternative ways of destroying stubble. High pollution levels affect the locals. Stubble burning is environmentally hazardous, and it should be prevented.

The Supreme Court seems to think that if stubble-burning is halted, the air quality in Delhi would improve dramatically. It has asked the neighbouring states to take appropriate action to prevent it. True, there are safer ways of disposing of stubble, but they are costly. The farmers do not have the financial capacity to pluck out the stubble and bury it in the fields where it will become part of the soil. Yet, the sad fact is that the poor

government suspended Internet and mobile data services in seven affected districts of the valley, which is dominated by the non-tribal Meiteis and the surrounding hills, where the tribal Kuki-Zos are in a majority. A curfew was clamped in the three valley districts of Imphal East, Imphal West and Bishnupur. Among the houses of the MLAs targeted was that of Rajkumar Imo Singh, the son-in-law of Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren Singh, whose personal residence on the outskirts of Imphal was also reportedly attacked by a mob on Saturday night. Large groups of people went about asking MLAs to quit if the government was unable to ensure peace and punish killers of women and children.

Dorai Ramani Suresh | Ghaziabad

farmers of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan are blamed for the poor air quality in Delhi. C K Subramaniam | Chennai

SANJU'S CENTURY STREAK

Madam — Sanju Samson has etched his name in the record books by becoming the first player to score three T20I centuries in a calendar year. This remarkable achievement cements his status as one of the most explosive batters in the shortest format of the game. Samson's stellar run began with his maiden T20I hundred against Bangladesh in Hyderabad on October 12. He reached the century mark in just 40 balls, the second-fastest hundred by an Indian in T20I cricket. His innings was a masterclass in power-hitting, as he smashed 111 off 47 balls, including 11 boundaries and 8 sixes, dismantling the Bangladeshi bowlers.

Jayanthy S Manaiam | Mumbai

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FIRST COLUMN

SEPHORA KIDS SYNDROME

By promoting safe practices, the parents and society can ensure that this trend benefits rather than exploits



SHAINY SHARMA

The beauty industry is continuously evolving, with brands adapting to trends, demographics and consumer behaviour. A notable trend is the rising interest in skincare and beauty among younger audiences, including children and pre-teens, popularly referred to as 'Sephora Kids'. While Sephora does not have a specific kids line, the term reflects a cultural shift as children become active participants in the beauty and skincare market.

The idea of 'Sephora Kids' is tied to the increasing exposure of children to social media, beauty tutorials and influencers. Platforms like TikTok and YouTube have normalised beauty routines for younger audiences, making skincare and makeup accessible and aspirational. Pre-teens, often labelled as "Generation Alpha," are drawn to the beauty industry as a way of self-expression and social connection.

Parents too play a role in this trend, with some encouraging early skincare habits to prevent future issues like acne. Additionally, brands targeting this demographic such as Bubble and Florence by Mills, offer gentle, age-appropriate skincare, further validating the interest of young consumers? Beauty brands have now recognised the buying power of younger audiences and their families.

Marketing campaigns often focus on inclusivity, fun packaging and social media visibility to attract children and pre-teens. For instance, kid influencers and beauty creators promote skincare routines and products, dri-



ving trends among their peers while brands like Bubble and BTWN emphasise safe, dermatologist-approved products for younger skin. Moreover, platforms like TikTok and Instagram amplify the trend by showcasing beauty routines and promoting luxury brands. This has contributed to an increase in spending among tweens and teens on beauty products, with estimates showing annual expenditures ranging from \$119 to \$140 per child for skincare and makeup.

Not only this, but many parents also express concerns about the safety of children using advanced skincare products with potent ingredients like retinol and acids, which may not be suitable for young skin. Dermatologists report an increase in skin issues, such as irritations and allergic reactions, linked to these products. Parents too worry about the psychological impact, such as the pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty standards and premature exposure to consumer culture?

They note that participating in beauty routines can boost their children's confidence and serve as a creative outlet. However, the same comes with the risk of adopting harmful skincare habits, overspending and feeling pressured by societal beauty ideals? The rise of Sephora Kids raises ethical questions about how much influence the beauty industry should exert over children. On one hand, critics argue that marketing beauty products to young audiences exploits their impressionability and perpetuates consumerism while on the other hand, advocates believe that when managed responsibly, it can foster creativity and self-care. Brands and regulators must emphasise transparency, safety and age-appropriate messaging.

Parents, too at times must guide their children in understanding the importance of moderation and self-acceptance. There is no denying that the concept of 'Sephora Kids' symbolises a cultural and generational shift in the beauty industry. While it opens doors to creativity and self-expression for younger audiences, it also demands careful navigation of ethical and developmental implications. By promoting safe practices and fostering positive self-images, the beauty industry, parents and society can ensure that this trend benefits rather than exploits young consumers.

(The write is an educator; views expressed are personal)

Redesigning education for real-world skills



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

By integrating practical lessons on earning, saving and managing money, education can better prepare students for real-world challenges



It is a truism to state that the world is becoming an increasingly complex proposition to deal with and the methods of coping with it need to be structured and understood. This alone will avoid increasing grief and bewilderment on the way matters are working in the world one is surrounded by. An illustration from the area of finance may illustrate the situation. It is an obvious matter to point out that everyone needs finance to survive and finance has to be obtained if not earned from somewhere. This business of understanding finance or earning requires the ability to understand what finance is and how it can be earned.

Finance comes in many shapes and colours. A common factor in all finance is that it is putting a monetary value to one's effort and it is compensation for what one does to keep a system going. Finance sets the equation between effort and its compensation and finance in turn becomes a tool for both purchasing and obtaining the needs of life beyond purchase. To do so, one needs to understand currency, its equivalence and how currency is measured in effort.

It is one of the enigmas of our prevailing school and college system that these matters are rarely explained through a curriculum or, for that matter, in a formal situation. Much is learned about finance through observation and the domestic environment in which one has grown, that is converted into transactions in operational life and early enough in one's life one learns that one needs to have capabilities to earn money and therefore deal with finance. Each system has its methods of equivalence between efforts and compensation and the forces that determine it are very often referred to as market forces. This by itself is an art that life teaches



FINANCE COMES IN MANY SHAPES AND COLOURS. A COMMON FACTOR IN ALL FINANCE IS THAT IT IS PUTTING A MONETARY VALUE TO ONE'S EFFORT AND IT IS COMPENSATION FOR WHAT ONE DOES TO KEEP A SYSTEM GOING

sometimes simply and frequently through trial and error. Thus, it is that finance is not only tricky, but it leads to comprehend and yet it remains one of the cornerstones of anyone's life. Taking the conversation further, it needs to be realised that finance has some basic constituents like earning, saving, investing, converting into tangible assets and more. Each area has over time become a specialised field of learning and indeed happiness or otherwise of one's existence.

There are forces in finance in the higher classes of the school where certain basic concepts are explained and certain essential foundational ideas on finance are shared. What is needed is giving it a practical orientation and teaching people through fieldwork, the value of finance and its central role in human life. Most classrooms have not graduated to that stage of thinking, or in that way of thinking which means very simply that most people pass through the completion of their schooling without getting the correlation between the essentials of finance and the foundation of living.

A situation becomes more complex when one graduate from the college or university level and then unless one is doing a specific course in finance, one may never learn anything beyond what one has learned in school about finance.

This is a loss because, as enumerated above, what is taught in school about finance does not go very far in the practice of finance. What everyone needs to know is the correlation between one's

worth in handling skills and information and how this is compensated in financial terms by the environment.

This by itself is a tricky proposition and, as suggested earlier, needs fieldwork. Then there are final areas of finance that cannot be learned unless exposed to the practical world and that is not a matter that can be brought into the classroom. Also, in a normal education system, there are again gaps where this learning goes by default and people are left to pay for themselves through trial and error.

This causes not only immense problems but complications of one variety or another. One can be shortchanged or one may not know that services cannot, in many cases, be provided without some type of compensation and that compensation very often has to be in terms of money. It will be a worthwhile approach to explain to people the relationship between money, finance and effort.

Such a perspective will help make the curriculum of not only the schools but also the colleges worthwhile and more practical in one's own life. As matters stand, if one specialises in physics, chemistry, history, psychology, geography, or whatever else, one hardly realises that beyond the so-called specialisation, there is a general education one needs.

This general education can be in behaviour concerning others, management of self, understanding income, understanding expenditure, understanding savings, and so on.

Putting it simply, there is a need

to also focus on the range of learning before one crosses into adulthood and becomes a financially viable entity. As indicated earlier, much of this is happening through trial and error, embracing a method; that works in certain cases but not in others. There is a clear need to reduce the treasury for adjustment to actual life through formal inputs before one graduates into adulthood and is thrown into the open sea - as it were to take care of oneself.

The time has come to establish a philosophy of education, self-formation, and teaching that can stand on its feet and be related to the requirements of life.

The time is right for some fundamental thinking on such matters, and the sooner it's done, the better. Similarly, similar reflections are needed in making him a person through his childhood, teenage, and other phases of his life about the nature and content of what is technology.

This is so because technology touches every aspect of our lives, from not just the glasses that one may have to wear to correct one's sight but to everything else that has become such an essential part of one's livelihood and existence. Including and understanding the basic nature of technology in the curriculum of schools and colleges also needs attention. However, that may be a subject matter that needs to be treated separately and independently.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal.)

Cloud seeding, urbanisation, global warming: Where is the world headed?

Amid the climate challenges plaguing urban life, innovative approaches like cloud seeding offer promising solutions for a better future

The impact of global warming and pollution is transforming urban life, turning once vibrant towns into places that are becoming less and less livable.

Across the globe, urban landscapes, particularly in India, are evolving into concrete jungles, where the struggle for survival frequently resembles an arduous challenge. Once viewed as a shining example of culture and a centre for economic pursuits, Delhi and Mumbai now display AQI scores that seem almost staggering.

Heavy with contaminants, the noxious air has transformed into an environmental concern, leaving inhabitants struggling to breathe



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

while suffering from respiratory conditions. Have these cities become uninhabitable? In Delhi, pollution levels frequently fall into the "severe" category, with AQI readings often exceeding 400.

The outcomes are dire: children attending school only part-time; elderly individuals confined indoors; and hospitals inundated with

cases of asthma, bronchitis and various other respiratory ailments. In Mumbai, the oppressive humidity intensifies the situation, transforming the already polluted air into a dangerous mix for its 20-million-strong populace. Economic growth challenges the conventional use of various facilities and personal vehicles: although development fosters prosperity, it comes with significant expenses. Alongside factories and vehicles, construction sites contribute to the GDP; however, they also transform cities into perilous environments.

The alarming rise in disease cases compels us to confront a difficult reality: does the cost of progress come at the expense of the health and

wellbeing of the populace? Now, comes cloud seeding, a game changer in this catastrophic scenario. The practice of introducing particles like silver iodide or salt into the atmosphere to encourage rainfall can be celebrated for its potential to cleanse the air and replenish water resources through cloud seeding.

Thus, it could indeed be the virtue that aids in easing the challenges faced by cities: pollution and water scarcity. Countries such as China and the United Arab Emirates have been exploring this technology, while India has intermittently implemented it during severe droughts. Nonetheless, its use as a means to reduce pollution



remains largely uncharted. Is cloud seeding the answer to the escalating air quality crisis in India?

Some argue that cloud seeding is not an extraordinary solution. It comes with a hefty price tag, and the long-term effects on the environ-

ment remain uncertain. What truly matters is that addressing pollution at its source—minimising industrial emissions, promoting sustainable urban growth, and shifting to clean energy—continues to be the primary goal. As cities like

Delhi struggle and suffocate under the weight of toxic air, these short-term measures, like cloud seeding, may provide a fleeting but vital relief. The entire conversation regarding urban development requires a complete transformation.

Advancement must not jeopardise the wellbeing of the local population. It is essential for those in positions of authority to champion sustainable practices and enforce rigorous pollution controls to achieve a harmonious relationship between advancement and environmental stewardship. The stakes have never been higher.

The choice before us is stark: continue on a path that suffocates our cities or embrace

innovation and sustainability to breathe life back into urban spaces. The future of millions depends on the decisions we make today.

Conclusion: The intersection of urbanisation, global warming, and pollution demands urgent action. Short-term fixes like cloud seeding can offer relief, but true progress requires systemic change—curbing emissions, adopting clean energy, and prioritising sustainable urban growth. The future of our cities and the well-being of millions depend on decisive, forward-thinking measures taken today.

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

Lawrence Bishnoi's brother detained in the US

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's brother Anmol, wanted for the murder of NCP leader Baba Siddique and firing outside actor Salman Khan's Mumbai home, has been detained in the United States, Mumbai police sources said on Monday.

Anmol, who was believed to be living in Canada and making regular travels to the US, is the younger brother of Lawrence Bishnoi, accused of running a global criminal syndicate despite being in jail. Anmol Bishnoi is wanted in connection with several criminal cases, including the murder of NCP leader and former Maharashtra minister Siddique on October 12 in Mumbai's Bandra area. He was also allegedly behind the firing outside Bollywood actor Salman Khan's home, located in the Bandra area, on April 14 this year, according to the sources. A Red Corner Notice was issued by global law enforcement agency Interpol. Bishnoi, from Punjab's Fazilka, was earlier believed to be in Canada after fleeing India on a fake passport. He also faces two cases filed by the National Investigation Agency.

Rahul links PM Modi's slogans to Adani



TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Holdings that the contest in Maharashtra was between one or two billionaires and the poor people, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said here on Monday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was bent on handing over the Rs 1 lakh crore worth Dharavi land to industrialist Gautam Adani, while the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) was all for supporting the poor, youth and unemployed people in the state.

Addressing a news conference on the final day of the campaigning for the

November 20 Maharashtra Assembly polls, "On one side, Adani is eyeing Dharavi land, while on the other side are our workers, and youth - betrayed by the MahaYuti government are aspiring for a better life."

Linking Modi's much-discussed slogan Ek-hai-toh safe-hai to Adani, Rahul said: "The real intention behind PM Modi's slogan Ek-hai-toh-safe-hai is to hand over Dharavi land to Adani. For PM Modi, it means 'Adani-ek-hai-toh-safe-hai'."

"A billionaire like Adani wants Mumbai's land, estimated to be worth around Rs 1 lakh crore. But our focus

is on supporting Maharashtra's poor, youth, and unemployed," the Congress leader said.

Displaying posters that showed a safe (a treasury box) with photographs of Modi and Adani on it and the Dharavi redevelopment map, Rahul said, "Adani is worried about the real safe (treasury box). Without the PM's support, he cannot take away the Dharavi land from its people."

"The real issue in the election is whether the wealth of Maharashtra should be given to the people of Maharashtra or to one person," Rahul said.

MVA-MahaYuti in neck and neck contest as campaign ends

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A high-pitch campaigning for the Maharashtra Assembly polls ended on Monday evening, as the feuding Shiv Sena leaders Eknath Shinde and Uddhav Thackeray traded charges over the legacy of late Bal Thackeray while the Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) president, JP Nadda, defended the prime minister's divisive slogans by saying that the country was safe in Narendra Modi's hand.

Slogans such as Ek-hai-toh-safe-hai and batenge-to-katenge and vote-jihad coined by the BJP leaders, the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA)'s criticism about the Modi-Adani link, diversion of projects to Gujarat, threat to the Constitution, stress on Maharashtra asmita, the guarantees by the MVA, and schemes of the BJP-led MahaYuti, the fight between the two Senas over the legacy of late Balasaheb Thackeray and the continued tussle between Sharad Pawar and Ajit Pawar dominated the four-week-long campaign.

In the last phase of the four-week-long campaign, the contentious issues of agrarian distress, farmers' suicides and lack of remunerative prices for agricultural produce, particularly Soya bean and cotton, figured prominently in the high-voltage campaigning witnessed in Vidarbha region, which sends a maximum of 62 MLAs to the 288-member Maharashtra Assembly.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who led the charge for the BJP, addressed as many as

11 rallies across the state. Prior to the declaration of the schedule for the state Assembly polls, he had four forays into the state to inaugurate various projects and used these occasion to reach out to the people ahead of the Assembly polls.

Union Minister for Home Affairs Amit Shah, who addressed 20-odd rallies, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who tried to polarise voters through his rhetoric, and BJP president JP Nadda were other BJP's national campaigners. Deputy Chief minister Devendra Fadnis and Union minister Nitin Gadkari addressed 80 and 50-odd rallies respectively across the state.

From the Opposition MVA side, Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Gandhi-Vadra were on the front of the Congress' campaign. Kharge addressed nine rallies, while Rahul and Priyanka addressed seven and three rallies respectively.

The prominent other campaigners from the MVA side, NCP (SP) President Sharad Pawar, working president Supriya Sule, state chief Jayant Patil, national general secretary Jitendra Awhad; SS (UBT) President Uddhav Thackeray, Aditya Thackeray, Arvind Sawant, Sushma Andhare and state Congress chief Nana Patole. Chief ministers of Karnataka, Siddaramaiah, Telangana, Revanth Reddy, Himachal Pradesh, Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, former CMs, deputy chief ministers from different states and senior leaders

including P Chidambaram, Ramesh Chennithala, KC Venugopal, Jairam Ramesh, Randeep S. Surjewala and more, plus INDIA bloc allies from Samajwadi Party, CPI, CPI(M), PWP and AAP joined the campaign in Maharashtra.

As expected, Modi and Yogi were shrill in their campaign, while Congress leaders, particularly Kharge and Rahul, combated the BJP's vicious campaign effectively. Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray was a crowd puller, while veteran leader Sharad Pawar reached out to people effectively.

On the last day of the campaigning, feuding Shiv Sena leaders Eknath Shinde and Uddhav Thackeray trained guns at each other over the legacy of late Balasaheb Thackeray.

Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav, whose party symbol is flaming torch, said: "My party was stolen. The name (Shiv Sena) was stolen. They (Shinde and his men) stole our (bow and arrow) symbol. Now they have stolen the photo of Balasaheb," Uddhav said, as he slammed the Shinde Sena for using the photographs of late Thackeray.

"You know how our government was stolen. It has been two-and-a-half-years, I have been waiting for justice. Justice delayed is justice denied. They stole everything but they could not steal your blessings and love," Uddhav said.

Hitting back at Uddhav, Shinde said that his party was carrying forward the legacy of late Balasaheb. "We are

Balasaheb's soldiers. We were in power. Why did we have to revolt even though we were ministers? This will be the first time that ministers in power have come out. The reason for this has been stated many times before. If it was not so, I would not have been able to remain as Chief Minister even for a day," Shinde said.

In a related development, BJP national president JP Nadda hit back at Rahul Gandhi for attacking PM Modi and industrialist Gautam Adani. Defending Modi and his ek-hai-toh-safe-hai, Nadda said: "Modi's ek-hai-toh-safe-hai slogan means that if there is unity in the country, everyone is safe in the country. The country is safe under Modi's leadership. Modi is taking along everyone in the country"

"Rahul Gandhi is alone even at press conferences. Even his MVA colleagues are not with him because he is safe only when he is alone," Nadda said.

Slamming Rahul for displaying pocket-sized version of the Constitution of India at his rallies, Nadda said: "Now Gandhi roams around carrying the book of Constitution. He has not read the Constitution because Babasaheb Ambedkar has written in the Constitution that reservation cannot be given on the basis of religion."

Meanwhile, more than 9.50 crore voters comprising 5,00,22,739 males, 4,69,96,279 females, 6,101 transgenders, will exercise their franchise on Wednesday to elect 288 representatives to the Maharashtra Assembly.

Campaigning draws to a close, high-stake polls next

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Not all the BJP allies supported these slogans. Ajit Pawar, distanced himself from them. Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis attempted to clarify the meaning of the slogans, leading to confusion within the ruling alliance.

The MVA alliance countered the ruling combine's rhetoric by focusing on issues like caste-based census, social justice, and protecting the Constitution. The Opposition aimed to appeal to voters who felt neglected by the government.

The BJP is contesting the November 20 elections in 149 seats, Shiv Sena is in the fray in 81 seats, and the Ajit Pawar-led NCP has fielded candidates in 59 constituencies.

Congress has fielded 101 candidates, Shiv Sena (UBT) 95, and NCP (SP) has put up 86 candidates. Rebels are in the fray in over 150

constituencies, with candidates from the Mahayuti and MVA contesting against their party's official nominees. Campaigning for the high-stakes second and final phase of Jharkhand Assembly elections also ended on Monday evening to decide the fate of candidates across 38 constituencies.

These include 18 seats from Santhal Pargana, another 18 from North Chotanagpur, and two from South Chotanagpur divisions.

Out of these 38 seats, eight are reserved for Scheduled Tribes (STs), three for Scheduled Castes (SCs), and the remaining 27 are general category seats.

Prominent candidates in the fray include Chief Minister Hemant Soren (JMM) contesting from Barhait, state BJP president and former CM Babulal Marandi from Dhanwar, and JMM star campaigner Kalpana Soren from Gandey.

Other notable contenders include Assembly Speaker Rabintra Nath Mahato (JMM) from Nala, Leader of Opposition Amar Bauri from Chandankiyari, Congress leaders Deepika Pandey Singh in Mahagama, Irfan Ansari in Jamtara, and Hafizul Hasan in Madhupur. All Jharkhand States Union (AJSU) Party chief Sudesh Mahto will contest from Silli, while Hemant Soren's brother, Basant Soren, is contesting from Dumka.

In the 2019 elections, the JMM had won the maximum number of seats, 13, in these constituencies, followed by BJP with 12. The Congress secured eight seats, while Jharkhand Vikas Morcha and AJSU Party won two each, and the CPI-ML secured one seat. Due to security concerns, 31 polling stations have been classified as highly sensitive and will operate from 7 am to 4 pm, while other polling stations will remain open until

5 pm.

On the final day of campaigning, high-profile leaders from both the BJP-National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and INDIA Bloc held over 20 public meetings. Key figures included Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Union Ministers Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Chirag Paswan, Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma, alongside opposition leaders Rahul Gandhi, Hemant Soren, and Kalpana Soren.

The by-elections in Uttar Pradesh too have become a crucial test for both major parties. For the BJP, a strong performance would reaffirm its dominance and help it recover from recent electoral setbacks. For the SP, retaining its seats would strengthen its position as a formidable opposition force. As the stage is set for polling on November 20, the political stakes in Uttar Pradesh have rarely been higher.

What is the real AQI?

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Due to this, the AQI in IQAir will always seem to be fluctuating as it is reacting to changes over an hourly basis. Typically, AQI is calculated based on certain pollutants, such as PM2.5 (particulate matter less than 2.5 microns), PM10 (particulate matter less than 10 microns), ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, carbon dioxide, and a few others.

According to IQAir, Delhi's

AQI stood at 2314 in VV Block C Station, 2047 in Najafgarh, 2019 in Sonia Vihar, 1967 in Dwarka, Sector-8, 1919 in Punjabi Bagh, 1882 in Mundka, 1794 in Pooth Khurd, Bawana, 1758 in Najafgarh DPCC, Dwarka, Sector -8 at 1702, Rohini at 1672 and 1672 in Narela.

As real time data by AQICN.Org, the AQI stood 999 at Satyawati College; 408 at Vasundhara, Ghaziabad, 809 at Delhi Institute of Tool Engineering, Wazirpur, 999 at

ITI Jahangirpuri, 936 at Sonia Vihar Water Treatment Plant DJB, 999 at DITE Okhla, 769 at Rohini, 699 at Sri Aurobindo Marg, 725 at Srinivaspuri, 810 at Anand Vihar, 696 at Pooth Kalan, 620 at Mandir Marg.

On the other hand, the Central CPCB monitoring stations data showed the AQI in Anand Vihar is at 487, Alipur at 475, Ashok Vihar at 495, Bawana at 495, Burari crossing at 461, Chandni Chowk at 441, DTU at 446, Dwarka 499, Dilshad Garden

at 463, Jahangirpuri at 484, Wazirpur at 490, Vivek Vihar at 485, Rohini at 491, Pusa at 482, Patparganj at 485, Punjabi Bagh at 493, Narela at 479, Mundka at 495, and Lodhi Road at 469. As per CPCB data Noida experienced 'very poor' air quality, with the latest AQI at 384, while Faridabad registered in the 'poor' category with an AQI of 320. Ghaziabad and Gurugram reported 'severe' air pollution levels, with AQIs of 400 and 446, respectively.

No FIR filed 72-hours after Jhansi fire tragedy

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The fire not only claimed innocent lives but also caused extensive damage to critical medical equipment worth Rs 2 Crore. Ventilators, bubble CPAP machines, HFNC machines, and 18 cradles, all essential for treating critically ill newborns, were destroyed. In response, the hospital has set up a temporary neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) in Ward No. 5, where 16 babies have been shifted for treatment. However, the loss of infrastructure has severely hampered the hospital's ability to provide care.

The incident has drawn widespread criticism, with opposition leaders accusing the government of systemic negligence. "This is not just a

tragedy but a clear case of administrative failure," said Akhilesh Yadav, national President of Samajwadi Party. "Despite prior warnings, the government ignored the glaring safety lapses."

The lack of swift action has raised serious questions about governance and systemic inefficiencies in ensuring the safety of critical medical facilities. The bereaved families continue to await justice, while the medical college remains under scrutiny for its failure to address long-standing safety concerns. The government has though announced compensation for the victims' families but is yet to announce an action plan to prevent such tragedies in the future.

MHA rushes 5,000 paramilitary...

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The Manipur Government, on Monday, also extended the suspension of internet services by two more days till Wednesday in seven districts of the northeastern state. Raising slogans demanding justice for the victims and their families killed by suspected tribal militants in Jiribam district, the protesters stormed into the office complex of the Chief Electoral Officer at Lamphelpat and locked its main entrance door with chains and locks, officials said.

The main office doors of the Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development (IBSD) at Takyel, and the Directorate of Economics and Statistics located a few hundred metres from the CEO's office were also locked by the protesters. Meanwhile,

the indefinite sit-in staged by COCOMI at Khwairamband market in Imphal demanding a military crackdown against "Kuki Zo Hmar" militants in the state entered its third day. Manipur has seen a fresh wave of protests after six people went missing from a camp for displaced persons in Jiribam on November 11, following a gunfight between armed men and security forces that resulted in the deaths of 10 Kuki youths. On Sunday, the bodies of two persons, believed to be among the six missing people from Jiribam, were found floating in the Barak river in neighbouring Cachar district of Assam.

More than 200 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kukis in Manipur since May last year.

Delhi facing medical emergency: CM Atishi

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Meanwhile, the Delhi government has directed the health department to form a special task force at Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital to handle medical emergencies related to the pollution. As Delhiites struggle to breathe, traders said the demand for air purifiers and masks have increased as many residents see the equipment as a necessity to safeguard their health.

A toxic smog blanketed the city, affecting visibility as the air quality deteriorated sharply, falling into the 'severe plus' category with an AQI of 494 on Monday, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) website. The toxic air has disrupted flight, rail and road traffic services in the National Capital.

Addressing a press conference, Atishi accused the BJP-led central government, instead of addressing the crisis, is focussed on political blame games. Punjab on

Monday reported 1,251 fresh farm fire cases, the single-day highest this season, taking the state's total count of such cases to 9,655, Punjab Remote Sensing Centre data showed. "North India is choking because of the Modi government's inaction. Stubble burning incidents have escalated in BJP-ruled states like Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh, while AAP-governed Punjab has registered a decline," Atishi said. She pointed to official data and claimed that the reduction in incidents of stubble burning in AAP-ruled Punjab demonstrates effective governance, unlike the approach seen in states governed by the BJP.

Atishi criticised the central government's handling of the situation, stating, "The people of Delhi are struggling to breathe, with the elderly and children needing medical support due to the severe pollution. Instead of taking action, the central government is busy playing

politics, pushing the entire region towards a health crisis." She questioned why the central government had not taken steps similar to those implemented in Punjab. "If the Punjab government can reduce stubble burning, why can't BJP-ruled states do the same? The rising pollution levels across North India highlight the failure of the central government's policies," Atishi added.

In a separate press conference, Environment Minister Gopal Rai said the Delhi government has directed the health department to form a special task force at LNJP Hospital to handle medical emergencies related to the pollution. "I have directed the health department to form a special task force at LNJP Hospital to address medical emergencies," Rai said. "If the central government had collaborated and acted in a timely manner, people in Delhi wouldn't have to face these hazardous conditions," he said.

Meanwhile, Municipal

Corporation of Delhi (MCD) school teachers accused the administration of neglecting their health by forcing them to come to school to take online classes amid deteriorating air quality. Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai said the government is taking all necessary measures to tackle air pollution and will implement additional steps, including the odd-even vehicle rationing scheme, based on expert advice and requirements. In response to a question about the odd-even scheme, Rai said: "From our side, the Delhi government is taking all the necessary steps at our level. We are monitoring everything closely and making decisions on a daily basis. We will consult experts and take all required measures." Vehicles with registration numbers ending in even digits (0, 2, 4, 6, 8) are allowed on the roads on even dates, while those with registration numbers ending in odd digits (1, 3, 5, 7, 9) are permitted on odd dates.

Kailash Gahlot goes to BJP, Somesh Shoukeen comes to AAP

From page 1

Gahlot joined the BJP at its headquarters in the presence of Union Ministers Manohar Lal Khattar and Harsh Malhotra, Delhi unit president Virendra Sachdeva, party vice president Baijant Jay Panda and national media head Anil Baluni among others.

"Some people must be thinking that this decision was taken overnight and under someone's pressure. I want to tell them that I have never done anything under anyone's pressure to date... I am hearing that an attempt is

being made to build a narrative that it was done under the pressure of the Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation... all this is wrong," he said, adding "The fact is that the AAP compromised its values". He claimed that he has never acted under anyone's pressure.

Gahlot said "maintaining good relations with the Centre is essential for Delhi's development", as he accused the AAP government of constantly being in a fight with the central government led by the BJP. "Be it the

Chief Minister or ministers, they were picking fights with the Centre over smallest of issues all the time," he alleged, claiming that he maintained good relations with the Central government, including the Lieutenant Governor Gahlot said people like him joined the AAP not out of personal ambitions but for Delhi's development and that he has joined the BJP for the same reason.

Gahlot praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and agenda. He accused the AAP of compromising the values which attracted people in

large numbers to its fold following its birth as a political party after the Anna Hazare-led anti-corruption movement. People saw hope in a person, an apparent reference to AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal, and the party's ideology but those values were compromised. They have become "khas" (special) from "aam" (ordinary), Gahlot claimed.

The BJP is hopeful that Gahlot's induction into the party will boost its prospects in the upcoming assembly polls as it looks to wrest power from the AAP. Sachdeva said Gahlot, a two-

term MLA and an advocate, is a leader known for his good work.

Meanwhile, AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal reacted to Delhi Minister Kailash Gahlot's resignation and defection to the BJP, stating that Gahlot was free to make his choice. Speaking to reporters, he said, "He is free; he can go wherever he wants."

On the other hand, former Matiala MLA from Congress, Somesh Shoukeen joined the AAP, a day after Gahlot resigned from the party. Welcoming Shoukeen to the AAP fold, Kejriwal said his joining will not only give a

boost to the party in rural Delhi but also in other parts of the National Capital. Kejriwal is hopeful that Shoukeen, known as a 'Delhi-dehat' leader may help to influence the traditional Jat dominated seats here.

Before the AAP came to power, the people living in Delhi-Dehat were neglected and cut off from the main city, Kejriwal said. The AAP government improved connectivity, opened schools, hospitals, mohalla clinics and stadiums, and provided other facilities in outer Delhi areas, bringing them at par with other parts of the city, he said.

Enforce GRAP IV strictly: SC

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First implemented in 2017, GRAP is a set of anti-air pollution measures followed in the Capital and its vicinity according to the severity of the situation. It classifies the air quality in the Delhi-NCR under four different stages: Stage 1 - 'poor' (AQI 201-300), Stage 2 - 'very poor' (AQI 301-400), Stage 3 - 'severe' (AQI 401-450) and Stage 4 - 'severe plus' (AQI above 450).

On Sunday, the CAQM announced stricter pollution control measures for the Delhi-NCR under GRAP-4, effective from 8 am on Monday, including a ban on

truck entry and a temporary halt on construction at public projects. The CAQM issued the order as Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) worsened, reaching 441 at 4 pm and rising to 457 by 7 pm due to unfavourable weather conditions.

According to the order, no trucks would be allowed into Delhi except for those carrying essential items or using clean fuel (LNG / CNG / BS-VI diesel/electric). Non-essential light commercial vehicles registered outside Delhi will also be prohibited, except for EVs and CNG and BS-VI diesel ones.

Biden authorises Ukraine to use US missiles for strikes inside Russia

AP ■ MANAUS (BRAZIL)

President Joe Biden has authorised Ukraine to use US-supplied missiles to strike deeper inside Russia, easing limitations on the longer range weapons as Russia deploys thousands of North Korean troops to reinforce its war, according to a US official and three other people familiar with the matter. The decision allowing Kyiv to use the Army Tactical Missile System, or ATACMS, for attacks farther inside Russia comes as President Vladimir Putin positions North Korean troops along Ukraine's northern border to try to reclaim hundreds of miles of territory seized by Ukrainian forces. Biden's move also follows the presidential election victory of Donald Trump, who has said he would bring about a swift end to the war and raised uncertainty about whether his administration would continue the United States' vital military support for Ukraine. The official and the others knowledgeable about the matter were not authorized to discuss the US decision publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's reaction Sunday was notably restrained. "Strikes are not made with words," he said during his

nightly video address. "Such things are not announced. The missiles will speak for themselves." Zelenskyy and many of his Western supporters have been pressing Biden for months to allow Ukraine to strike military targets deeper inside Russia with Western-supplied missiles, saying the US ban had made it impossible for Ukraine to try to stop Russian attacks on its cities and electrical grids. Zelenskyy's statement came shortly after he posted a message of condolence on Telegram following a Russian attack on a nine-story building that killed at least eight people in the northern city of Sumy, 40 kilometers (24 miles) from the border with Russia. Russia also launched a massive drone and missile attack, described by officials as the largest in recent months, targeting energy infrastructure and killing civilians. The attack came as fears are mounting about Moscow's intentions to devastate Ukraine's power generation capacity before the winter. "And this is the answer to everyone who tried to achieve something with Putin through talks, phone calls, hugs and appeasement," Zelenskyy said. The comment appeared to be a dig at German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who spoke Friday with Putin in the first such call with a sitting head of a major

Western power in nearly two years. Some supporters have argued that the limitation and other U.S. constraints could cost Ukraine the war. The debate has become a source of disagreement among Ukraine's NATO allies. Biden had remained opposed, determined to hold the line against any escalation that he felt could draw the US and other NATO members into direct conflict with nuclear-armed Russia. Putin has warned that Moscow could provide long-range weapons to others to strike Western targets if NATO allies allow Ukraine to use their arms to attack Russian territory. News of Biden's decision followed meetings over the last two days with the leaders of South Korea, Japan and China. The addition of North Korean troops was central to the talks, which took place on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Peru. Biden did not mention the decision during a speech at a stop in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil on his way to the Group of 20 summit. Asked about the decision, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told reporters that the UN position is "to avoid a permanent deterioration of the war in Ukraine."

"We want peace, we want fair peace," Guterres said Sunday before the summit in Rio de Janeiro. He didn't elaborate. The longer-range missiles are likely to be used in response to North Korea's decision to support Putin's invasion of Ukraine, according to one of the people familiar with the development. The overall supply of ATACMS missiles is short, so US officials in the past have questioned whether they could give Ukraine enough to make a difference. Some supporters of Ukraine say that even a few strikes deeper inside Russia would force its military to change deployments and expend more of its resources. North Korea has provided thousands of troops to Russia to help Moscow try to claw back land in the Kursk border region that Ukraine seized this year. The introduction of North Korean troops to the conflict comes as Moscow has seen a favorable shift in momentum. Trump has signaled that he could push Ukraine to agree to give up some land seized by Russia to find an end to the conflict. As many as 12,000 North Korean troops have been sent to Russia, according to US, South Korean and Ukrainian assessments. US and South Korean intelligence officials say North Korea also has provided Russia with significant

amounts of munitions to replenish its dwindling weapons stockpiles. Trump, who takes office in January, spoke for months as a candidate about wanting Russia's war in Ukraine to be over, but he mostly ducked questions about whether he wanted U.S. ally Ukraine to win. He also repeatedly slammed the Biden administration for giving Kyiv tens of billions of dollars in aid. His victory has Ukraine's international backers worrying that any rushed settlement would mostly benefit Putin. America is Ukraine's most valuable ally in the war, providing more than \$56.2 billion in security assistance since Russian forces invaded in February 2022. Worried about Russia's response, however, the Biden administration repeatedly has delayed providing some specific advanced weapons sought by Ukraine, agreeing only under pressure from Kyiv, its supporters and in consultation with allies. That includes initially refusing Zelenskyy's pleas for advanced tanks, Patriot air defense systems and F-16 fighter jets, among other systems. The White House agreed in May to allow Ukraine to use US-provided weaponry for limited strikes just across the border with Russia.

Russia chides US over nod to hit its soil with long-range weapons

AP ■ MANAUS (BRAZIL)

President Joe Biden's decision to let Ukraine strike targets inside Russia with US-supplied long-range missiles was met with ominous warnings from Moscow, a hint of menace from Kyiv and nods of approval from some Western allies. Biden's shift in policy added an uncertain and potentially crucial new factor to the war on the eve of its 1,000-day milestone. News of Biden's change came on the day a Russian ballistic missile with cluster munitions struck a residential area of Sumy, a city in northern Ukraine, killing 11 people, including two children, and injuring 84 others. On Monday, another Russian missile attack started fires in two apartment blocks in Odesa, in southern Ukraine. At least eight people were killed and many more were injured, Ukrainian lawmaker Oleksii Honcharenko said in a video he posted on Telegram from the site of the attack. Washington is easing limits on what Ukraine can strike with US-made weaponry, US officials told The Associated Press on Sunday, after months of ruling out such a move over fears of escalating the conflict and bringing about a direct confrontation between Russia and NATO. The scope of the new firing guidelines isn't clear. But the

change came after the US, South Korea and NATO said recently that North Korean troops are in Russia and apparently are being deployed to help the Russian army drive Ukrainian troops out of Russia's Kursk border region. Russia is also slowly pushing Ukraine's outnumbered army backward in the eastern Donetsk region. It has also conducted a devastating and deadly aerial campaign against civilian areas in Ukraine. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Monday referred journalists to a statement made by Russian President Vladimir Putin in September, in which he said allowing Ukraine to target Russia would significantly raise the stakes in the conflict. It would change "the very nature of the conflict dramatically," Putin said at the time. "This will mean that NATO countries - the United States and European countries - are at war with Russia." Peskov claimed that Western countries supplying long-range weapons also provide targeting services to Kyiv. "This fundamentally changes the modality of their involvement in the conflict," Peskov said. Last June, Putin warned that Russia could provide long-range weapons to others to strike Western targets in response to NATO allies allowing Ukraine to use their arms to attack Russian territory. He also reaffirmed Moscow's

readiness to use nuclear weapons if it sees a threat to its sovereignty. President-elect Donald Trump, who takes office in about two months' time, has raised uncertainty about whether his administration would continue the United States' vital military support for Ukraine. He has also vowed to quickly end the war. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy gave a muted response to the approval that he and his government have been requesting of Biden for more than a year. "Today, much is being said in the media about us receiving permission for the relevant actions," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address Sunday. "But strikes are not made with words. Such things are not announced. The missiles will speak for themselves," he said. The foreign minister of NATO member Lithuania, Gabrielius Landsbergis, said he's not "opening the champagne" yet as it remains unclear exactly what restrictions have been lifted and whether Ukraine has enough of the US weapons to make a difference. Margus Tsahkna, the foreign minister of Estonia which is another Baltic country that fears a military threat from Russia, said easing restrictions on Ukraine was "a good thing."

Children, parents among 8 killed in Israeli strikes in Gaza, officials say

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip killed eight people, including two children aged 7 and 9 and their parents, Palestinian officials said Monday. A third child, 10 years old, was wounded in an overnight strike on a tent where displaced people were sheltering in the southern city of Khan Younis, according to the Civil Defence, first responders who operate under the Hamas-run government. An Associated Press reporter saw the children's bodies at nearby Nasser Hospital. A separate strike early Monday killed four people, including a woman and a child, in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp, according to nearby Al-Aqsa

Martyrs Hospital. The Israeli military blames civilian deaths on Hamas, accusing militants of hiding among civilians and fighting from residential areas. It rarely comments on individual strikes, which often kill women and children. The war began when Hamas stormed into Israel on Oct 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250. Some 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 43,800 Palestinians, according to local health authorities. They do not distinguish between militants and civilians but say most of those killed are women and children.

The fighting has left some 76 people dead in Israel, including 31 soldiers. Meanwhile, a government minister close to Hezbollah says Lebanon will convey its "positive position" on a United States-backed ceasefire proposal this week. The Biden administration is trying to halt the war between Israel and the militant group after months of sputtering cease-fire efforts. Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, a Hezbollah ally who is mediating for the militants, is expected to meet with US envoy Amos Hochstein in the Lebanese capital on Tuesday. Labour Minister Mostafa Bayram, who met with Berri on Monday, said Hezbollah's func-

tion "is to make sure the (Israeli) aggression fails to achieve its goals, while negotiation is for the state and the government." A Western diplomat familiar with the talks told The Associated Press there is a sense of "cautious optimism." "Diplomatic efforts are converging towards a cease-fire, but it's still in the hands and heads of key players to decide if it's in their interest or not to stop things right now," said the diplomat, who was not authorized to brief media and so spoke on condition of anonymity. The efforts are aimed at reestablishing a UN buffer zone in southern Lebanon established after the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war.



Lebanese policemen stand in front of destroyed shops that were hit Sunday evening in an Israeli airstrike in central Beirut, Lebanon on Monday. AP/PTI

North Korean leader calls for expanding N-forces in face of alleged US threats

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un renewed his call for a "limitless" expansion of his military nuclear program to counter US-led threats in comments reported Monday that were his first direct criticism toward Washington since Donald Trump's win in the US presidential election. At a conference with army officials on Friday, Kim condemned the United States for updating its nuclear deterrence strategies with South Korea and solidifying three-way military cooperation involving Japan, which he portrayed as an "Asian NATO" that was escalating tensions and instability in the region. Kim also criticized the

United States over its support of Ukraine against a prolonged Russian invasion. He insisted that Washington and its Western allies were using Ukraine as their "shock troops" to wage a war against Moscow and expand the scope of US military influence, the North's official Korean Central News Agency said. Kim has prioritized his country's ties to Russia in recent months, embracing the idea of a "new Cold War" and displaying a united front in Russian President Vladimir Putin's broader conflicts with the West. He has used Russia's war on Ukraine as a distraction to accelerate the development of his nuclear-armed military, which now has various nuclear-

capable systems targeting South Korea and intercontinental ballistic missiles that can potentially reach the US mainland. Kim has yet to directly acknowledge that he has been providing military equipment and troops to Russia to support its war against Ukraine and the KCNA's report didn't mention whether Kim made any comments toward Trump, whose election win has yet to be reported in the North's state media. Kim met Trump three times in 2018 and 2019 in Trump's first presidency, but their diplomacy quickly collapsed over disagreements in exchanging the release of US-led sanctions and North Korean steps to wind down its nuclear and missile program.

North Korea has since suspended any meaningful talks with Washington and Seoul as Kim ramped up his testing activity and military demonstrations in the face of what he portrayed as "gangster-like US threats." There's concern in Seoul that Kim in exchange for his military support of Russia would receive Russian technology in return to further develop his arsenal. Trump's election win has touched off speculation about a resumption of a summit-driven diplomacy with Kim, which was described by critics as a "bromance." But some experts say a quick return to 2018 is highly unlikely, as too much has changed about the regional security situation and broader geopolitics since then.

Trial to begin in human smuggling case after deaths of Indian family at Canada-US border

AP ■ FERGUS FALLS (US)

A criminal network stretching from India to Canada made money smuggling families seeking better lives in the United States, including a man who died holding his 3-year-old son in gusting snow and bone-chilling temperatures two years ago, federal prosecutors plan to argue at a trial starting Monday in Minnesota. Prosecutors have accused Indian national Harshkumar Ramanlal Patel, 29, of running the scheme and Steve Shand, 50, of Florida of waiting in a truck for 11 migrants, including the couple and two children who died after they tried to walk across the border to the US. Prosecutors say Patel

recruited Shand at a casino near their homes in Deltona, Florida, just north of Orlando. Jagdish Patel, 39, died along with his wife, Vaishaliben, who was in her mid-30s, and with their 11-year-old daughter, Vihangi and their 3-year-old son Dharmik. Patel is a common Indian surname and the victims were not related to Harshkumar Patel, who has pleaded not guilty, as has Shand. The family, from the village of Dingucha in Gujarat state, is believed to have spent hours wandering fields in the blizzard conditions as the wind chill reached minus 36 Fahrenheit (minus 38 Celsius). Canadian authorities found the Patels' frozen bodies on the morning of Jan. 19, 2022. Jagdish Patel

was holding Dharmik, who was wrapped in a blanket. Federal prosecutors say Patel and Shand were part of an operation that scouted clients in India, got them Canadian student visas, arranged transportation and smuggled them into the US, mostly through Washington state or Minnesota. The US Border Patrol arrested more than 14,000 Indians on the Canadian border in the year ending Sept. 30. By 2022, the Pew Research Center estimates there were more than 725,000 Indians living illegally in the US, behind only Mexicans and El Salvadorans. Harshkumar Patel's attorney, Thomas Leinenweber, told The Associated Press that his client came to America to escape

poverty and build a better life for himself and now "stands unjustly accused of participating in this horrible crime. He has faith in the justice system of his adopted country and believes that the truth will come out at the trial." Attorneys for Shand did not return messages. Court documents filed by prosecutors show Patel was in the US illegally after being refused a US visa at least five times. Over a five-week period, court documents say, Patel and Shand often communicated about the bitter cold as they smuggled five groups of Indians over a quiet stretch of border. One night in December 2021, Shand messaged Patel that it was "cold as hell" while waiting to pick up one group, the documents say.

Canadian PM admits his govt made 'mistakes' in immigration policy

PTI ■ OTTAWA

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has admitted that his government made "mistakes" in its immigration policy which led to "bad actors" like "fake colleges" and big corporations exploiting the system for their vested interests. Trudeau's statement on Sunday came amidst his Liberal Party's denting popularity ahead of the 2025 general election in Canada. The prime minister is facing intense public criticism due to his policies leading to housing shortage, inflation, and deteriorating health and transport systems in the country. The opposition Conservative Party has also been accusing his government of mismanagement and failure to prioritise Canadian citizens'

needs. In a video message posted on his YouTube channel, Trudeau said, "In the last two years, our population has grown really fast, like a baby boom...Increasingly bad actors like fake colleges and big chain corporations have been exploiting our immigration system for their own interests." To combat this, "we are reducing the number of immigrants who are coming to Canada for the next three years," he said. "We made some mistakes and that's why we are taking this big turn," he said, justifying his government's action. Outlining the government's latest immigration strategy, Immigration Minister Marc Miller said last month that Canada will admit approximately 3,95,000 permanent res-

idents in 2025, marking a drop of nearly 20 per cent from the 4,85,000 expected this year. The plan also sets a target for temporary immigrants, including international students and foreign workers. Their numbers are expected to drop to about 4,46,000 in 2025 and 2026, down from roughly 8,00,000 this year. By 2027, Canada will accept just 17,400 new non-permanent residents, the new policy suggested. Canada also ended the popular fast track study visa programme, SDS, a major policy decision that is likely to impact scores of international students, including from India. According to the Indian High Commission here, India is the largest source country of for-

ign students with an estimated 4,27,000 Indian students studying in Canada. Trudeau said for years, Canada's immigration system only focused on Permanent Immigration where people come with family to settle in Canada and the government decides the number of permanent residents that it wants to admit each year. However, in doing so, it missed "the other pathway — the temporary immigration", which involves international students, temporary workers and so on. "After the (coronavirus) pandemic, our economy came roaring back quickly. We wanted more workers fast. We were in the midst of a huge labour shortage. Temporary foreign workers became such a signif-

icant part of our workforce...So, we brought in more workers," he said. And it was the right choice and it worked, Trudeau emphasised. "Our economy grew. Restaurants and stores reopened, businesses kept running, but most importantly, in spite of lots of economists' predictions, we avoided the worst-case scenario — a recession," he said. However, the prime minister said, some saw that as an opportunity to profit, to game the system. "We have seen way too many large corporations doing this. Far too many colleges and universities used international students to raise their bottom line, because they could charge these students tens of thou-

sands of dollars more for the same degree. "And then there are really bad actors who outright exploit people who target vulnerable immigrants with promises of jobs, diplomas and easy pathways to citizenship promises that would never come true," he said. "Looking back when the post pandemic boom cooled and the businesses no longer needed the additional workforce, as a federal team, we could have acted quicker and turned off the taps faster," Trudeau admitted. Canada's new immigration plan is "straightforward — lower the number of immigrants — both permanent and temporary," he said, adding that the government is prioritising permanent residents with the skills it

needs like healthcare and construction workers. Trudeau said the cut on the cap on immigrants coming to Canada was necessary to address its housing crisis and cost-of-living issues. "The goal is to help stabilise population growth while housing stocks catch up, and then to consider gradually increasing immigration rates once again," he said, adding that this pause is going to "give our economy and our communities the chance to catch up with things like our plan to build more homes." "Some temporary residents may turn to our asylum system when their visa expires...Those claims will be analysed and processed, and if their claim fails, they'll be sent home,"

Trudeau said. India-Canada ties remain deeply troubled over the North American country's alleged support to Khalistani separatists and its accusation of India's involvement in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian citizen who has been designated a terrorist by India. India rejected Trudeau's charges as "absurd" and expelled six Canadian diplomats. India also withdrew its High Commissioner in Canada Sanjay Kumar Verma after dismissing Ottawa's allegations. India has been maintaining that the main issue between the two countries is that of Canada giving space to pro-Khalistan elements operating from Canadian soil with impunity.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das urges banks to strengthen governance to curb unethical practices

PTI ■ MUMBAI

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Monday asked bank boards to strengthen internal governance framework to curb unethical practices, such as mis-selling of products or opening of accounts without proper KYC verification.

Das also said that the incentives for bank staff should be carefully structured so as not to encourage them to indulge in unethical practices. "While such practices may yield short-term gains, they ultimately expose the bank to significant long-term risks, including reputational damage, supervisory scrutiny



and financial penalties," he said in a keynote address at the Conference of Directors of Private Sector Banks here. Das further said that the Indian banking sector is

transitioning through a time which is replete with opportunities as well as risks and challenges.

"The banking sector remains strong and stable. All the financial indicators have improved since we met in May last year, reflecting the efforts of the various participants of the banking sector, including their management and boards," he said.

To keep the resilience of the banking system intact, the governor emphasised that strong fundamentals ought to be leveraged to reinforce and fortify the defences. "Good times, after all, are the best times to reinforce

resilience and grow sustainably," he added.

Das also said that in the rapidly evolving and technology-driven environment, organisations face significant challenges and risks.

Factors like technological advancements, the rise of new-age fintech entities, third-party dependencies and climate change are reshaping the economic landscape, he added.

Amid these shifting tides, bank boards should serve as a lighthouse for lenders and provide steady guidance to help navigate these challenges and steer towards safe and prosperous shores, he said.

SC issues notice to Centre over vacancies in 11 Debt Recovery Tribunals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday sought a response from the Ministry of Finance on a PIL highlighting critical vacancies in 11 Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRTs) across India.

The DRTs are set up under the Recovery of Dues to Banks and Financial Institutions Act of 1993 to enable banks and financial institutions recover bad debts from borrowers.

"Eleven DRTs remain unmanned which is creating issues. In view of the grant of additional charges and also the complications, notice be served including 'dasti', counter affidavits (reply) be filed in five weeks and the rejoinder to be filed within three weeks after the response," said a bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjay Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar.

The PIL, filed by Ghaziabad resident Nischay Chaudhary, was argued by senior advocate K B Sounder Rajan along with lawyer Sudarshan Rajan.

According to the PIL, as of September 30, 2024, 11 DRTs are without presiding officers, severely impacting their ability to resolve cases efficiently.

The PIL raised concerns that nearly one-third of the 39 DRTs in the country are currently non-functional due to the absence of presiding officers, undermining their core objective of expediting debt recovery for banks and financial institutions.

The petitioner argues that this inaction frustrates the purpose of the 1993 law, which was enacted to ensure timely adjudication and recovery of debts.



The plea said various DRTs at Jaipur, Chennai, Mumbai, Aurangabad, Ahmedabad, Coimbatore, Ranchi, Bengaluru and Lucknow have vacancies.

The PIL also emphasises that speedy justice is a fundamental right under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution, as recognised by the Supreme Court in the case of District Bar Association Dehradun vs Ishwar Shandilya in 2020.

The PIL sought a direction to the Ministry of Finance to produce records relating to the selection and appointment of presiding officers in DRTs to evaluate the government's seriousness in addressing these vacancies.

It also sought a direction to the Centre to mandate the timely filling up of existing vacancies and establish mechanisms to prevent delays in future appointments.

As interim measures, it sought a direction that the powers of non-functional DRTs are vested in other tribunals to prevent

disruption of services. "Issue any further orders to safeguard the efficient functioning of DRTs in the interest of justice," the PIL said.

"For instance, the Presiding Officer, DRT Patna has been given additional charge of the Ranchi DRT (22.07.2024) and Lucknow DRT (17.09.2024).

The charge of DRT Jaipur has now been with DRT Delhi for almost a year.

"This stopgap arrangement is no respite; rather causes practical difficulties to the concerned lawyers practising in the particular DRTs and further decelerates the disposal of the other DRT as we," the plea said.

In view of the additional charge given to such DRTs, only urgent matters are taken up and normal matters are not considered, it said.

"The pendency is on the increase in such DRTs.

The irony is that a specific time schedule ranging from 60 to 180 days has been stipulated in the Act whereas the DRTs remain non-functional due to non-appointment of Presiding Officers beyond the above time range," the PIL said.

Rupee recovers from all-time low to settle six paise higher at 84.40 against US Dollar



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee recovered from its all-time low level and settled with a gain of 6 paise at 84.40 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, backed by a retreating American currency.

Forex traders said, the recovery in the local unit was capped by the unabated withdrawal of foreign funds amid lacklustre sentiment in the domestic equity markets as well as an upward movement in crude oil prices. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 84.42 and touched the intra-day high of 84.37 against the greenback during the session. It finally settled at 84.40 (provisional) against the dollar, up 6 paise from its previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee fell 7 paise to settle at its all-time low of 84.46 against the US dollar. The Forex market was closed on Friday on account of Guru Nanak Jayanti.

"This minor support for the rupee was further aided by a reduction in FII selling activity in recent days, with expectations that sell-off pressure will remain limited

due to the upcoming state elections in Maharashtra.

"The rupee is expected to find support in the 84.45-84.52 range, while resistance is projected around 84.25-84.30," said Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading lower by 0.06 per cent at 106.55.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose by 0.79 per cent to USD 71.60 per barrel in futures trade.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 241.30 points, or 0.31 per cent, to close at 77,339.01 points, while Nifty fell 78.90 points, or 0.34 per cent, to settle at 23,453.80 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Thursday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 1,849.87 crore, according to exchange data. On the domestic macroeconomic front, India's merchandise exports in October rose by an impressive 17.25 per cent year-on-year, highest in over two years, to USD 39.2 billion, while the trade deficit widened to USD 27.14 billion on a sequential basis, according to the latest government data released on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the country's forex reserves dropped by USD 6.477 billion to USD 675.653 billion for the week ended November 8, the Reserve Bank of India said on Friday.

SBI to open 500 more branches in FY25, take overall network to 23,000: Finance Minister

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said SBI will open another 500 branches to take its overall network to 23,000 by the end of FY25.

Speaking at an event to mark the 100th anniversary of the state-owned lender's main branch in Mumbai, Sitharaman recalled that the size of the bank has increased substantially since 1921 when three presidency banks merged to form the Imperial Bank of India (IBI).

The government passed an Act of Parliament to form SBI in 1955 out of what used to be

customers. Sitharaman said the digital investments are "robust" at the bank, and it can handle up to 20 crore UPI transactions a day.

This is a long way from the objective of the merger of three presidency banks in 1921, Sitharaman said, pointing out that one of the stated aims of the century-old consolidation move was to extend banking services to people.

The Mumbai main branch is housed in a heritage building inaugurated in 1924 and currently handles nearly a fourth of all the deposits in the country.

IBI, and what was a network of 250 branches in 1921 has grown to 22,500 now, she said. "SBI today has grown to become 22,500 branches, and I understand that another 500 branches are going to be opened in FY25.

So, 23,000 branches," Sitharaman said. The finance minister said this growth of SBI should be a "global record", particularly in the context of India being repeatedly "taunted" for income disparities.

She said SBI commands a 22.4 per cent share in the overall deposits in the country, nearly one-fifth in advance and serves over 50 crore

Gold and silver prices rebound because of ongoing wedding season buying, global cues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold and silver prices rebounded on Monday in the national capital mainly on the back of ongoing wedding season buying by jewellers and retailers as well as strong global trend, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Snapping a four-day losing streak, gold of 99.9 per cent purity rose by Rs 400 to Rs 77,450 per 10 grams in the local markets.

The precious metal had closed at Rs 77,050 per 10 grams on Thursday.

Silver also climbed Rs 1,810 to reclaim the Rs 92,000 per kg-mark against the previous close of Rs 90,190 per kg on Thursday. Price of gold of 99.5 per cent



purity jumped Rs 400 to Rs 77,050 per 10 grams.

The yellow metal had settled at Rs 76,650 per 10 grams. Traders said besides wedding season demand from jewellers and retailers, a strong global trend for

gold influenced the precious metal prices.

On Friday, the local bullion markets were closed on account of Guru Nanak Jayanti. In futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for

December delivery jumped Rs 621 or 0.84 per cent to trade at Rs 74,567 per 10 grams.

During the day, the precious metal had climbed Rs 732 or 0.99 per cent to Rs 74,678 per 10 grams on the exchange.

"Gold traded strongly positive due to heightened geopolitical tensions between Russia and Ukraine.

This geopolitical risk bolstered gold prices as investors turned to safe-haven assets," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said.

Silver contracts for December delivery also bounced by Rs 879 or 0.99 per cent to Rs 89,300 per kg

on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

In the Asian trading hours, Comex gold futures rose USD 25.20 per ounce or 0.98 per cent to USD 2,595.30 per ounce.

"Geopolitical developments over the weekend fuelled some haven flows, allowing the precious metal to start trading on a positive note," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities, HDFC Securities, said. Meanwhile, retail demand in India is likely to improve due to the ongoing wedding season, Gandhi said.

According to Rahul Kalantri, VP Commodities, Mehta Equities Ltd, last week, gold and silver prices extended their decline, reaching two-month lows in international markets.

This sharp drop was primarily driven by the strong performance of Bitcoin and the US dollar following Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election, reducing the safe-haven appeal of precious metals, Kalantri said.

Silver traded 1.23 per cent higher at USD 30.81 per ounce in the international markets. "Focus this week will be on the preliminary Manufacturing and Services PMI data from major economies along with Fed officials' comments," Manav Modi, analyst, Commodity Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said. The commentary from the officials will chart a path for the policy interest rates.

Sensex down 241 points, Nifty falls for seventh day as FPI selling spree



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty continued their decline on Monday owing to unabated foreign fund outflows, selling in IT stocks and weak leads from the US markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped by 241.30 points or 0.31 per cent to settle at 77,339.01 and registering its fourth day of decline. During the day, it fell 615.25 points or 0.79 per cent to 76,965.06.

Falling for the seventh day in a row, the NSE Nifty dipped 78.90 points or 0.34 per cent to 23,453.80. From the 30-share Sensex pack, the Tata Consultancy

Services, Infosys, NTPC, HCL Technologies, Axis Bank, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, Sun Pharma, IndusInd Bank and Reliance Industries were the major laggards.

Tata Steel, Hindustan Unilever, Mahindra & Mahindra, Nestle and State Bank of India were among the gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,849.87 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

Foreign investors have pulled out Rs 22,420 crore from the Indian equity markets so far this month, owing to high domestic stock valuations, increasing allocations to China, and

the rising US dollar as well as Treasury yields.

With this sell-off, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have recorded a total outflow of Rs 15,827 crore in 2024 so far.

Equity markets were closed on Friday for Guru Nanak Jayanti.

"Consolidation continued in the market, a slowdown in earnings growth and a weak rupee due to inflation impacted the sentiment.

IT stocks reacted negatively today due to a reduced expectation of a Fed rate cut in December, which may pose a delay in spending in the BFSI segment," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

In Asian markets, Seoul and Hong Kong settled higher while Tokyo and Shanghai ended lower.

European markets were trading in the negative territory. The US markets ended lower on Friday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.49 per cent to USD 71.39 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark Sensex dropped 110.64 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 77,580.31 on Thursday. The Nifty declined by 26.35 points or 0.11 per cent to 23,532.70.

Bajaj Finance FD book rises 21 per cent to ₹ 66,131 Crore

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Bajaj Finance Ltd (BFL), part of Bajaj Finserv Ltd, has reported a growth of 21 per cent in its Fixed Deposit (FD) book to Rs 66,131 crore as on September 30, 2024, a senior company official has said.

The company's total customer franchise stood at 92.09 million as of September 30, 2024 and net users on its App platform stood at 61.67 million.

"The Bajaj Group's century-old legacy of trust resonates across generations of Indian



families. Bajaj Finserv is founded on the business philosophy of the Bajaj Group, which has encouraged people across

demographics to choose its FDs," Sachin Sikka, Executive Vice President Deposits, Investments, Rewards and EMI Cards, Bajaj Finance,

is driving us to continuously transform savers' experience through digital journeys, competitive interest rates and a safe investing platform," Sikka said.

Bajaj Finance has emerged as India's largest deposit-taking NBFC.

It presents an opportunity for savers to secure stable and better returns in prevailing market conditions.

Bajaj Finance Ltd maintains the highest domestic credit rating of AAA/Stable from CRISIL and ICRA for its Fixed Deposit program.

Emerging India Focus Funds settles FPIs violation case with Sebi, pays ₹ 64.35 Lakh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Emerging India Focus Funds on Monday settled a case concerning the alleged violations of Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) rules with markets regulator Sebi on payment of Rs 64.35 lakh towards settlement charges.

This came after the applicant filed an application with Sebi proposing to settle the proceedings initiated against it, "without admitting or denying the findings of facts and conclusions of law" through a settlement order.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) initiated adjudication proceedings against the applicant and issued a



showcase notice in February for the alleged violations of FPI Regulations and Intermediaries Regulations.

Pending adjudication proceedings, Emerging India Focus Funds filed an application with Sebi and shelved out Rs 64.35 lakh on November 13 to settle the

alleged violations. "In view of the acceptance of the settlement terms and the receipt of settlement amount by Sebi, the instant adjudication proceedings initiated against applicant vide SCN (showcase notice) dated February 29, 2024, is disposed of," Sebi said in its order.

INBRIEF

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY POSTPONES EXAMS SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 20

GURUGRAM: Guru Nanak Dev University has announced the postponement of all annual and semester (theory) examinations initially set to take place on Wednesday, November 20, 2024. Prof. Shalini Bahel, Professor Incharge (Examinations) said that the exams will now be rescheduled for Sunday, December 1, 2024, at their originally designated times and examination centers.

SRM INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CELEBRATES 20TH (SPECIAL) CONVOCATION.

KATTANKULATHUR: The 20th (special) Convocation of SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) was held on 15th November 2024 at the Kattankulathur campus. A total of 10,848 students including undergraduate (UG), postgraduate (PG), and doctoral (PhD) programs in Science and Humanities, Medicine and Health Sciences, Management, Law, and Agricultural Sciences, were awarded their degrees.



India look to play to their strength, start as favourites against Japan

PTI ■ RAJGIR (BIHAR)

Confident and unbeaten India will back their strategy of attack and defense at appropriate times when they take on Japan in the semifinal of the women's Asian Champions Trophy hockey tournament here Tuesday. Hosts and defending champions India will undoubtedly enter the semifinal as clear favourites against a side which they trounced 3-0 in their final league game.

World number nine India have registered five wins from as many games, including 3-0 victory over Olympic silver medalist and world number six China.

India's chief coach Harendra Singh also emphasised on the need to continue in the same vein in the tournament.

"We know what are their strengths and weaknesses. For us, this tournament is about working on our strengths and build a formidable style of play for Indian women's hockey team. It's a mixture of attacking and defensive," Harendra said. "So far the girls have executed really well. I am satisfied with their decision making but semifinal will be a different ball game."

The Indians must guard against complacency, as a single mistake could shatter their dreams of retaining the crown.

The top four sides qualified for the semifinals of the six-team continental tournament. In the other



semifinal China will be up against Malaysia.

The Indians might have defeated Japan hands down in the league stage, but Harendra is in no mood to take their opponents lightly in the knock-out match.

"Of course we are expecting a tough fight from Japan because the training game and pool matches are different. It's a semifinal and every team prepares according to their

plans.

"We are going to face some resistance from Japan for sure. They have a good side but we have to do our homework. We need to focus on how we want to play rather than focussing on the opponent," he said. After a cagey start, India quickly found their rhythm, elevating their performance dramatically and excelling in every aspect of the game.

One of the most encouraging aspects of India's success here has been the stellar performance of their backline, led brilliantly by Uditia, Sushila Chanu, and Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke. The Indian defense has been so solid that goalkeepers Savita Punia and Bichu Devi Karibam have hardly been tested in the tournament thus far. In the first part of the tournament,

the Indians were guilty of rushing the play and failing to identify the right options inside the opposition circle, a shortcoming acknowledged by Harendra.

But it seems the hosts have gotten over that bad habit in the last few matches. Not only have they managed to play full press hockey, but they've also displayed improved decision-making inside the circle, resulting in some fine field goals.

Penalty corner conversion was also an area of concern but over the last few games, the likes of Deepika and Manisha Chauhan have risen to the occasion on that front.

India have got a fine striker and a fierce dragflicker in young Deepika. Her exploits in the tournament can be gauged from the fact that she is leading the goal scorers chart with 10 strike which includes four field goals, five penalty corner conversions and one from the spot. Other Indian forwards like Sharmila Devi, Sangita Kumari Preeti Dubey and Lalaremsiami have also contributed immensely in the home team's campaign so far.

Skipper Salima Tete has been the centre point of the Indian midfield in the company of Neha Goyal, vice-captain Navneet Kaur and Beauty Dung Dung.

The only concern going into the business end of the tournament for chief coach Harendra would be the lack of action of his goalkeepers Savita and Bichu as they hardly were seen in action, given the performance of the defenders.



Nelly Korda rallies in Florida for her seventh LPGA win of the year

AP ■ BELLEAIR (US)

Nelly Korda was back to competition for the first time in nearly two months and didn't miss a beat. She ran off five straight birdies on the back nine to stage another comeback, closing with a 3-under 67 to win The Annika for her seventh LPGA Tour title this year. Korda had a rough start and said she didn't have many happy thoughts when she made the turn at 2 over for the day, two shots behind Charley Hull. Starting with a birdie on No. 11, she made five in a row on her way to a three-shot victory.

The only big surprise was seeing her younger brother, Sebastian, who has been charting his own career in tennis that kept him from seeing his sister win until Sunday at Pelican Golf Club. Korda, who earlier this year tied an LPGA record with five straight victories, became the first player to win seven times in a season since Yani Tseng in 2011. No other American had won seven times in a season since Beth Daniel in 1990. Korda now has won four times this year when trailing going into the final round. Hull, going for a wire-to-wire win, simply couldn't keep up with Korda's birdie blitz. Coming off her first

win worldwide two weeks ago in Saudi Arabia, Hull closed with a 1-over 71 and tied for second with LPGA rookie Jin Hee Im (68) and Weiwei Zhang (70).

Zhang moved up 24 spots to No. 82 in the Race to CME Globe to keep her card for next year. The top 60 advance to the CME Group Tour Championship next week in Naples, where the winner gets \$4 million. Charla Ciganda moved up three places to secure the final spot. Korda last played Sept. 22 in Ohio. She was planning to play twice during the Asian swing until a minor neck injury kept her at home. She was eager to get back in time to play Pelican, where she had won two of the previous three years.

"After taking some time off with an injury, it feels great to be back out here," Korda said. "Nothing like being in the hunt, the adrenaline feeling on the back nine, and being in contention. I love it so much."

The victory puts her over \$4 million for the year, and she can nearly match that with a win next week at Tiburon Golf Club. The ranking does not matter for the season finale — all 60 players have the same shot at one of the biggest prizes in women's sports.



Britain knocks out defending champion Canada to advance to Billie Jean King Cup semifinals against Slovakia

AP ■ MALAGA (SPAIN)

Britain kept alive its hopes of winning the Billie Jean King Cup for the first time by defeating defending champion Canada in the quarterfinals in Malaga.

Katie Boulter clinched the 2-0 victory with a 6-2, 6-4 win over Leylah Fernandez after Emma Raducanu defeated Rebecca Marino 6-0, 7-5 in the first singles match of the tie. "I think we have got a great team. We've always got a great chance," Boulter said. "I think every single day anything can happen. We're just going to keep believing, keep trusting it, and just keep enjoying it. I think that's really important. It's worked so well for us so far."

Four-time finalist Britain is yet to win the title, though it's the second time in three years that it has made it to the last four. Canada clinched its first title last year.

"You know what? We can't win them all, and I think credit to Team Great Britain, because I

think both girls played complete matches today," Canada captain Heidi El Tabakh said. Britain next faces Slovakia in the semifinals. "It's fantastic. It really is a brilliant achievement for the team," Britain captain Anne Keothavong said. "But like I said on court, you know, the job is far from over."

SLOVAKIA KEEPS MOMENTUM Slovakia followed up its win over the United States with a 2-0 victory against Australia to reach the last four.

Rebecca Sramkova cruised to a 6-1, 6-2 win over Ajla Tomljanovic to clinch Slovakia the victory after Viktorija Hrucnakova rallied to defeat Kimberly Birrell 7-5, 6-7 (4), 6-3 for her sixth straight BJK Cup win counting singles and doubles. Slovakia had beaten the U.S. — the competition's most successful nation — in the first round of the finals in Malaga. Iga Swiatek's Poland, seeking its first title, will face Italy in the other semifinal.

Omkar Salvi named RCB's bowling coach

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Monday announced the appointment of Omkar Salvi as the IPL franchise's bowling coach, a reward for guiding Mumbai to Ranji Trophy and Irani Trophy titles last season. A well-known name on the domestic circuit, Omkar has in the past worked as assistant coach with Kolkata Knight Riders. "Omkar Salvi, current Head Coach of Mumbai, has been

appointed as RCB's Bowling Coach," the franchise tweeted. "Omkar, who has won the Ranji Trophy, Irani Trophy and the IPL in the last 8 months, is excited to join us in time for #IPL2025, after completion of his Indian domestic season duties." He is expected to join RCB after the end of the ongoing Ranji season, which will resume on January 23. In between, he will also oversee Mumbai's campaign in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20

tournament. Omkar, who is the younger brother of former India player Avishkar Salvi, has played just one List-A game for Railways in 2005. He is contracted with the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) until March 2025. This will be Salvi's second IPL stint after his tenure at KKR. RCB have never won an IPL title despite participating in it since the tournament's inaugural edition way back in 2008.

China Masters: Satwik-Chirag return to action in BWF World Tour

PTI ■ SHENZHEN (CHINA)

India's premier men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will make a highly-anticipated return to action at the China Masters Super 750 badminton tournament, starting here on Tuesday, following a disappointing Paris Olympics campaign.

The former world number one duo had been sidelined from competitive action post the Paris Olympics due to Satwik's shoulder injury. Their absence from the circuit led them to miss several high-profile tournaments, including the Arctic Open, Denmark Open, and China Open. Fresh off a lengthy recovery, Satwik and his Asian Games gold medal-winning partner Chirag will aim to regain their momentum, despite having



been without a coach since Mathias Boe's departure in August. Satwik and Chirag, who finished runner-up in the last editions, will start their campaign against Chinese Taipei's Yang Po-Hsuan and Lee Jhe-Huei in the opening round. Elsewhere, P V Sindhu and Lakshya Sen will look to overcome their recent

struggles and aim for improved performances as they continue their quest for consistency and form. Both the players, who took a long break after their campaign at the Paris Games ended in early August without a medal, have struggled to regain their best form since the Olympics. Since his semifinal loss in Paris, Lakshya has endured

early exits at the Arctic Open Super 500 and Denmark Open, and the trend continued last week, with the young shuttler making another first-round exit from the Kumamoto Masters Japan. He will kick off his campaign against seventh-seeded Malaysian Lee Zii Jia.

The 23-year-old possesses the ability to beat any opponent, but his mental toughness has been questioned following his agonising near-miss at the Tokyo Olympics, where he slipped from a medal position in a heartbreaking loss. Two-time Olympic medalist Sindhu bounced back from her shock opening-round loss to Canada's Michelle Li in Finland, reaching the quarterfinals in Odense. However, Li proved to be a hurdle once again, defeating Sindhu in the round of 16 last week.

The unseeded Indian begins her campaign against Thailand's Supanida Katethong, whom she leads 5-4 on head-to-head record. Also competing in the women's singles event will be promising young talents Aakarshi Kashyap and Malvika Bansod.

Aakarsi will face Tomoka Miyazaki of Japan in her opener while Malvika will take on Line Højmark Kjærsefeldt in the first round. The women's doubles team of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, that made a first round exit from the Kumamoto Masters Japan, will also be in action. The Indian duo will square up against the second seeded Chinese combination of Liu Sheng Shu and Tan Ning. B Sumeeth Reddy will partner Sikki Reddy in the mixed doubles event.

Sinner opens up about his doping case after winning ATP Finals trophy before his home fans

AP ■ TURIN (ITALY)

Sleepless nights. Constant thoughts of what went wrong — and how it could have been prevented.

Jannik Sinner opened up about his ongoing doping case after beating U.S. Open runner-up Taylor Fritz 6-4, 6-4 on Sunday for the ATP Finals trophy before his home fans. Sinner tested positive in two separate drug tests in March and a decision to clear him of wrongdoing was appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency in September. A final ruling is expected from the Court of Arbitration for Sport early next year.

Sinner's explanation was that the banned performance-enhancer entered his system unintentionally through a massage from his physiotherapist, who had used a spray containing the steroid to treat his own cut finger. "I've kept on thinking about where we went wrong and what we could have done

better," Sinner said in Italian. "I had days where I wasn't feeling great; nights when I didn't sleep well."

"But when I put my hat on, I don't think about what's going on beyond the court," Sinner added. "I'm fortunate to have people around me who keep me stable. Thanks to them we've continued to work hard every day like there's no tomorrow and we've even improved in this period."

SINNER'S PERFORMANCE HAS APPROACHED DOMINATION LATELY Sinner's victory in Turin was the latest big achievement in a year full of them following his first two Grand Slam titles at the Australian Open and U.S. Open and clinching the year-end No. 1 ranking. Sinner has won 26 of his last 27 matches and ends the ATP season with eight titles and an overall record of 70-6. "The work will never stop. We know we still have room for improvement," Sinner said. "But it's been an incredible season and there's

no better place to finish the season than here."

SINNER ALSO BEAT FRITZ IN THE US OPEN FINAL AND THE GROUP STAGE Sinner maintained his recent mastery over Fritz, having also beaten the American in the U.S. Open final in September and in the group stage this week at the elite event for the year's top eight players.

By sweeping all five of his matches en route to the trophy, Sinner earned \$4.8 million — the largest winner's prize on the men's tour. Sinner became the first Italian to win the finals and he went one step further than last year, when he lost the championship match to Novak Djokovic, who withdrew this time. And he did so without dropping a set — which was last accomplished by Ivan Lendl in 1986.

"I just tried to understand whatever works best for each opponent," Sinner said. "It was a very high-level tournament from my side. At



times, I couldn't play better." **THE CROWD WAS DECKED OUT IN ORANGE — SINNER'S THEME COLOR** The crowd inside Inalpi Arena included multiple clusters of fans wearing orange — a tribute to Sinner's red- and orange-colored hair,

and how he once ate carrots during a match. There were orange carrot costumes, orange wigs, orange hats, jackets and plenty of other orange items, too. Some fans even had carrots in their mouths. The crowd broke into its customary chant of "Ole, Ole,

Ole; Sin-ner, Sin-ner" when Sinner produced a drop-shot winner to break for a 4-3 lead in the first set. Sinner faced a break point while serving for the first set but saved it with a big serve out wide that Fritz couldn't return. Then he served an ace — his 10th of the set — to

close it out. Another break by Sinner early in the second and the match was virtually over. **SINNER LED 14-8 IN ACES AND GAVE FRITZ HARDLY ANY CHANCES** Sinner served better than he had all week, leading 14-8 in aces without any double-faults.

"He served absolutely lights out. So many lines," Fritz said. "He placed the serve great. He took a lot of risk on the second serve as well. I think that was probably one of his main game plans, to not let me attack his second serve." **FRITZ WILL STILL RISE TO A CAREER-HIGH NO. 4** Fritz was attempting to become the event's first American champion since Pete Sampras beat Andre Agassi in the title match 25 years ago. Still, Fritz will rise to a career-high No. 4 in the rankings on Monday after beating No. 2 Alexander Zverev in a third-set tiebreaker in the semifinals on Saturday. That

will make him the highest-ranked American man since Andy Roddick was No. 4 in August 2007.

It's the latest in a series of achievements for Fritz, whose run in New York made him the first American man to reach a Grand Slam singles final since Roddick lost to Roger Federer at Wimbledon in 2009. "I feel like I've gone up a level and I'm much more confident in my game," Fritz said. At the start of the week, Fritz told The Associated Press that his "career has always been a very steady progression and just improving a little bit each year." **DAVIS CUP AND NADAL'S RETIREMENT ARE NEXT** Both Sinner and Fritz will conclude their seasons representing defending champion Italy and the United States, respectively, in the Davis Cup finals, which start Tuesday in Malaga, Spain, and which will also mark Rafael Nadal's retirement.

'Hungry' Virat's record in Australia will give him confidence: Gavaskar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Virat Kohli will be "very, very hungry" for runs following his lean patch against New Zealand, according to former Indian captain Sunil Gavaskar, who feels the veteran batter's strong track record Down Under will boost his confidence heading into the upcoming Test series against Australia.

Kohli has faced a challenging patch in all formats over the past few months. In his last 60 Test innings, he has managed just two centuries and 11 half-centuries.

This year, he has averaged only 22.72 across six Tests, and in the three games against New Zealand, he could manage only 93 runs.

"Because he hasn't scored runs against New Zealand, he'll be very, very hungry," Gavaskar told Star Sports.

"Even in that Adelaide Test, where India was bowled out for 36 in the second innings, Kohli scored 70-plus runs in the first innings before being run out," he added.

Despite these recent struggles, Kohli has an outstanding record in Australia. The right-hander, who has been part of four tours Down Under, averages a stellar 54.08.



Gavaskar believes these stats will provide a significant confidence boost as Kohli prepares for the upcoming five-match series,

starting with the first Test in Perth on Friday.

"He has consistently performed in Adelaide, a ground he knows well.

Before Adelaide, it's Perth, where Kohli played one of his finest Test centuries in the 2018-19 series — a terrific hundred.

"Having performed on these grounds, he'll feel an extra bit of confidence. Of course, you need a bit of luck at the start, but if he gets off to a good beginning, he will score big runs," Gavaskar added.

As the series approaches, all eyes will be on Kohli, who will look to bounce back with his trademark resilience and continue his fine record in Australia.

Kohli knows what's coming: Manjrekar.

Former India cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar also weighed in on how Australia might target Kohli.

"I think Virat knows exactly what's coming," Manjrekar said.

"They'll start with a line outside the off stump to assess his mindset. These days, he often leaves balls outside off and looks to drive anything pitched up. Australia may try to cramp him for room and attack his body, especially since he likes to get forward. New Zealand used this tactic effectively."

Manjrekar continued, "If he's focused on balls outside off stump, bowlers like Josh Hazlewood could target the middle-stump line, much like Vernon Philander used to do. Australia will experiment with different strategies, and Virat Kohli is well aware of that."



Sri Lanka beats New Zealand in 2nd ODI to win another home series

AP ■ PALLEKELE (SRI LANKA)

Kusal Mendis hit a patient 74 not out as Sri Lanka beat New Zealand by three wickets under the DLS method with six balls remaining in the rain-hit second ODI.

Sri Lanka took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series with the final game also at Pallekele on Tuesday. Sri Lanka won the first one-day international by 45 runs — also by DLS — after rain disrupted that game at Dambulla.

It was Sri Lanka's fifth ODI series win at home in 2024 after it had beaten Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, India and West Indies. Sri Lanka couldn't qualify for next year's Champions Trophy after finishing ninth at last year's 50-over World Cup in India, but has since then lost just one ODI series in Bangladesh while winning five at home.

"It is really tough for batters to score runs here," Sri Lanka captain Charith Asalanka said. "This is just another series. As a team, we are moving towards a big goal and we have to achieve that, this is a process."

Mendis followed his career-best 143 in the series opener with a determined 102-ball knock as Sri Lanka reached 210-7 in 46 overs.

The match was cut to 47 overs-a-side after two rain interruptions when New Zealand batted and was bowled out for 209 in 45.1 overs. Sri Lanka was set a target of 210.

Off-spinner Michael Bracewell's first four-wicket ODI haul (4-36) gave New Zealand a sniff when Sri Lanka slipped to 163-7 before Maheesh Theekshana (27 not out) shared a match-winning 47-run stand with

Mendis and carried the team home.

Earlier, Sri Lanka grassed a few hard chances but Avishka Fernando took three spectacular catches after Asalanka won the toss and elected to field.

Mark Chapman ended his struggling batting form with 76 off 81 balls, but his dismissal in the 37th over would see New Zealand lose its last six wickets for 36 runs. Mitchell Hay made a well composed 49 off 62 balls and shared a 75-run stand with Chapman. Hay was the last man to be dismissed.

New Zealand struggled against a four-pronged spin attack with Theekshana (3-31) and Jeffrey Vandersay (3-46) sharing six wickets. Left-arm spinner Dunith Wellalage, the only change Sri Lanka made from the team which won the first game, and Asalanka took one wicket each.

Bracewell mopped up the top order but Mendis stood firm as he completed his half century off 84 balls with four boundaries. He added 39 runs with Janith Liyanage and another 31 with Wellalage, who struck three successive boundaries in his 18-run knock against Nathan Smith before holing out at mid-on to give Bracewell his fourth wicket.

But Theekshana showed some aggression against pace, slicing fast bowler Jacob Duffy for the only six in the Sri Lanka chase and also struck two boundaries.

"It is always a challenge when you are defending a low score," New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner said. "Kusal played the situation very well ... that partnership (between Kusal and Theekshana) at the end took it away, but we also left a few runs out there."



India name 20-member team for men's Junior Asia Cup

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Defender Amir Ali will lead a 20-member Indian squad in the men's Junior Asia Cup hockey tournament starting in Muscat from November 26. India have won this tournament for a record four times, including 2004, 2008, 2015 and 2023. They beat nemesis Pakistan 2-1 in the final last year to lift the title. This year, the event will have 10 teams from the continent divided into two pools with India, Chinese Taipei, Japan, Korea and Thailand clubbed in pool A.

Bangladesh, Malaysia, China, Oman and Pakistan are in Pool B.

The tournament is also a qualifying event for next year's FIH Junior World Cup and India have automatically qualified for it by virtue of being hosts.

However under the guidance of coach PR Sreejesh, the team will be looking to build on its recent success at the Sultan of Johor Cup.

Rohit will serve as Amir Ali's deputy.

"The Sultan of Johor Cup was a first-time experience for

many of the players, yet they showed great spirit in doing well and I am quite pleased with how they performed," Sreejesh said in a media release.

The team will be taking confidence from that performance and will be working towards a successful outing in the Junior Asia Cup.

"The players have been putting in a lot of hard work at the ongoing national camp in SAI, Bengaluru and we have made certain changes to our game to be more effective in defence and efficient in converting goals," he added.

Squad: Goalkeepers: Princedeep Singh, Bikramjit Singh. Defenders: Amir Ali (C), Taleem Priyobarta, Shardanand Tiwari, Yogender Rawat, Anmol Ekka, Rohit (VC). Midfielders: Ankit Pal, Manmeet Singh, Rasan Kujur, Mukesh Toppo, Thokchom Kingson Singh. Forwards: Gurjot Singh, Sourabh Anand Kushwaha, Dilraj Singh, Arshdeep Singh and Arajiet Singh Hundal. Iternate Players: Sukhvinder and Chandan Yadav.

Vaughan shocked by India's call to skip warm-up matches ahead of Australia series

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Baffled by India's decision to head into the high-profile Border-Gavaskar Trophy against Australia without a proper warm-up game, former England captain Michael Vaughan has raised concerns about how the tourists would get into a "competitive mindset" without match practice.

India decided against playing a match against an Australian domestic side in the run up to the five-match Test series, starting in Perth from November 22, marking a departure from their approach on the previous two tours of Australia.

"I can't get my head around a team like India only wanting to play an intra-squad game leading into a series against Australia in their own backyard," Vaughan told 'Fox Cricket'.

"I just can't see how you get yourself in that competitive mindset of consequence by playing an intra-squad game. Time will tell."

But India have also called off their scheduled three-day intra-squad match with their 'A' team. They have instead opted to focus on centre-wicket training at the WACA in Perth. The Indian think tank believed that the bounce of the WACA centre strip closely mirrors that of



the Perth Stadium pitch. As a result, they felt it would be beneficial for all top-order batters to spend more time in the middle.

"I'm surprised that this Indian side didn't want at least one game of cricket, and the WACA's the perfect venue because it's a similar pitch to Optus (Stadium), so you get used to the bounce," Vaughan said.

Australia had also skipped warm-up matches before last year's Test tours of India and England, citing issues with scheduling and a lack of trust in local curators as contributing factors.

"These players have a different kind of

mindset to what we had, whereas we probably needed more games," Vaughan continued.

"They're playing 12 months of the year and get straight into it, but it'll be intriguing to see how both sets of players settle on that first day when they're playing the longer form."

"The modern player maybe believes that they don't need (tour matches). They think they get enough cricket throughout the year and they can react and just adapt. I just like to see teams win and stick a marker down," he added.

IOA gets involved as India host first Kho Kho World Cup from January 13-19

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on Monday confirmed its partnership with the Kho Kho Federation of India as the country gets ready to host the first-ever Kho Kho World Cup, to be held here from January 13 to 19.

The IOA has pledged its "unwavering support" for the event to be organised at the IGI Stadium.

In a statement to KKFI chief Sudhanshu Mittal, IOA president PT Usha expressed the association's strong commitment to elevating indigenous sports like Kho Kho.

Usha said, "We recognise the

significance of this event in celebrating our cultural heritage and promoting traditional sports, and we look forward to collaborating with Kho Kho Federation of India to ensure the success of the tournament.

"Together, we aim to make this event memorable and impactful, encouraging the spirit of sportsmanship among participants and fostering a deeper appreciation for Kho Kho worldwide."

Mittal said the partnership between IOA and KKFI will be a "game-changer" for Kho Kho.

"The support of the IOA, led by President PT Usha, is a game-changer for Kho Kho. This



collaboration is pivotal in putting Kho Kho on the global map, and we're thrilled to be hosting the first-ever Kho Kho World Cup, a truly historic event for the sport," Mittal said.

The World Cup will feature both men's and women's teams, with 25 countries from six continents set to compete.

Teams from Asia, including hosts India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, will face off alongside competitors from Africa, Europe, North America, South America, and Oceania.

Nations like Ghana, Kenya, England, Germany, Brazil and Australia will be among the participants.

Ashwin, an incredibly smart bowler, has taught me a lot: Nathan Lyon

PTI ■ PERTH

Veteran Australian spinner Nathan Lyon believes that rival players often serve as the "best coaches", acknowledging that his Indian counterpart Ravichandran Ashwin has "taught" him a great deal through their faceoffs since 2011-12.

Having made their Test debuts in the same year, Lyon and Ashwin will face each other for the eighth time in the longest format during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy five-Test series beginning in Perth on November 22.

"Ash (Ashwin) is an incredible bowler. I've gone head-to-head with him for basically my whole career, so I've learned a lot from

Ash," Lyon told Fox Cricket.

"He's an incredibly smart bowler, and he's able to learn and adapt very quickly, and I think the best bowlers in the world are able to do that. He used his skills to benefit himself and his team.

"So, you've got to give credit where credit's due, he was the best bowler (in 2020/21), as he usually is. So, hats off to Ash."

It will be Ashwin's fifth Test tour of Australia, where he has claimed 39 wickets in 10 Tests at an average of 42.15.

Lyon further admitted to having studied Ashwin's bowling closely, especially before Australia toured India in the last few years.

"He's taught me a lot," Lyon said. "I'm a big believer in the players



that you play against are your best coaches that you eventually come across."

"I've watched a lot of his footage heading over to India, the way he goes about it here in Australia, see

if I can pick up anything.

"The way I look at cricket is that I've never met anyone who has conquered the game, never played against or with anyone who's conquered the game.

"There's so much to learn in this great game, and there's so much for me to learn from Ash. He's a world-class bowler. He's taken over 500 Test match wickets, and he should be extremely proud of that."

Ashwin (21.76) outshines Lyon (30.81) in terms of having the best Test bowling average in Asia. However, the Australian has better bowling figures outside Asia -- Lyon: 30.09, Ashwin: 33.14.

Asked if they could face again post this tour, Lyon reckoned, "Spin

bowling is a craft that the older you get, the better you get with age.

"There's definitely no limit for me, and I don't think there should be a limit for us as well. He's absolutely world-class, and there's a series in a couple of years' time. So, who knows?"

Asked the secret of his success on non-spinning tracks, Lyon quipped: "I know Jadeja reads all of this stuff, so I can't really share all my secrets."

"My big thing is spinning up the back of the ball and getting bounce, but it's a hard craft to be able to do that in Australia. Your size for error is extremely small," he said. They may not have won a Test series against India in nearly a

decade, but Lyon feels their World Test Championship final triumph last year would give them the edge.

"India's got the wood over us in the past few series, but if you're looking at the World Test Championship (final) in England, we were able to beat them there, and I know that should give us a bit of confidence heading into (this summer)," Lyon said.

"We understand that we're coming up against a world-class side, but we can take a lot of confidence out of where we are at as an Australian cricket team. "I feel like we're on the journey to becoming a great team. We're not there yet. There's a bit of work to do, but we have the opportunity to do something pretty special this summer."

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